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GABLES**

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Lucy Maud Montgomery

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Published by

MUSAICUM

Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook Formatting -
musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

2017 OK Publishing

ISBN 978-80-272-3688-6

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CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde is Surprised

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Mrs. Rachel Lynde lived just where the Avonlea main road dipped down into a little hollow, fringed with alders and ladies' eardrops and traversed by a brook that had its source away back in the woods of the old Cuthbert place; it was reputed to be an intricate, headlong brook in its earlier course through those woods, with dark secrets of pool and cascade; but by the time it reached Lynde's Hollow it was a quiet, well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs. Rachel Lynde's door without due regard for decency and decorum; it probably was conscious that Mrs. Rachel was sitting at her window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up, and that if she noticed anything odd or out of place she would never rest until she had ferreted out the whys and wherefores thereof.

There are plenty of people in Avonlea and out of it, who can attend closely to their neighbor's business by dint of neglecting their own; but Mrs. Rachel Lynde was one of those capable creatures who can manage their own concerns and those of other folks into the bargain. She was a notable housewife; her work was always done and well done; she "ran" the Sewing Circle, helped run the Sunday-school, and was the strongest prop of the Church Aid Society and Foreign Missions Auxiliary. Yet with all this Mrs. Rachel found abundant time to sit for hours at her kitchen window, knitting "cotton warp" quilts — she had knitted sixteen of them, as Avonlea housekeepers were wont to tell in awed voices — and keeping a sharp eye on the main road that crossed the hollow and wound up the steep red hill beyond. Since Avonlea occupied a little triangular peninsula jutting out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence with water on two sides of it, anybody who went out of it or into it had to pass over that hill road and so run the unseen gauntlet of Mrs. Rachel's all-seeing eye.

She was sitting there one afternoon in early June. The sun was coming in at the window warm and bright; the orchard on the slope below the house was in a bridal flush of pinky-white bloom, hummed over by a myriad of bees. Thomas Lynde — a meek little man whom Avonlea people called “Rachel Lynde’s husband” — was sowing his late turnip seed on the hill field beyond the barn; and Matthew Cuthbert ought to have been sowing his on the big red brook field away over by Green Gables. Mrs. Rachel knew that he ought because she had heard him tell Peter Morrison the evening before in William J. Blair’s store over at Carmody that he meant to sow his turnip seed the next afternoon. Peter had asked him, of course, for Matthew Cuthbert had never been known to volunteer information about anything in his whole life.

And yet here was Matthew Cuthbert, at halfpast three on the afternoon of a busy day, placidly driving over the hollow and up the hill; moreover, he wore a white collar and his best suit of clothes, which was plain proof that he was going out of Avonlea; and he had the buggy and the sorrel mare, which betokened that he was going a considerable distance. Now, where was Matthew Cuthbert going and why was he going there?

Had it been any other man in Avonlea, Mrs. Rachel, deftly putting this and that together, might have given a pretty good guess as to both questions. But Matthew so rarely went from home that it must be something pressing and unusual which was taking him; he was the shyest man alive and hated to have to go among strangers or to any place where he might have to talk. Matthew, dressed up with a white collar and driving in a buggy, was something that didn’t happen often. Mrs. Rachel, ponder as she might, could make nothing of it and her afternoon’s enjoyment was spoiled.

“I’ll just step over to Green Gables after tea and find out from Marilla where he’s gone and why,” the worthy woman finally concluded. “He doesn’t generally go to town this time of year and he NEVER visits; if he’d run out of turnip seed he wouldn’t dress up and take the buggy to go for more; he wasn’t driving fast enough to be going for a doctor. Yet something must have happened since last night to start him off. I’m clean puzzled, that’s what, and I won’t know a minute’s peace of mind or

conscience until I know what has taken Matthew Cuthbert out of Avonlea today.”

Accordingly after tea Mrs. Rachel set out; she had not far to go; the big, rambling, orchard-embowered house where the Cuthberts lived was a scant quarter of a mile up the road from Lynde’s Hollow. To be sure, the long lane made it a good deal further. Matthew Cuthbert’s father, as shy and silent as his son after him, had got as far away as he possibly could from his fellow men without actually retreating into the woods when he founded his homestead. Green Gables was built at the furthest edge of his cleared land and there it was to this day, barely visible from the main road along which all the other Avonlea houses were so sociably situated. Mrs. Rachel Lynde did not call living in such a place LIVING at all.

“It’s just STAYING, that’s what,” she said as she stepped along the deep-rutted, grassy lane bordered with wild rose bushes. “It’s no wonder Matthew and Marilla are both a little odd, living away back here by themselves. Trees aren’t much company, though dear knows if they were there’d be enough of them. I’d rather look at people. To be sure, they seem contented enough; but then, I suppose, they’re used to it. A body can get used to anything, even to being hanged, as the Irishman said.”

With this Mrs. Rachel stepped out of the lane into the backyard of Green Gables. Very green and neat and precise was that yard, set about on one side with great patriarchal willows and the other with prim Lombardies. Not a stray stick nor stone was to be seen, for Mrs. Rachel would have seen it if there had been. Privately she was of the opinion that Marilla Cuthbert swept that yard over as often as she swept her house. One could have eaten a meal off the ground without overbrimming the proverbial peck of dirt.

Mrs. Rachel rapped smartly at the kitchen door and stepped in when bidden to do so. The kitchen at Green Gables was a cheerful apartment — or would have been cheerful if it had not been so painfully clean as to give it something of the appearance of an unused parlor. Its windows looked east and west; through the west one, looking out on the back yard, came a flood of mellow June sunlight; but the east one, whence you got a glimpse of the bloom white cherry-trees in the left orchard and nodding, slender

birches down in the hollow by the brook, was greened over by a tangle of vines. Here sat Marilla Cuthbert, when she sat at all, always slightly distrustful of sunshine, which seemed to her too dancing and irresponsible a thing for a world which was meant to be taken seriously; and here she sat now, knitting, and the table behind her was laid for supper.

Mrs. Rachel, before she had fairly closed the door, had taken a mental note of everything that was on that table. There were three plates laid, so that Marilla must be expecting some one home with Matthew to tea; but the dishes were everyday dishes and there was only crab-apple preserves and one kind of cake, so that the expected company could not be any particular company. Yet what of Matthew's white collar and the sorrel mare? Mrs. Rachel was getting fairly dizzy with this unusual mystery about quiet, unmysterious Green Gables.

"Good evening, Rachel," Marilla said briskly. "This is a real fine evening, isn't it? Won't you sit down? How are all your folks?"

Something that for lack of any other name might be called friendship existed and always had existed between Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel, in spite of — or perhaps because of — their dissimilarity.

Marilla was a tall, thin woman, with angles and without curves; her dark hair showed some gray streaks and was always twisted up in a hard little knot behind with two wire hairpins stuck aggressively through it. She looked like a woman of narrow experience and rigid conscience, which she was; but there was a saving something about her mouth which, if it had been ever so slightly developed, might have been considered indicative of a sense of humor.

"We're all pretty well," said Mrs. Rachel. "I was kind of afraid YOU weren't, though, when I saw Matthew starting off today. I thought maybe he was going to the doctor's."

Marilla's lips twitched understandingly. She had expected Mrs. Rachel up; she had known that the sight of Matthew jaunting off so unaccountably would be too much for her neighbor's curiosity.

“Oh, no, I’m quite well although I had a bad headache yesterday,” she said. “Matthew went to Bright River. We’re getting a little boy from an orphan asylum in Nova Scotia and he’s coming on the train tonight.”

If Marilla had said that Matthew had gone to Bright River to meet a kangaroo from Australia Mrs. Rachel could not have been more astonished. She was actually stricken dumb for five seconds. It was unsupposable that Marilla was making fun of her, but Mrs. Rachel was almost forced to suppose it.

“Are you in earnest, Marilla?” she demanded when voice returned to her.

“Yes, of course,” said Marilla, as if getting boys from orphan asylums in Nova Scotia were part of the usual spring work on any well-regulated Avonlea farm instead of being an unheard of innovation.

Mrs. Rachel felt that she had received a severe mental jolt. She thought in exclamation points. A boy! Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert of all people adopting a boy! From an orphan asylum! Well, the world was certainly turning upside down! She would be surprised at nothing after this! Nothing!

“What on earth put such a notion into your head?” she demanded disapprovingly.

This had been done without her advice being asked, and must perforce be disapproved.

“Well, we’ve been thinking about it for some time — all winter in fact,” returned Marilla. “Mrs. Alexander Spencer was up here one day before Christmas and she said she was going to get a little girl from the asylum over in Hopeton in the spring. Her cousin lives there and Mrs. Spencer has visited here and knows all about it. So Matthew and I have talked it over off and on ever since. We thought we’d get a boy. Matthew is getting up in years, you know — he’s sixty — and he isn’t so spry as he once was. His heart troubles him a good deal. And you know how desperate hard it’s got to be to get hired help. There’s never anybody to be had but those stupid, half-grown little French boys; and as soon as you do get one broke into

your ways and taught something he's up and off to the lobster canneries or the States. At first Matthew suggested getting a Home boy. But I said 'no' flat to that. 'They may be all right — I'm not saying they're not — but no London street Arabs for me,' I said. 'Give me a native born at least. There'll be a risk, no matter who we get. But I'll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born Canadian.' So in the end we decided to ask Mrs. Spencer to pick us out one when she went over to get her little girl. We heard last week she was going, so we sent her word by Richard Spencer's folks at Carmody to bring us a smart, likely boy of about ten or eleven. We decided that would be the best age — old enough to be of some use in doing chores right off and young enough to be trained up proper. We mean to give him a good home and schooling. We had a telegram from Mrs. Alexander Spencer today — the mailman brought it from the station — saying they were coming on the five-thirty train tonight. So Matthew went to Bright River to meet him. Mrs. Spencer will drop him off there. Of course she goes on to White Sands station herself."

Mrs. Rachel prided herself on always speaking her mind; she proceeded to speak it now, having adjusted her mental attitude to this amazing piece of news.

"Well, Marilla, I'll just tell you plain that I think you're doing a mighty foolish thing — a risky thing, that's what. You don't know what you're getting. You're bringing a strange child into your house and home and you don't know a single thing about him nor what his disposition is like nor what sort of parents he had nor how he's likely to turn out. Why, it was only last week I read in the paper how a man and his wife up west of the Island took a boy out of an orphan asylum and he set fire to the house at night — set it ON PURPOSE, Marilla — and nearly burnt them to a crisp in their beds. And I know another case where an adopted boy used to suck the eggs — they couldn't break him of it. If you had asked my advice in the matter — which you didn't do, Marilla — I'd have said for mercy's sake not to think of such a thing, that's what."

This Job's comforting seemed neither to offend nor to alarm Marilla. She knitted steadily on.

“I don’t deny there’s something in what you say, Rachel. I’ve had some qualms myself. But Matthew was terrible set on it. I could see that, so I gave in. It’s so seldom Matthew sets his mind on anything that when he does I always feel it’s my duty to give in. And as for the risk, there’s risks in pretty near everything a body does in this world. There’s risks in people’s having children of their own if it comes to that — they don’t always turn out well. And then Nova Scotia is right close to the Island. It isn’t as if we were getting him from England or the States. He can’t be much different from ourselves.”

“Well, I hope it will turn out all right,” said Mrs. Rachel in a tone that plainly indicated her painful doubts. “Only don’t say I didn’t warn you if he burns Green Gables down or puts strychnine in the well — I heard of a case over in New Brunswick where an orphan asylum child did that and the whole family died in fearful agonies. Only, it was a girl in that instance.”

“Well, we’re not getting a girl,” said Marilla, as if poisoning wells were a purely feminine accomplishment and not to be dreaded in the case of a boy. “I’d never dream of taking a girl to bring up. I wonder at Mrs. Alexander Spencer for doing it. But there, SHE wouldn’t shrink from adopting a whole orphan asylum if she took it into her head.”

Mrs. Rachel would have liked to stay until Matthew came home with his imported orphan. But reflecting that it would be a good two hours at least before his arrival she concluded to go up the road to Robert Bell’s and tell the news. It would certainly make a sensation second to none, and Mrs. Rachel dearly loved to make a sensation. So she took herself away, somewhat to Marilla’s relief, for the latter felt her doubts and fears reviving under the influence of Mrs. Rachel’s pessimism.

“Well, of all things that ever were or will be!” ejaculated Mrs. Rachel when she was safely out in the lane. “It does really seem as if I must be dreaming. Well, I’m sorry for that poor young one and no mistake. Matthew and Marilla don’t know anything about children and they’ll expect him to be wiser and steadier than his own grandfather, if so be’s he ever had a grandfather, which is doubtful. It seems uncanny to think of a child at Green Gables somehow; there’s never been one there, for Matthew

and Marilla were grown up when the new house was built — if they ever WERE children, which is hard to believe when one looks at them. I wouldn't be in that orphan's shoes for anything. My, but I pity him, that's what."

So said Mrs. Rachel to the wild rose bushes out of the fulness of her heart; but if she could have seen the child who was waiting patiently at the Bright River station at that very moment her pity would have been still deeper and more profound.

CHAPTER II.

Matthew Cuthbert is surprised

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Matthew Cuthbert and the sorrel mare jogged comfortably over the eight miles to Bright River. It was a pretty road, running along between snug farmsteads, with now and again a bit of balsamy fir wood to drive through or a hollow where wild plums hung out their filmy bloom. The air was sweet with the breath of many apple orchards and the meadows sloped away in the distance to horizon mists of pearl and purple; while

“The little birds sang as if it were

The one day of summer in all the year.”

Matthew enjoyed the drive after his own fashion, except during the moments when he met women and had to nod to them — for in Prince Edward island you are supposed to nod to all and sundry you meet on the road whether you know them or not.

Matthew dreaded all women except Marilla and Mrs. Rachel; he had an uncomfortable feeling that the mysterious creatures were secretly laughing at him. He may have been quite right in thinking so, for he was an odd-looking personage, with an ungainly figure and long iron-gray hair that touched his stooping shoulders, and a full, soft brown beard which he had worn ever since he was twenty. In fact, he had looked at twenty very much as he looked at sixty, lacking a little of the grayness.

When he reached Bright River there was no sign of any train; he thought he was too early, so he tied his horse in the yard of the small Bright River hotel and went over to the station house. The long platform was almost deserted; the only living creature in sight being a girl who was sitting on a pile of shingles at the extreme end. Matthew, barely noting that it WAS a

girl, sidled past her as quickly as possible without looking at her. Had he looked he could hardly have failed to notice the tense rigidity and expectation of her attitude and expression. She was sitting there waiting for something or somebody and, since sitting and waiting was the only thing to do just then, she sat and waited with all her might and main.

Matthew encountered the stationmaster locking up the ticket office preparatory to going home for supper, and asked him if the five-thirty train would soon be along.

“The five-thirty train has been in and gone half an hour ago,” answered that brisk official. “But there was a passenger dropped off for you — a little girl. She’s sitting out there on the shingles. I asked her to go into the ladies’ waiting room, but she informed me gravely that she preferred to stay outside. ‘There was more scope for imagination,’ she said. She’s a case, I should say.”

“I’m not expecting a girl,” said Matthew blankly. “It’s a boy I’ve come for. He should be here. Mrs. Alexander Spencer was to bring him over from Nova Scotia for me.”

The stationmaster whistled.

“Guess there’s some mistake,” he said. “Mrs. Spencer came off the train with that girl and gave her into my charge. Said you and your sister were adopting her from an orphan asylum and that you would be along for her presently. That’s all I know about it — and I haven’t got any more orphans concealed hereabouts.”

“I don’t understand,” said Matthew helplessly, wishing that Marilla was at hand to cope with the situation.

“Well, you’d better question the girl,” said the stationmaster carelessly. “I dare say she’ll be able to explain — she’s got a tongue of her own, that’s certain. Maybe they were out of boys of the brand you wanted.”

He walked jauntily away, being hungry, and the unfortunate Matthew was left to do that which was harder for him than bearding a lion in its den —

walk up to a girl — a strange girl — an orphan girl — and demand of her why she wasn't a boy. Matthew groaned in spirit as he turned about and shuffled gently down the platform towards her.

She had been watching him ever since he had passed her and she had her eyes on him now. Matthew was not looking at her and would not have seen what she was really like if he had been, but an ordinary observer would have seen this: A child of about eleven, garbed in a very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish-gray wincey. She wore a faded brown sailor hat and beneath the hat, extending down her back, were two braids of very thick, decidedly red hair. Her face was small, white and thin, also much freckled; her mouth was large and so were her eyes, which looked green in some lights and moods and gray in others.

So far, the ordinary observer; an extraordinary observer might have seen that the chin was very pointed and pronounced; that the big eyes were full of spirit and vivacity; that the mouth was sweet-lipped and expressive; that the forehead was broad and full; in short, our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray woman-child of whom shy Matthew Cuthbert was so ludicrously afraid.

Matthew, however, was spared the ordeal of speaking first, for as soon as she concluded that he was coming to her she stood up, grasping with one thin brown hand the handle of a shabby, old-fashioned carpet-bag; the other she held out to him.

"I suppose you are Mr. Matthew Cuthbert of Green Gables?" she said in a peculiarly clear, sweet voice. "I'm very glad to see you. I was beginning to be afraid you weren't coming for me and I was imagining all the things that might have happened to prevent you. I had made up my mind that if you didn't come for me tonight I'd go down the track to that big wild cherry-tree at the bend, and climb up into it to stay all night. I wouldn't be a bit afraid, and it would be lovely to sleep in a wild cherry-tree all white with bloom in the moonshine, don't you think? You could imagine you were dwelling in marble halls, couldn't you? And I was quite sure you would come for me in the morning, if you didn't tonight."

Matthew had taken the scrawny little hand awkwardly in his; then and there he decided what to do. He could not tell this child with the glowing eyes that there had been a mistake; he would take her home and let Marilla do that. She couldn't be left at Bright River anyhow, no matter what mistake had been made, so all questions and explanations might as well be deferred until he was safely back at Green Gables.

"I'm sorry I was late," he said shyly. "Come along. The horse is over in the yard. Give me your bag."

"Oh, I can carry it," the child responded cheerfully. "It isn't heavy. I've got all my worldly goods in it, but it isn't heavy. And if it isn't carried in just a certain way the handle pulls out — so I'd better keep it because I know the exact knack of it. It's an extremely old carpet-bag. Oh, I'm very glad you've come, even if it would have been nice to sleep in a wild cherry-tree. We've got to drive a long piece, haven't we? Mrs. Spencer said it was eight miles. I'm glad because I love driving. Oh, it seems so wonderful that I'm going to live with you and belong to you. I've never belonged to anybody — not really. But the asylum was the worst. I've only been in it four months, but that was enough. I don't suppose you ever were an orphan in an asylum, so you can't possibly understand what it is like. It's worse than anything you could imagine. Mrs. Spencer said it was wicked of me to talk like that, but I didn't mean to be wicked. It's so easy to be wicked without knowing it, isn't it? They were good, you know — the asylum people. But there is so little scope for the imagination in an asylum — only just in the other orphans. It was pretty interesting to imagine things about them — to imagine that perhaps the girl who sat next to you was really the daughter of a belted earl, who had been stolen away from her parents in her infancy by a cruel nurse who died before she could confess. I used to lie awake at nights and imagine things like that, because I didn't have time in the day. I guess that's why I'm so thin — I AM dreadful thin, ain't I? There isn't a pick on my bones. I do love to imagine I'm nice and plump, with dimples in my elbows."

With this Matthew's companion stopped talking, partly because she was out of breath and partly because they had reached the buggy. Not another word did she say until they had left the village and were driving down a

steep little hill, the road part of which had been cut so deeply into the soft soil, that the banks, fringed with blooming wild cherry-trees and slim white birches, were several feet above their heads.

The child put out her hand and broke off a branch of wild plum that brushed against the side of the buggy.

“Isn’t that beautiful? What did that tree, leaning out from the bank, all white and lacy, make you think of?” she asked.

“Well now, I dunno,” said Matthew.

“Why, a bride, of course — a bride all in white with a lovely misty veil. I’ve never seen one, but I can imagine what she would look like. I don’t ever expect to be a bride myself. I’m so homely nobody will ever want to marry me — unless it might be a foreign missionary. I suppose a foreign missionary mightn’t be very particular. But I do hope that some day I shall have a white dress. That is my highest ideal of earthly bliss. I just love pretty clothes. And I’ve never had a pretty dress in my life that I can remember — but of course it’s all the more to look forward to, isn’t it? And then I can imagine that I’m dressed gorgeously. This morning when I left the asylum I felt so ashamed because I had to wear this horrid old wincey dress. All the orphans had to wear them, you know. A merchant in Hopeton last winter donated three hundred yards of wincey to the asylum. Some people said it was because he couldn’t sell it, but I’d rather believe that it was out of the kindness of his heart, wouldn’t you? When we got on the train I felt as if everybody must be looking at me and pitying me. But I just went to work and imagined that I had on the most beautiful pale blue silk dress — because when you ARE imagining you might as well imagine something worth while — and a big hat all flowers and nodding plumes, and a gold watch, and kid gloves and boots. I felt cheered up right away and I enjoyed my trip to the Island with all my might. I wasn’t a bit sick coming over in the boat. Neither was Mrs. Spencer although she generally is. She said she hadn’t time to get sick, watching to see that I didn’t fall overboard. She said she never saw the beat of me for prowling about. But if it kept her from being seasick it’s a mercy I did prowl, isn’t it? And I wanted to see everything that was to be seen on that boat, because I didn’t know whether I’d ever have another opportunity. Oh, there are a lot more

cherry-trees all in bloom! This Island is the bloomiest place. I just love it already, and I'm so glad I'm going to live here. I've always heard that Prince Edward Island was the prettiest place in the world, and I used to imagine I was living here, but I never really expected I would. It's delightful when your imaginations come true, isn't it? But those red roads are so funny. When we got into the train at Charlottetown and the red roads began to flash past I asked Mrs. Spencer what made them red and she said she didn't know and for pity's sake not to ask her any more questions. She said I must have asked her a thousand already. I suppose I had, too, but how you going to find out about things if you don't ask questions? And what DOES make the roads red?"

"Well now, I dunno," said Matthew.

"Well, that is one of the things to find out sometime. Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive — it's such an interesting world. It wouldn't be half so interesting if we know all about everything, would it? There'd be no scope for imagination then, would there? But am I talking too much? People are always telling me I do. Would you rather I didn't talk? If you say so I'll stop. I can STOP when I make up my mind to it, although it's difficult."

Matthew, much to his own surprise, was enjoying himself. Like most quiet folks he liked talkative people when they were willing to do the talking themselves and did not expect him to keep up his end of it. But he had never expected to enjoy the society of a little girl. Women were bad enough in all conscience, but little girls were worse. He detested the way they had of sidling past him timidly, with sidewise glances, as if they expected him to gobble them up at a mouthful if they ventured to say a word. That was the Avonlea type of well-bred little girl. But this freckled witch was very different, and although he found it rather difficult for his slower intelligence to keep up with her brisk mental processes he thought that he "kind of liked her chatter." So he said as shyly as usual:

"Oh, you can talk as much as you like. I don't mind."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I know you and I are going to get along together fine. It's such a relief to talk when one wants to and not be told that children

should be seen and not heard. I've had that said to me a million times if I have once. And people laugh at me because I use big words. But if you have big ideas you have to use big words to express them, haven't you?"

"Well now, that seems reasonable," said Matthew.

"Mrs. Spencer said that my tongue must be hung in the middle. But it isn't — it's firmly fastened at one end. Mrs. Spencer said your place was named Green Gables. I asked her all about it. And she said there were trees all around it. I was gladder than ever. I just love trees. And there weren't any at all about the asylum, only a few poor weeny-teeny things out in front with little whitewashed cagey things about them. They just looked like orphans themselves, those trees did. It used to make me want to cry to look at them. I used to say to them, 'Oh, you POOR little things! If you were out in a great big woods with other trees all around you and little mosses and Junebells growing over your roots and a brook not far away and birds singing in you branches, you could grow, couldn't you? But you can't where you are. I know just exactly how you feel, little trees.' I felt sorry to leave them behind this morning. You do get so attached to things like that, don't you? Is there a brook anywhere near Green Gables? I forgot to ask Mrs. Spencer that."

"Well now, yes, there's one right below the house."

"Fancy. It's always been one of my dreams to live near a brook. I never expected I would, though. Dreams don't often come true, do they? Wouldn't it be nice if they did? But just now I feel pretty nearly perfectly happy. I can't feel exactly perfectly happy because — well, what color would you call this?"

She twitched one of her long glossy braids over her thin shoulder and held it up before Matthew's eyes. Matthew was not used to deciding on the tints of ladies' tresses, but in this case there couldn't be much doubt.

"It's red, ain't it?" he said.

The girl let the braid drop back with a sigh that seemed to come from her very toes and to exhale forth all the sorrows of the ages.

“Yes, it’s red,” she said resignedly. “Now you see why I can’t be perfectly happy. Nobody could who has red hair. I don’t mind the other things so much — the freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. I can imagine them away. I can imagine that I have a beautiful roseleaf complexion and lovely starry violet eyes. But I CANNOT imagine that red hair away. I do my best. I think to myself, ‘Now my hair is a glorious black, black as the raven’s wing.’ But all the time I KNOW it is just plain red and it breaks my heart. It will be my lifelong sorrow. I read of a girl once in a novel who had a lifelong sorrow but it wasn’t red hair. Her hair was pure gold rippling back from her alabaster brow. What is an alabaster brow? I never could find out. Can you tell me?”

“Well now, I’m afraid I can’t,” said Matthew, who was getting a little dizzy. He felt as he had once felt in his rash youth when another boy had enticed him on the merrygo-round at a picnic.

“Well, whatever it was it must have been something nice because she was divinely beautiful. Have you ever imagined what it must feel like to be divinely beautiful?”

“Well now, no, I haven’t,” confessed Matthew ingenuously.

“I have, often. Which would you rather be if you had the choice — divinely beautiful or dazzlingly clever or angelically good?”

“Well now, I — I don’t know exactly.”

“Neither do I. I can never decide. But it doesn’t make much real difference for it isn’t likely I’ll ever be either. It’s certain I’ll never be angelically good. Mrs. Spencer says — oh, Mr. Cuthbert! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!!!”

That was not what Mrs. Spencer had said; neither had the child tumbled out of the buggy nor had Matthew done anything astonishing. They had simply rounded a curve in the road and found themselves in the “Avenue.”

The “Avenue,” so called by the Newbridge people, was a stretch of road four or five hundred yards long, completely arched over with huge,

widespreading apple-trees, planted years ago by an eccentric old farmer. Overhead was one long canopy of snowy fragrant bloom. Below the boughs the air was full of a purple twilight and far ahead a glimpse of painted sunset sky shone like a great rose window at the end of a cathedral aisle.

Its beauty seemed to strike the child dumb. She leaned back in the buggy, her thin hands clasped before her, her face lifted rapturously to the white splendor above. Even when they had passed out and were driving down the long slope to Newbridge she never moved or spoke. Still with rapt face she gazed afar into the sunset west, with eyes that saw visions trooping splendidly across that glowing background. Through Newbridge, a bustling little village where dogs barked at them and small boys hooted and curious faces peered from the windows, they drove, still in silence. When three more miles had dropped away behind them the child had not spoken. She could keep silence, it was evident, as energetically as she could talk.

“I guess you’re feeling pretty tired and hungry,” Matthew ventured to say at last, accounting for her long visitation of dumbness with the only reason he could think of. “But we haven’t very far to go now — only another mile.”

She came out of her reverie with a deep sigh and looked at him with the dreamy gaze of a soul that had been wondering afar, startled.

“Oh, Mr. Cuthbert,” she whispered, “that place we came through — that white place — what was it?”

“Well now, you must mean the Avenue,” said Matthew after a few moments’ profound reflection. “It is a kind of pretty place.”

“Pretty? Oh, PRETTY doesn’t seem the right word to use. Nor beautiful, either. They don’t go far enough. Oh, it was wonderful — wonderful. It’s the first thing I ever saw that couldn’t be improved upon by imagination. It just satisfies me here” — she put one hand on her breast—“it made a queer funny ache and yet it was a pleasant ache. Did you ever have an ache like that, Mr. Cuthbert?”

“Well now, I just can’t recollect that I ever had.”

“I have it lots of time — whenever I see anything royally beautiful. But they shouldn’t call that lovely place the Avenue. There is no meaning in a name like that. They should call it — let me see — the White Way of Delight. Isn’t that a nice imaginative name? When I don’t like the name of a place or a person I always imagine a new one and always think of them so. There was a girl at the asylum whose name was Hepzibah Jenkins, but I always imagined her as Rosalia DeVere. Other people may call that place the Avenue, but I shall always call it the White Way of Delight. Have we really only another mile to go before we get home? I’m glad and I’m sorry. I’m sorry because this drive has been so pleasant and I’m always sorry when pleasant things end. Something still pleasanter may come after, but you can never be sure. And it’s so often the case that it isn’t pleasanter. That has been my experience anyhow. But I’m glad to think of getting home. You see, I’ve never had a real home since I can remember. It gives me that pleasant ache again just to think of coming to a really truly home. Oh, isn’t that pretty!”

They had driven over the crest of a hill. Below them was a pond, looking almost like a river so long and winding was it. A bridge spanned it midway and from there to its lower end, where an amber-hued belt of sandhills shut it in from the dark blue gulf beyond, the water was a glory of many shifting hues — the most spiritual shadings of crocus and rose and ethereal green, with other elusive tintings for which no name has ever been found. Above the bridge the pond ran up into fringing groves of fir and maple and lay all darkly translucent in their wavering shadows. Here and there a wild plum leaned out from the bank like a white-clad girl tiptoeing to her own reflection. From the marsh at the head of the pond came the clear, mournfully-sweet chorus of the frogs. There was a little gray house peering around a white apple orchard on a slope beyond and, although it was not yet quite dark, a light was shining from one of its windows.

“That’s Barry’s pond,” said Matthew.

“Oh, I don’t like that name, either. I shall call it — let me see — the Lake of Shining Waters. Yes, that is the right name for it. I know because of the

thrill. When I hit on a name that suits exactly it gives me a thrill. Do things ever give you a thrill?"

Matthew ruminated.

"Well now, yes. It always kind of gives me a thrill to see them ugly white grubs that spade up in the cucumber beds. I hate the look of them."

"Oh, I don't think that can be exactly the same kind of a thrill. Do you think it can? There doesn't seem to be much connection between grubs and lakes of shining waters, does there? But why do other people call it Barry's pond?"

"I reckon because Mr. Barry lives up there in that house. Orchard Slope's the name of his place. If it wasn't for that big bush behind it you could see Green Gables from here. But we have to go over the bridge and round by the road, so it's near half a mile further."

"Has Mr. Barry any little girls? Well, not so very little either — about my size."

"He's got one about eleven. Her name is Diana."

"Oh!" with a long indrawing of breath. "What a perfectly lovely name!"

"Well now, I dunno. There's something dreadful heathenish about it, seems to me. I'd rather Jane or Mary or some sensible name like that. But when Diana was born there was a schoolmaster boarding there and they gave him the naming of her and he called her Diana."

"I wish there had been a schoolmaster like that around when I was born, then. Oh, here we are at the bridge. I'm going to shut my eyes tight. I'm always afraid going over bridges. I can't help imagining that perhaps just as we get to the middle, they'll crumple up like a jack-knife and nip us. So I shut my eyes. But I always have to open them for all when I think we're getting near the middle. Because, you see, if the bridge DID crumple up I'd want to SEE it crumple. What a jolly rumble it makes! I always like the rumble part of it. Isn't it splendid there are so many things to like in

this world? There we're over. Now I'll look back. Good night, dear Lake of Shining Waters. I always say good night to the things I love, just as I would to people. I think they like it. That water looks as if it was smiling at me."

When they had driven up the further hill and around a corner Matthew said:

"We're pretty near home now. That's Green Gables over—"

"Oh, don't tell me," she interrupted breathlessly, catching at his partially raised arm and shutting her eyes that she might not see his gesture. "Let me guess. I'm sure I'll guess right."

She opened her eyes and looked about her. They were on the crest of a hill. The sun had set some time since, but the landscape was still clear in the mellow afterlight. To the west a dark church spire rose up against a marigold sky. Below was a little valley and beyond a long, gently-rising slope with snug farmsteads scattered along it. From one to another the child's eyes darted, eager and wistful. At last they lingered on one away to the left, far back from the road, dimly white with blossoming trees in the twilight of the surrounding woods. Over it, in the stainless southwest sky, a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise.

"That's it, isn't it?" she said, pointing.

Matthew slapped the reins on the sorrel's back delightedly.

"Well now, you've guessed it! But I reckon Mrs. Spencer described it so's you could tell."

"No, she didn't — really she didn't. All she said might just as well have been about most of those other places. I hadn't any real idea what it looked like. But just as soon as I saw it I felt it was home. Oh, it seems as if I must be in a dream. Do you know, my arm must be black and blue from the elbow up, for I've pinched myself so many times today. Every little while a horrible sickening feeling would come over me and I'd be so afraid it was all a dream. Then I'd pinch myself to see if it was real —

until suddenly I remembered that even supposing it was only a dream I'd better go on dreaming as long as I could; so I stopped pinching. But it IS real and we're nearly home."

With a sigh of rapture she relapsed into silence. Matthew stirred uneasily. He felt glad that it would be Marilla and not he who would have to tell this waif of the world that the home she longed for was not to be hers after all. They drove over Lynde's Hollow, where it was already quite dark, but not so dark that Mrs. Rachel could not see them from her window vantage, and up the hill and into the long lane of Green Gables. By the time they arrived at the house Matthew was shrinking from the approaching revelation with an energy he did not understand. It was not of Marilla or himself he was thinking of the trouble this mistake was probably going to make for them, but of the child's disappointment. When he thought of that rapt light being quenched in her eyes he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was going to assist at murdering something — much the same feeling that came over him when he had to kill a lamb or calf or any other innocent little creature.

The yard was quite dark as they turned into it and the poplar leaves were rustling silkily all round it.

"Listen to the trees talking in their sleep," she whispered, as he lifted her to the ground. "What nice dreams they must have!"

Then, holding tightly to the carpet-bag which contained "all her worldly goods," she followed him into the house.

CHAPTER III.

Marilla Cuthbert is Surprised

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Marilla came briskly forward as Matthew opened the door. But when her eyes fell of the odd little figure in the stiff, ugly dress, with the long braids of red hair and the eager, luminous eyes, she stopped short in amazement.

“Matthew Cuthbert, who’s that?” she ejaculated. “Where is the boy?”

“There wasn’t any boy,” said Matthew wretchedly. “There was only HER.”

He nodded at the child, remembering that he had never even asked her name.

“No boy! But there MUST have been a boy,” insisted Marilla. “We sent word to Mrs. Spencer to bring a boy.”

“Well, she didn’t. She brought HER. I asked the stationmaster. And I had to bring her home. She couldn’t be left there, no matter where the mistake had come in.”

“Well, this is a pretty piece of business!” ejaculated Marilla.

During this dialogue the child had remained silent, her eyes roving from one to the other, all the animation fading out of her face. Suddenly she seemed to grasp the full meaning of what had been said. Dropping her precious carpet-bag she sprang forward a step and clasped her hands.

“You don’t want me!” she cried. “You don’t want me because I’m not a boy! I might have expected it. Nobody ever did want me. I might have known it was all too beautiful to last. I might have known nobody really did want me. Oh, what shall I do? I’m going to burst into tears!”

Burst into tears she did. Sitting down on a chair by the table, flinging her arms out upon it, and burying her face in them, she proceeded to cry stormily. Marilla and Matthew looked at each other deprecatingly across the stove. Neither of them knew what to say or do. Finally Marilla stepped lamely into the breach.

“Well, well, there’s no need to cry so about it.”

“Yes, there IS need!” The child raised her head quickly, revealing a tearstained face and trembling lips. “YOU would cry, too, if you were an orphan and had come to a place you thought was going to be home and found that they didn’t want you because you weren’t a boy. Oh, this is the most TRAGICAL thing that ever happened to me!”

Something like a reluctant smile, rather rusty from long disuse, mellowed Marilla’s grim expression.

“Well, don’t cry any more. We’re not going to turn you out-of-doors tonight. You’ll have to stay here until we investigate this affair. What’s your name?”

The child hesitated for a moment.

“Will you please call me Cordelia?” she said eagerly.

“CALL you Cordelia? Is that your name?”

“No-o-o, it’s not exactly my name, but I would love to be called Cordelia. It’s such a perfectly elegant name.”

“I don’t know what on earth you mean. If Cordelia isn’t your name, what is?”

“Anne Shirley,” reluctantly faltered forth the owner of that name, “but, oh, please do call me Cordelia. It can’t matter much to you what you call me if I’m only going to be here a little while, can it? And Anne is such an unromantic name.”

“Unromantic fiddlesticks!” said the unsympathetic Marilla. “Anne is a real good plain sensible name. You’ve no need to be ashamed of it.”

“Oh, I’m not ashamed of it,” explained Anne, “only I like Cordelia better. I’ve always imagined that my name was Cordelia — at least, I always have of late years. When I was young I used to imagine it was Geraldine, but I like Cordelia better now. But if you call me Anne please call me Anne spelled with an E.”

“What difference does it make how it’s spelled?” asked Marilla with another rusty smile as she picked up the teapot.

“Oh, it makes SUCH a difference. It LOOKS so much nicer. When you hear a name pronounced can’t you always see it in your mind, just as if it was printed out? I can; and A-n-n looks dreadful, but A-n-n-e looks so much more distinguished. If you’ll only call me Anne spelled with an E I shall try to reconcile myself to not being called Cordelia.”

“Very well, then, Anne spelled with an E, can you tell us how this mistake came to be made? We sent word to Mrs. Spencer to bring us a boy. Were there no boys at the asylum?”

“Oh, yes, there was an abundance of them. But Mrs. Spencer said **DISTINCTLY** that you wanted a girl about eleven years old. And the matron said she thought I would do. You don’t know how delighted I was. I couldn’t sleep all last night for joy. Oh,” she added reproachfully, turning to Matthew, “why didn’t you tell me at the station that you didn’t want me and leave me there? If I hadn’t seen the White Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters it wouldn’t be so hard.”

“What on earth does she mean?” demanded Marilla, staring at Matthew.

“She — she’s just referring to some conversation we had on the road,” said Matthew hastily. “I’m going out to put the mare in, Marilla. Have tea ready when I come back.”

“Did Mrs. Spencer bring anybody over besides you?” continued Marilla when Matthew had gone out.

“She brought Lily Jones for herself. Lily is only five years old and she is very beautiful and had nut-brown hair. If I was very beautiful and had nut-brown hair would you keep me?”

“No. We want a boy to help Matthew on the farm. A girl would be of no use to us. Take off your hat. I’ll lay it and your bag on the hall table.”

Anne took off her hat meekly. Matthew came back presently and they sat down to supper. But Anne could not eat. In vain she nibbled at the bread and butter and pecked at the crab-apple preserve out of the little scalloped glass dish by her plate. She did not really make any headway at all.

“You’re not eating anything,” said Marilla sharply, eyeing her as if it were a serious shortcoming. Anne sighed.

“I can’t. I’m in the depths of despair. Can you eat when you are in the depths of despair?”

“I’ve never been in the depths of despair, so I can’t say,” responded Marilla.

“Weren’t you? Well, did you ever try to IMAGINE you were in the depths of despair?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Then I don’t think you can understand what it’s like. It’s very uncomfortable feeling indeed. When you try to eat a lump comes right up in your throat and you can’t swallow anything, not even if it was a chocolate caramel. I had one chocolate caramel once two years ago and it was simply delicious. I’ve often dreamed since then that I had a lot of chocolate caramels, but I always wake up just when I’m going to eat them. I do hope you won’t be offended because I can’t eat. Everything is extremely nice, but still I cannot eat.”

“I guess she’s tired,” said Matthew, who hadn’t spoken since his return from the barn. “Best put her to bed, Marilla.”

Marilla had been wondering where Anne should be put to bed. She had prepared a couch in the kitchen chamber for the desired and expected boy. But, although it was neat and clean, it did not seem quite the thing to put a girl there somehow. But the spare room was out of the question for such a stray waif, so there remained only the east gable room. Marilla lighted a candle and told Anne to follow her, which Anne spiritlessly did, taking her hat and carpet-bag from the hall table as she passed. The hall was fearsomely clean; the little gable chamber in which she presently found herself seemed still cleaner.

Marilla set the candle on a three-legged, three-cornered table and turned down the bedclothes.

“I suppose you have a nightgown?” she questioned.

Anne nodded.

“Yes, I have two. The matron of the asylum made them for me. They’re fearfully skimpy. There is never enough to go around in an asylum, so things are always skimpy — at least in a poor asylum like ours. I hate skimpy nightdresses. But one can dream just as well in them as in lovely trailing ones, with frills around the neck, that’s one consolation.”

“Well, undress as quick as you can and go to bed. I’ll come back in a few minutes for the candle. I daren’t trust you to put it out yourself. You’d likely set the place on fire.”

When Marilla had gone Anne looked around her wistfully. The whitewashed walls were so painfully bare and staring that she thought they must ache over their own bareness. The floor was bare, too, except for a round braided mat in the middle such as Anne had never seen before. In one corner was the bed, a high, old-fashioned one, with four dark, low-turned posts. In the other corner was the aforesaid three-corner table adorned with a fat, red velvet pincushion hard enough to turn the point of the most adventurous pin. Above it hung a little six-by-eight mirror. Midway between table and bed was the window, with an icy white muslin frill over it, and opposite it was the washstand. The whole apartment was of a rigidity not to be described in words, but which sent a shiver to the

very marrow of Anne's bones. With a sob she hastily discarded her garments, put on the skimpy nightgown and sprang into bed where she burrowed face downward into the pillow and pulled the clothes over her head. When Marilla came up for the light various skimpy articles of raiment scattered most untidily over the floor and a certain tempestuous appearance of the bed were the only indications of any presence save her own.

She deliberately picked up Anne's clothes, placed them neatly on a prim yellow chair, and then, taking up the candle, went over to the bed.

"Good night," she said, a little awkwardly, but not unkindly.

Anne's white face and big eyes appeared over the bedclothes with a startling suddenness.

"How can you call it a GOOD night when you know it must be the very worst night I've ever had?" she said reproachfully.

Then she dived down into invisibility again.

Marilla went slowly down to the kitchen and proceeded to wash the supper dishes. Matthew was smoking — a sure sign of perturbation of mind. He seldom smoked, for Marilla set her face against it as a filthy habit; but at certain times and seasons he felt driven to it and then Marilla winked at the practice, realizing that a mere man must have some vent for his emotions.

"Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish," she said wrathfully. "This is what comes of sending word instead of going ourselves. Richard Spencer's folks have twisted that message somehow. One of us will have to drive over and see Mrs. Spencer tomorrow, that's certain. This girl will have to be sent back to the asylum."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Matthew reluctantly.

"You SUPPOSE so! Don't you know it?"

“Well now, she’s a real nice little thing, Marilla. It’s kind of a pity to send her back when she’s so set on staying here.”

“Matthew Cuthbert, you don’t mean to say you think we ought to keep her!”

Marilla’s astonishment could not have been greater if Matthew had expressed a predilection for standing on his head.

“Well, now, no, I suppose not — not exactly,” stammered Matthew, uncomfortably driven into a corner for his precise meaning. “I suppose — we could hardly be expected to keep her.”

“I should say not. What good would she be to us?”

“We might be some good to her,” said Matthew suddenly and unexpectedly.

“Matthew Cuthbert, I believe that child has bewitched you! I can see as plain as plain that you want to keep her.”

“Well now, she’s a real interesting little thing,” persisted Matthew. “You should have heard her talk coming from the station.”

“Oh, she can talk fast enough. I saw that at once. It’s nothing in her favour, either. I don’t like children who have so much to say. I don’t want an orphan girl and if I did she isn’t the style I’d pick out. There’s something I don’t understand about her. No, she’s got to be despatched straightway back to where she came from.”

“I could hire a French boy to help me,” said Matthew, “and she’d be company for you.”

“I’m not suffering for company,” said Marilla shortly. “And I’m not going to keep her.”

“Well now, it’s just as you say, of course, Marilla,” said Matthew rising and putting his pipe away. “I’m going to bed.”

To bed went Matthew. And to bed, when she had put her dishes away, went Marilla, frowning most resolutely. And upstairs, in the east gable, a lonely, heart-hungry, friendless child cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

Morning at Green Gables

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It was broad daylight when Anne awoke and sat up in bed, staring confusedly at the window through which a flood of cheery sunshine was pouring and outside of which something white and feathery waved across glimpses of blue sky.

For a moment she could not remember where she was. First came a delightful thrill, as something very pleasant; then a horrible remembrance. This was Green Gables and they didn't want her because she wasn't a boy!

But it was morning and, yes, it was a cherry-tree in full bloom outside of her window. With a bound she was out of bed and across the floor. She pushed up the sash — it went up stiffly and creakily, as if it hadn't been opened for a long time, which was the case; and it stuck so tight that nothing was needed to hold it up.

Anne dropped on her knees and gazed out into the June morning, her eyes glistening with delight. Oh, wasn't it beautiful? Wasn't it a lovely place? Suppose she wasn't really going to stay here! She would imagine she was. There was scope for imagination here.

A huge cherry-tree grew outside, so close that its boughs tapped against the house, and it was so thickset with blossoms that hardly a leaf was to be seen. On both sides of the house was a big orchard, one of apple-trees and one of cherry-trees, also showered over with blossoms; and their grass was all sprinkled with dandelions. In the garden below were lilac-trees purple with flowers, and their dizzily sweet fragrance drifted up to the window on the morning wind.

Below the garden a green field lush with clover sloped down to the hollow where the brook ran and where scores of white birches grew, upspringing airily out of an undergrowth suggestive of delightful possibilities in ferns and mosses and woodsy things generally. Beyond it was a hill, green and feathery with spruce and fir; there was a gap in it where the gray gable end of the little house she had seen from the other side of the Lake of Shining Waters was visible.

Off to the left were the big barns and beyond them, away down over green, low-sloping fields, was a sparkling blue glimpse of sea.

Anne's beauty-loving eyes lingered on it all, taking everything greedily in. She had looked on so many unlovely places in her life, poor child; but this was as lovely as anything she had ever dreamed.

She knelt there, lost to everything but the loveliness around her, until she was startled by a hand on her shoulder. Marilla had come in unheard by the small dreamer.

"It's time you were dressed," she said curtly.

Marilla really did not know how to talk to the child, and her uncomfortable ignorance made her crisp and curt when she did not mean to be.

Anne stood up and drew a long breath.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful?" she said, waving her hand comprehensively at the good world outside.

"It's a big tree," said Marilla, "and it blooms great, but the fruit don't amount to much never — small and wormy."

"Oh, I don't mean just the tree; of course it's lovely — yes, it's **RADIANTLY** lovely — it blooms as if it meant it — but I meant everything, the garden and the orchard and the brook and the woods, the whole big dear world. Don't you feel as if you just loved the world on a morning like this? And I can hear the brook laughing all the way up here.

Have you ever noticed what cheerful things brooks are? They're always laughing. Even in winter-time I've heard them under the ice. I'm so glad there's a brook near Green Gables. Perhaps you think it doesn't make any difference to me when you're not going to keep me, but it does. I shall always like to remember that there is a brook at Green Gables even if I never see it again. If there wasn't a brook I'd be HAUNTED by the uncomfortable feeling that there ought to be one. I'm not in the depths of despair this morning. I never can be in the morning. Isn't it a splendid thing that there are mornings? But I feel very sad. I've just been imagining that it was really me you wanted after all and that I was to stay here for ever and ever. It was a great comfort while it lasted. But the worst of imagining things is that the time comes when you have to stop and that hurts."

"You'd better get dressed and come downstairs and never mind your imaginings," said Marilla as soon as she could get a word in edgewise. "Breakfast is waiting. Wash your face and comb your hair. Leave the window up and turn your bedclothes back over the foot of the bed. Be as smart as you can."

Anne could evidently be smart to some purpose for she was downstairs in ten minutes' time, with her clothes neatly on, her hair brushed and braided, her face washed, and a comfortable consciousness pervading her soul that she had fulfilled all Marilla's requirements. As a matter of fact, however, she had forgotten to turn back the bedclothes.

"I'm pretty hungry this morning," she announced as she slipped into the chair Marilla placed for her. "The world doesn't seem such a howling wilderness as it did last night. I'm so glad it's a sunshiny morning. But I like rainy mornings real well, too. All sorts of mornings are interesting, don't you think? You don't know what's going to happen through the day, and there's so much scope for imagination. But I'm glad it's not rainy today because it's easier to be cheerful and bear up under affliction on a sunshiny day. I feel that I have a good deal to bear up under. It's all very well to read about sorrows and imagine yourself living through them heroically, but it's not so nice when you really come to have them, is it?"

“For pity’s sake hold your tongue,” said Marilla. “You talk entirely too much for a little girl.”

Thereupon Anne held her tongue so obediently and thoroughly that her continued silence made Marilla rather nervous, as if in the presence of something not exactly natural. Matthew also held his tongue, — but this was natural, — so that the meal was a very silent one.

As it progressed Anne became more and more abstracted, eating mechanically, with her big eyes fixed unswervingly and unseeingly on the sky outside the window. This made Marilla more nervous than ever; she had an uncomfortable feeling that while this odd child’s body might be there at the table her spirit was far away in some remote airy cloudland, borne aloft on the wings of imagination. Who would want such a child about the place?

Yet Matthew wished to keep her, of all unaccountable things! Marilla felt that he wanted it just as much this morning as he had the night before, and that he would go on wanting it. That was Matthew’s way — take a whim into his head and cling to it with the most amazing silent persistency — a persistency ten times more potent and effectual in its very silence than if he had talked it out.

When the meal was ended Anne came out of her reverie and offered to wash the dishes.

“Can you wash dishes right?” asked Marilla distrustfully.

“Pretty well. I’m better at looking after children, though. I’ve had so much experience at that. It’s such a pity you haven’t any here for me to look after.”

“I don’t feel as if I wanted any more children to look after than I’ve got at present. YOU’RE problem enough in all conscience. What’s to be done with you I don’t know. Matthew is a most ridiculous man.”

“I think he’s lovely,” said Anne reproachfully. “He is so very sympathetic. He didn’t mind how much I talked — he seemed to like it. I felt that he

was a kindred spirit as soon as ever I saw him.”

“You’re both queer enough, if that’s what you mean by kindred spirits,” said Marilla with a sniff. “Yes, you may wash the dishes. Take plenty of hot water, and be sure you dry them well. I’ve got enough to attend to this morning for I’ll have to drive over to White Sands in the afternoon and see Mrs. Spencer. You’ll come with me and we’ll settle what’s to be done with you. After you’ve finished the dishes go upstairs and make your bed.”

Anne washed the dishes deftly enough, as Marilla who kept a sharp eye on the process, discerned. Later on she made her bed less successfully, for she had never learned the art of wrestling with a feather tick. But it was done somehow and smoothed down; and then Marilla, to get rid of her, told her she might go out-of-doors and amuse herself until dinner time.

Anne flew to the door, face alight, eyes glowing. On the very threshold she stopped short, wheeled about, came back and sat down by the table, light and glow as effectually blotted out as if some one had clapped an extinguisher on her.

“What’s the matter now?” demanded Marilla.

“I don’t dare go out,” said Anne, in the tone of a martyr relinquishing all earthly joys. “If I can’t stay here there is no use in my loving Green Gables. And if I go out there and get acquainted with all those trees and flowers and the orchard and the brook I’ll not be able to help loving it. It’s hard enough now, so I won’t make it any harder. I want to go out so much — everything seems to be calling to me, ‘Anne, Anne, come out to us. Anne, Anne, we want a playmate’ — but it’s better not. There is no use in loving things if you have to be torn from them, is there? And it’s so hard to keep from loving things, isn’t it? That was why I was so glad when I thought I was going to live here. I thought I’d have so many things to love and nothing to hinder me. But that brief dream is over. I am resigned to my fate now, so I don’t think I’ll go out for fear I’ll get unresigned again. What is the name of that geranium on the windowsill, please?”

“That’s the apple-scented geranium.”

“Oh, I don’t mean that sort of a name. I mean just a name you gave it yourself. Didn’t you give it a name? May I give it one then? May I call it — let me see — Bonny would do — may I call it Bonny while I’m here? Oh, do let me!”

“Goodness, I don’t care. But where on earth is the sense of naming a geranium?”

“Oh, I like things to have handles even if they are only geraniums. It makes them seem more like people. How do you know but that it hurts a geranium’s feelings just to be called a geranium and nothing else? You wouldn’t like to be called nothing but a woman all the time. Yes, I shall call it Bonny. I named that cherry-tree outside my bedroom window this morning. I called it Snow Queen because it was so white. Of course, it won’t always be in blossom, but one can imagine that it is, can’t one?”

“I never in all my life saw or heard anything to equal her,” muttered Marilla, beating a retreat down to the cellar after potatoes. “She is kind of interesting as Matthew says. I can feel already that I’m wondering what on earth she’ll say next. She’ll be casting a spell over me, too. She’s cast it over Matthew. That look he gave me when he went out said everything he said or hinted last night over again. I wish he was like other men and would talk things out. A body could answer back then and argue him into reason. But what’s to be done with a man who just LOOKS?”

Anne had relapsed into reverie, with her chin in her hands and her eyes on the sky, when Marilla returned from her cellar pilgrimage. There Marilla left her until the early dinner was on the table.

“I suppose I can have the mare and buggy this afternoon, Matthew?” said Marilla.

Matthew nodded and looked wistfully at Anne. Marilla intercepted the look and said grimly:

“I’m going to drive over to White Sands and settle this thing. I’ll take Anne with me and Mrs. Spencer will probably make arrangements to send

her back to Nova Scotia at once. I'll set your tea out for you and I'll be home in time to milk the cows."

Still Matthew said nothing and Marilla had a sense of having wasted words and breath. There is nothing more aggravating than a man who won't talk back — unless it is a woman who won't.

Matthew hitched the sorrel into the buggy in due time and Marilla and Anne set off. Matthew opened the yard gate for them and as they drove slowly through, he said, to nobody in particular as it seemed:

"Little Jerry Buote from the Creek was here this morning, and I told him I guessed I'd hire him for the summer."

Marilla made no reply, but she hit the unlucky sorrel such a vicious clip with the whip that the fat mare, unused to such treatment, whizzed indignantly down the lane at an alarming pace. Marilla looked back once as the buggy bounced along and saw that aggravating Matthew leaning over the gate, looking wistfully after them.

CHAPTER V.

Anne's History

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“Do you know,” said Anne confidentially, “I’ve made up my mind to enjoy this drive. It’s been my experience that you can nearly always enjoy things if you make up your mind firmly that you will. Of course, you must make it up FIRMLY. I am not going to think about going back to the asylum while we’re having our drive. I’m just going to think about the drive. Oh, look, there’s one little early wild rose out! Isn’t it lovely? Don’t you think it must be glad to be a rose? Wouldn’t it be nice if roses could talk? I’m sure they could tell us such lovely things. And isn’t pink the most bewitching color in the world? I love it, but I can’t wear it. Redheaded people can’t wear pink, not even in imagination. Did you ever know of anybody whose hair was red when she was young, but got to be another color when she grew up?”

“No, I don’t know as I ever did,” said Marilla mercilessly, “and I shouldn’t think it likely to happen in your case either.”

Anne sighed.

“Well, that is another hope gone. ‘My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes.’ That’s a sentence I read in a book once, and I say it over to comfort myself whenever I’m disappointed in anything.”

“I don’t see where the comforting comes in myself,” said Marilla.

“Why, because it sounds so nice and romantic, just as if I were a heroine in a book, you know. I am so fond of romantic things, and a graveyard full of buried hopes is about as romantic a thing as one can imagine isn’t it? I’m rather glad I have one. Are we going across the Lake of Shining Waters today?”

“We’re not going over Barry’s pond, if that’s what you mean by your Lake of Shining Waters. We’re going by the shore road.”

“Shore road sounds nice,” said Anne dreamily. “Is it as nice as it sounds? Just when you said ‘shore road’ I saw it in a picture in my mind, as quick as that! And White Sands is a pretty name, too; but I don’t like it as well as Avonlea. Avonlea is a lovely name. It just sounds like music. How far is it to White Sands?”

“It’s five miles; and as you’re evidently bent on talking you might as well talk to some purpose by telling me what you know about yourself.”

“Oh, what I KNOW about myself isn’t really worth telling,” said Anne eagerly. “If you’ll only let me tell you what I IMAGINE about myself you’ll think it ever so much more interesting.”

“No, I don’t want any of your imaginings. Just you stick to bald facts. Begin at the beginning. Where were you born and how old are you?”

“I was eleven last March,” said Anne, resigning herself to bald facts with a little sigh. “And I was born in Bolingbroke, Nova Scotia. My father’s name was Walter Shirley, and he was a teacher in the Bolingbroke High School. My mother’s name was Bertha Shirley. Aren’t Walter and Bertha lovely names? I’m so glad my parents had nice names. It would be a real disgrace to have a father named — well, say Jedediah, wouldn’t it?”

“I guess it doesn’t matter what a person’s name is as long as he behaves himself,” said Marilla, feeling herself called upon to inculcate a good and useful moral.

“Well, I don’t know.” Anne looked thoughtful. “I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I’ve never been able to believe it. I don’t believe a rose WOULD be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage. I suppose my father could have been a good man even if he had been called Jedediah; but I’m sure it would have been a cross. Well, my mother was a teacher in the High school, too, but when she married father she gave up teaching, of course. A husband was enough responsibility. Mrs. Thomas said that they were a pair of babies and as

poor as church mice. They went to live in a weeny-teeny little yellow house in Bolingbroke. I've never seen that house, but I've imagined it thousands of times. I think it must have had honeysuckle over the parlor window and lilacs in the front yard and lilies of the valley just inside the gate. Yes, and muslin curtains in all the windows. Muslin curtains give a house such an air. I was born in that house. Mrs. Thomas said I was the homeliest baby she ever saw, I was so scrawny and tiny and nothing but eyes, but that mother thought I was perfectly beautiful. I should think a mother would be a better judge than a poor woman who came in to scrub, wouldn't you? I'm glad she was satisfied with me anyhow, I would feel so sad if I thought I was a disappointment to her — because she didn't live very long after that, you see. She died of fever when I was just three months old. I do wish she'd lived long enough for me to remember calling her mother. I think it would be so sweet to say 'mother,' don't you? And father died four days afterwards from fever too. That left me an orphan and folks were at their wits' end, so Mrs. Thomas said, what to do with me. You see, nobody wanted me even then. It seems to be my fate. Father and mother had both come from places far away and it was well known they hadn't any relatives living. Finally Mrs. Thomas said she'd take me, though she was poor and had a drunken husband. She brought me up by hand. Do you know if there is anything in being brought up by hand that ought to make people who are brought up that way better than other people? Because whenever I was naughty Mrs. Thomas would ask me how I could be such a bad girl when she had brought me up by hand — reproachful-like.

“Mr. and Mrs. Thomas moved away from Bolingbroke to Marysville, and I lived with them until I was eight years old. I helped look after the Thomas children — there were four of them younger than me — and I can tell you they took a lot of looking after. Then Mr. Thomas was killed falling under a train and his mother offered to take Mrs. Thomas and the children, but she didn't want me. Mrs. Thomas was at HER wits' end, so she said, what to do with me. Then Mrs. Hammond from up the river came down and said she'd take me, seeing I was handy with children, and I went up the river to live with her in a little clearing among the stumps. It was a very lonesome place. I'm sure I could never have lived there if I hadn't had an imagination. Mr. Hammond worked a little sawmill up there, and Mrs.

Hammond had eight children. She had twins three times. I like babies in moderation, but twins three times in succession is TOO MUCH. I told Mrs. Hammond so firmly, when the last pair came. I used to get so dreadfully tired carrying them about.

“I lived up river with Mrs. Hammond over two years, and then Mr. Hammond died and Mrs. Hammond broke up housekeeping. She divided her children among her relatives and went to the States. I had to go to the asylum at Hopeton, because nobody would take me. They didn’t want me at the asylum, either; they said they were overcrowded as it was. But they had to take me and I was there four months until Mrs. Spencer came.”

Anne finished up with another sigh, of relief this time. Evidently she did not like talking about her experiences in a world that had not wanted her.

“Did you ever go to school?” demanded Marilla, turning the sorrel mare down the shore road.

“Not a great deal. I went a little the last year I stayed with Mrs. Thomas. When I went up river we were so far from a school that I couldn’t walk it in winter and there was a vacation in summer, so I could only go in the spring and fall. But of course I went while I was at the asylum. I can read pretty well and I know ever so many pieces of poetry off by heart—’The Battle of Hohenlinden’ and ‘Edinburgh after Flodden,’ and ‘Bingen of the Rhine,’ and most of the ‘Lady of the Lake’ and most of ‘The Seasons’ by James Thompson. Don’t you just love poetry that gives you a crinkly feeling up and down your back? There is a piece in the Fifth Reader—’The Downfall of Poland’ — that is just full of thrills. Of course, I wasn’t in the Fifth Reader — I was only in the Fourth — but the big girls used to lend me theirs to read.”

“Were those women — Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hammond — good to you?” asked Marilla, looking at Anne out of the corner of her eye.

“O-o-o-h,” faltered Anne. Her sensitive little face suddenly flushed scarlet and embarrassment sat on her brow. “Oh, they MEANT to be — I know they meant to be just as good and kind as possible. And when people mean to be good to you, you don’t mind very much when they’re not quite —

always. They had a good deal to worry them, you know. It's very trying to have a drunken husband, you see; and it must be very trying to have twins three times in succession, don't you think? But I feel sure they meant to be good to me."

Marilla asked no more questions. Anne gave herself up to a silent rapture over the shore road and Marilla guided the sorrel abstractedly while she pondered deeply. Pity was suddenly stirring in her heart for the child. What a starved, unloved life she had had — a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect; for Marilla was shrewd enough to read between the lines of Anne's history and divine the truth. No wonder she had been so delighted at the prospect of a real home. It was a pity she had to be sent back. What if she, Marilla, should indulge Matthew's unaccountable whim and let her stay? He was set on it; and the child seemed a nice, teachable little thing.

"She's got too much to say," thought Marilla, "but she might be trained out of that. And there's nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She's ladylike. It's likely her people were nice folks."

The shore road was "woodsy and wild and lonesome." On the right hand, scrub firs, their spirits quite unbroken by long years of tussle with the gulf winds, grew thickly. On the left were the steep red sandstone cliffs, so near the track in places that a mare of less steadiness than the sorrel might have tried the nerves of the people behind her. Down at the base of the cliffs were heaps of surf-worn rocks or little sandy coves inlaid with pebbles as with ocean jewels; beyond lay the sea, shimmering and blue, and over it soared the gulls, their pinions flashing silvery in the sunlight.

"Isn't the sea wonderful?" said Anne, rousing from a long, wide-eyed silence. "Once, when I lived in Marysville, Mr. Thomas hired an express wagon and took us all to spend the day at the shore ten miles away. I enjoyed every moment of that day, even if I had to look after the children all the time. I lived it over in happy dreams for years. But this shore is nicer than the Marysville shore. Aren't those gulls splendid? Would you like to be a gull? I think I would — that is, if I couldn't be a human girl. Don't you think it would be nice to wake up at sunrise and swoop down over the water and away out over that lovely blue all day; and then at night

to fly back to one's nest? Oh, I can just imagine myself doing it. What big house is that just ahead, please?"

"That's the White Sands Hotel. Mr. Kirke runs it, but the season hasn't begun yet. There are heaps of Americans come there for the summer. They think this shore is just about right."

"I was afraid it might be Mrs. Spencer's place," said Anne mournfully. "I don't want to get there. Somehow, it will seem like the end of everything."

CHAPTER VI.

Marilla Makes Up Her Mind

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Get there they did, however, in due season. Mrs. Spencer lived in a big yellow house at White Sands Cove, and she came to the door with surprise and welcome mingled on her benevolent face.

“Dear, dear,” she exclaimed, “you’re the last folks I was looking for today, but I’m real glad to see you. You’ll put your horse in? And how are you, Anne?”

“I’m as well as can be expected, thank you,” said Anne smilelessly. A blight seemed to have descended on her.

“I suppose we’ll stay a little while to rest the mare,” said Marilla, “but I promised Matthew I’d be home early. The fact is, Mrs. Spencer, there’s been a queer mistake somewhere, and I’ve come over to see where it is. We send word, Matthew and I, for you to bring us a boy from the asylum. We told your brother Robert to tell you we wanted a boy ten or eleven years old.”

“Marilla Cuthbert, you don’t say so!” said Mrs. Spencer in distress. “Why, Robert sent word down by his daughter Nancy and she said you wanted a girl — didn’t she Flora Jane?” appealing to her daughter who had come out to the steps.

“She certainly did, Miss Cuthbert,” corroborated Flora Jane earnestly.

“I’m dreadful sorry,” said Mrs. Spencer. “It’s too bad; but it certainly wasn’t my fault, you see, Miss Cuthbert. I did the best I could and I thought I was following your instructions. Nancy is a terrible flighty thing. I’ve often had to scold her well for her heedlessness.”

“It was our own fault,” said Marilla resignedly. “We should have come to you ourselves and not left an important message to be passed along by word of mouth in that fashion. Anyhow, the mistake has been made and the only thing to do is to set it right. Can we send the child back to the asylum? I suppose they’ll take her back, won’t they?”

“I suppose so,” said Mrs. Spencer thoughtfully, “but I don’t think it will be necessary to send her back. Mrs. Peter Blewett was up here yesterday, and she was saying to me how much she wished she’d sent by me for a little girl to help her. Mrs. Peter has a large family, you know, and she finds it hard to get help. Anne will be the very girl for you. I call it positively providential.”

Marilla did not look as if she thought Providence had much to do with the matter. Here was an unexpectedly good chance to get this unwelcome orphan off her hands, and she did not even feel grateful for it.

She knew Mrs. Peter Blewett only by sight as a small, shrewish-faced woman without an ounce of superfluous flesh on her bones. But she had heard of her. “A terrible worker and driver,” Mrs. Peter was said to be; and discharged servant girls told fearsome tales of her temper and stinginess, and her family of pert, quarrelsome children. Marilla felt a qualm of conscience at the thought of handing Anne over to her tender mercies.

“Well, I’ll go in and we’ll talk the matter over,” she said.

“And if there isn’t Mrs. Peter coming up the lane this blessed minute!” exclaimed Mrs. Spencer, bustling her guests through the hall into the parlor, where a deadly chill struck on them as if the air had been strained so long through dark green, closely drawn blinds that it had lost every particle of warmth it had ever possessed. “That is real lucky, for we can settle the matter right away. Take the armchair, Miss Cuthbert. Anne, you sit here on the ottoman and don’t wiggle. Let me take your hats. Flora Jane, go out and put the kettle on. Good afternoon, Mrs. Blewett. We were just saying how fortunate it was you happened along. Let me introduce you two ladies. Mrs. Blewett, Miss Cuthbert. Please excuse me for just a moment. I forgot to tell Flora Jane to take the buns out of the oven.”

Mrs. Spencer whisked away, after pulling up the blinds. Anne sitting mutely on the ottoman, with her hands clasped tightly in her lap, stared at Mrs. Blewett as one fascinated. Was she to be given into the keeping of this sharp-faced, sharp-eyed woman? She felt a lump coming up in her throat and her eyes smarted painfully. She was beginning to be afraid she couldn't keep the tears back when Mrs. Spencer returned, flushed and beaming, quite capable of taking any and every difficulty, physical, mental or spiritual, into consideration and settling it out of hand.

"It seems there's been a mistake about this little girl, Mrs. Blewett," she said. "I was under the impression that Mr. and Miss Cuthbert wanted a little girl to adopt. I was certainly told so. But it seems it was a boy they wanted. So if you're still of the same mind you were yesterday, I think she'll be just the thing for you."

Mrs. Blewett darted her eyes over Anne from head to foot.

"How old are you and what's your name?" she demanded.

"Anne Shirley," faltered the shrinking child, not daring to make any stipulations regarding the spelling thereof, "and I'm eleven years old."

"Humph! You don't look as if there was much to you. But you're wiry. I don't know but the wiry ones are the best after all. Well, if I take you you'll have to be a good girl, you know — good and smart and respectful. I'll expect you to earn your keep, and no mistake about that. Yes, I suppose I might as well take her off your hands, Miss Cuthbert. The baby's awful fractious, and I'm clean worn out attending to him. If you like I can take her right home now."

Marilla looked at Anne and softened at sight of the child's pale face with its look of mute misery — the misery of a helpless little creature who finds itself once more caught in the trap from which it had escaped. Marilla felt an uncomfortable conviction that, if she denied the appeal of that look, it would haunt her to her dying day. Moreover, she did not fancy Mrs. Blewett. To hand a sensitive, "highstrung" child over to such a woman! No, she could not take the responsibility of doing that!

“Well, I don’t know,” she said slowly. “I didn’t say that Matthew and I had absolutely decided that we wouldn’t keep her. In fact I may say that Matthew is disposed to keep her. I just came over to find out how the mistake had occurred. I think I’d better take her home again and talk it over with Matthew. I feel that I oughtn’t to decide on anything without consulting him. If we make up our mind not to keep her we’ll bring or send her over to you tomorrow night. If we don’t you may know that she is going to stay with us. Will that suit you, Mrs. Blewett?”

“I suppose it’ll have to,” said Mrs. Blewett ungraciously.

During Marilla’s speech a sunrise had been dawning on Anne’s face. First the look of despair faded out; then came a faint flush of hope; her eyes grew deep and bright as morning stars. The child was quite transfigured; and, a moment later, when Mrs. Spencer and Mrs. Blewett went out in quest of a recipe the latter had come to borrow she sprang up and flew across the room to Marilla.

“Oh, Miss Cuthbert, did you really say that perhaps you would let me stay at Green Gables?” she said, in a breathless whisper, as if speaking aloud might shatter the glorious possibility. “Did you really say it? Or did I only imagine that you did?”

“I think you’d better learn to control that imagination of yours, Anne, if you can’t distinguish between what is real and what isn’t,” said Marilla crossly. “Yes, you did hear me say just that and no more. It isn’t decided yet and perhaps we will conclude to let Mrs. Blewett take you after all. She certainly needs you much more than I do.”

“I’d rather go back to the asylum than go to live with her,” said Anne passionately. “She looks exactly like a — like a gimlet.”

Marilla smothered a smile under the conviction that Anne must be reproofed for such a speech.

“A little girl like you should be ashamed of talking so about a lady and a stranger,” she said severely. “Go back and sit down quietly and hold your tongue and behave as a good girl should.”

“I’ll try to do and be anything you want me, if you’ll only keep me,” said Anne, returning meekly to her ottoman.

When they arrived back at Green Gables that evening Matthew met them in the lane. Marilla from afar had noted him prowling along it and guessed his motive. She was prepared for the relief she read in his face when he saw that she had at least brought back Anne back with her. But she said nothing, to him, relative to the affair, until they were both out in the yard behind the barn milking the cows. Then she briefly told him Anne’s history and the result of the interview with Mrs. Spencer.

“I wouldn’t give a dog I liked to that Blewett woman,” said Matthew with unusual vim.

“I don’t fancy her style myself,” admitted Marilla, “but it’s that or keeping her ourselves, Matthew. And since you seem to want her, I suppose I’m willing — or have to be. I’ve been thinking over the idea until I’ve got kind of used to it. It seems a sort of duty. I’ve never brought up a child, especially a girl, and I dare say I’ll make a terrible mess of it. But I’ll do my best. So far as I’m concerned, Matthew, she may stay.”

Matthew’s shy face was a glow of delight.

“Well now, I reckoned you’d come to see it in that light, Marilla,” he said. “She’s such an interesting little thing.”

“It’d be more to the point if you could say she was a useful little thing,” retorted Marilla, “but I’ll make it my business to see she’s trained to be that. And mind, Matthew, you’re not to go interfering with my methods. Perhaps an old maid doesn’t know much about bringing up a child, but I guess she knows more than an old bachelor. So you just leave me to manage her. When I fail it’ll be time enough to put your oar in.”

“There, there, Marilla, you can have your own way,” said Matthew reassuringly. “Only be as good and kind to her as you can without spoiling her. I kind of think she’s one of the sort you can do anything with if you only get her to love you.”

Marilla sniffed, to express her contempt for Matthew's opinions concerning anything feminine, and walked off to the dairy with the pails.

"I won't tell her tonight that she can stay," she reflected, as she strained the milk into the creamers. "She'd be so excited that she wouldn't sleep a wink. Marilla Cuthbert, you're fairly in for it. Did you ever suppose you'd see the day when you'd be adopting an orphan girl? It's surprising enough; but not so surprising as that Matthew should be at the bottom of it, him that always seemed to have such a mortal dread of little girls. Anyhow, we've decided on the experiment and goodness only knows what will come of it."

CHAPTER VII.

Anne Says Her Prayers

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When Marilla took Anne up to bed that night she said stiffly:

“Now, Anne, I noticed last night that you threw your clothes all about the floor when you took them off. That is a very untidy habit, and I can’t allow it at all. As soon as you take off any article of clothing fold it neatly and place it on the chair. I haven’t any use at all for little girls who aren’t neat.”

“I was so harrowed up in my mind last night that I didn’t think about my clothes at all,” said Anne. “I’ll fold them nicely tonight. They always made us do that at the asylum. Half the time, though, I’d forget, I’d be in such a hurry to get into bed nice and quiet and imagine things.”

“You’ll have to remember a little better if you stay here,” admonished Marilla. “There, that looks something like. Say your prayers now and get into bed.”

“I never say any prayers,” announced Anne.

Marilla looked horrified astonishment.

“Why, Anne, what do you mean? Were you never taught to say your prayers? God always wants little girls to say their prayers. Don’t you know who God is, Anne?”

““God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,”” responded Anne promptly and glibly.

Marilla looked rather relieved.

“So you do know something then, thank goodness! You’re not quite a heathen. Where did you learn that?”

“Oh, at the asylum Sunday-school. They made us learn the whole catechism. I liked it pretty well. There’s something splendid about some of the words. ‘Infinite, eternal and unchangeable.’ Isn’t that grand? It has such a roll to it — just like a big organ playing. You couldn’t quite call it poetry, I suppose, but it sounds a lot like it, doesn’t it?”

“We’re not talking about poetry, Anne — we are talking about saying your prayers. Don’t you know it’s a terrible wicked thing not to say your prayers every night? I’m afraid you are a very bad little girl.”

“You’d find it easier to be bad than good if you had red hair,” said Anne reproachfully. “People who haven’t red hair don’t know what trouble is. Mrs. Thomas told me that God made my hair red ON PURPOSE, and I’ve never cared about Him since. And anyhow I’d always be too tired at night to bother saying prayers. People who have to look after twins can’t be expected to say their prayers. Now, do you honestly think they can?”

Marilla decided that Anne’s religious training must be begun at once. Plainly there was no time to be lost.

“You must say your prayers while you are under my roof, Anne.”

“Why, of course, if you want me to,” assented Anne cheerfully. “I’d do anything to oblige you. But you’ll have to tell me what to say for this once. After I get into bed I’ll imagine out a real nice prayer to say always. I believe that it will be quite interesting, now that I come to think of it.”

“You must kneel down,” said Marilla in embarrassment.

Anne knelt at Marilla’s knee and looked up gravely.

“Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I’ll tell you what I’d do. I’d go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep,

deep, woods, and I'd look up into the sky — up — up — up — into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just FEEL a prayer. Well, I'm ready. What am I to say?"

Marilla felt more embarrassed than ever. She had intended to teach Anne the childish classic, "Now I lay me down to sleep." But she had, as I have told you, the glimmerings of a sense of humor — which is simply another name for a sense of fitness of things; and it suddenly occurred to her that that simple little prayer, sacred to white-robed childhood lisping at motherly knees, was entirely unsuited to this freckled witch of a girl who knew and cared nothing about God's love, since she had never had it translated to her through the medium of human love.

"You're old enough to pray for yourself, Anne," she said finally. "Just thank God for your blessings and ask Him humbly for the things you want."

"Well, I'll do my best," promised Anne, burying her face in Marilla's lap. "Gracious heavenly Father — that's the way the ministers say it in church, so I suppose it's all right in private prayer, isn't it?" she interjected, lifting her head for a moment.

"Gracious heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the White
Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters and Bonny
and the Snow Queen. I'm really extremely grateful for
them. And that's all the blessings I can think of just
now to thank Thee for. As for the things I want,
they're so numerous that it would take a great deal of
time to name them all so I will only mention the two
most important. Please let me stay at Green Gables;

and please let me be goodlooking when I grow up.

I remain,

“Yours respectfully,

Anne Shirley.

“There, did I do all right?” she asked eagerly, getting up. “I could have made it much more flowery if I’d had a little more time to think it over.”

Poor Marilla was only preserved from complete collapse by remembering that it was not irreverence, but simply spiritual ignorance on the part of Anne that was responsible for this extraordinary petition. She tucked the child up in bed, mentally vowing that she should be taught a prayer the very next day, and was leaving the room with the light when Anne called her back.

“I’ve just thought of it now. I should have said, ‘Amen’ in place of ‘yours respectfully,’ shouldn’t I? — the way the ministers do. I’d forgotten it, but I felt a prayer should be finished off in some way, so I put in the other. Do you suppose it will make any difference?”

“I — I don’t suppose it will,” said Marilla. “Go to sleep now like a good child. Good night.”

“I can only say good night tonight with a clear conscience,” said Anne, cuddling luxuriously down among her pillows.

Marilla retreated to the kitchen, set the candle firmly on the table, and glared at Matthew.

“Matthew Cuthbert, it’s about time somebody adopted that child and taught her something. She’s next door to a perfect heathen. Will you believe that she never said a prayer in her life till tonight? I’ll send her to

the manse tomorrow and borrow the Peep of the Day series, that's what I'll do. And she shall go to Sunday-school just as soon as I can get some suitable clothes made for her. I foresee that I shall have my hands full. Well, well, we can't get through this world without our share of trouble. I've had a pretty easy life of it so far, but my time has come at last and I suppose I'll just have to make the best of it."

CHAPTER VIII.

Anne's Bringing-up Is Begun

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For reasons best known to herself, Marilla did not tell Anne that she was to stay at Green Gables until the next afternoon. During the forenoon she kept the child busy with various tasks and watched over her with a keen eye while she did them. By noon she had concluded that Anne was smart and obedient, willing to work and quick to learn; her most serious shortcoming seemed to be a tendency to fall into daydreams in the middle of a task and forget all about it until such time as she was sharply recalled to earth by a reprimand or a catastrophe.

When Anne had finished washing the dinner dishes she suddenly confronted Marilla with the air and expression of one desperately determined to learn the worst. Her thin little body trembled from head to foot; her face flushed and her eyes dilated until they were almost black; she clasped her hands tightly and said in an imploring voice:

“Oh, please, Miss Cuthbert, won’t you tell me if you are going to send me away or not? I’ve tried to be patient all the morning, but I really feel that I cannot bear not knowing any longer. It’s a dreadful feeling. Please tell me.”

“You haven’t scalded the dishcloth in clean hot water as I told you to do,” said Marilla immovably. “Just go and do it before you ask any more questions, Anne.”

Anne went and attended to the dishcloth. Then she returned to Marilla and fastened imploring eyes of the latter’s face. “Well,” said Marilla, unable to find any excuse for deferring her explanation longer, “I suppose I might as well tell you. Matthew and I have decided to keep you — that is, if you

will try to be a good little girl and show yourself grateful. Why, child, whatever is the matter?"

"I'm crying," said Anne in a tone of bewilderment. "I can't think why. I'm glad as glad can be. Oh, GLAD doesn't seem the right word at all. I was glad about the White Way and the cherry blossoms — but this! Oh, it's something more than glad. I'm so happy. I'll try to be so good. It will be uphill work, I expect, for Mrs. Thomas often told me I was desperately wicked. However, I'll do my very best. But can you tell me why I'm crying?"

"I suppose it's because you're all excited and worked up," said Marilla disapprovingly. "Sit down on that chair and try to calm yourself. I'm afraid you both cry and laugh far too easily. Yes, you can stay here and we will try to do right by you. You must go to school; but it's only a fortnight till vacation so it isn't worth while for you to start before it opens again in September."

"What am I to call you?" asked Anne. "Shall I always say Miss Cuthbert? Can I call you Aunt Marilla?"

"No; you'll call me just plain Marilla. I'm not used to being called Miss Cuthbert and it would make me nervous."

"It sounds awfully disrespectful to just say Marilla," protested Anne.

"I guess there'll be nothing disrespectful in it if you're careful to speak respectfully. Everybody, young and old, in Avonlea calls me Marilla except the minister. He says Miss Cuthbert — when he thinks of it."

"I'd love to call you Aunt Marilla," said Anne wistfully. "I've never had an aunt or any relation at all — not even a grandmother. It would make me feel as if I really belonged to you. Can't I call you Aunt Marilla?"

"No. I'm not your aunt and I don't believe in calling people names that don't belong to them."

"But we could imagine you were my aunt."

“I couldn’t,” said Marilla grimly.

“Do you never imagine things different from what they really are?” asked Anne wide-eyed.

“No.”

“Oh!” Anne drew a long breath. “Oh, Miss — Marilla, how much you miss!”

“I don’t believe in imagining things different from what they really are,” retorted Marilla. “When the Lord puts us in certain circumstances He doesn’t mean for us to imagine them away. And that reminds me. Go into the sitting room, Anne — be sure your feet are clean and don’t let any flies in — and bring me out the illustrated card that’s on the mantelpiece. The Lord’s Prayer is on it and you’ll devote your spare time this afternoon to learning it off by heart. There’s to be no more of such praying as I heard last night.”

“I suppose I was very awkward,” said Anne apologetically, “but then, you see, I’d never had any practice. You couldn’t really expect a person to pray very well the first time she tried, could you? I thought out a splendid prayer after I went to bed, just as I promised you I would. It was nearly as long as a minister’s and so poetical. But would you believe it? I couldn’t remember one word when I woke up this morning. And I’m afraid I’ll never be able to think out another one as good. Somehow, things never are so good when they’re thought out a second time. Have you ever noticed that?”

“Here is something for you to notice, Anne. When I tell you to do a thing I want you to obey me at once and not stand stock-still and discourse about it. Just you go and do as I bid you.”

Anne promptly departed for the sitting-room across the hall; she failed to return; after waiting ten minutes Marilla laid down her knitting and marched after her with a grim expression. She found Anne standing motionless before a picture hanging on the wall between the two windows, with her eyes astar with dreams. The white and green light strained

through apple trees and clustering vines outside fell over the rapt little figure with a half-unearthly radiance.

“Anne, whatever are you thinking of?” demanded Marilla sharply.

Anne came back to earth with a start.

“That,” she said, pointing to the picture — a rather vivid chromo entitled, “Christ Blessing Little Children”—“and I was just imagining I was one of them — that I was the little girl in the blue dress, standing off by herself in the corner as if she didn’t belong to anybody, like me. She looks lonely and sad, don’t you think? I guess she hadn’t any father or mother of her own. But she wanted to be blessed, too, so she just crept shyly up on the outside of the crowd, hoping nobody would notice her — except Him. I’m sure I know just how she felt. Her heart must have beat and her hands must have got cold, like mine did when I asked you if I could stay. She was afraid He mightn’t notice her. But it’s likely He did, don’t you think? I’ve been trying to imagine it all out — her edging a little nearer all the time until she was quite close to Him; and then He would look at her and put His hand on her hair and oh, such a thrill of joy as would run over her! But I wish the artist hadn’t painted Him so sorrowful looking. All His pictures are like that, if you’ve noticed. But I don’t believe He could really have looked so sad or the children would have been afraid of Him.”

“Anne,” said Marilla, wondering why she had not broken into this speech long before, “you shouldn’t talk that way. It’s irreverent — positively irreverent.”

Anne’s eyes marveled.

“Why, I felt just as reverent as could be. I’m sure I didn’t mean to be irreverent.”

“Well I don’t suppose you did — but it doesn’t sound right to talk so familiarly about such things. And another thing, Anne, when I send you after something you’re to bring it at once and not fall into mooning and imagining before pictures. Remember that. Take that card and come right

to the kitchen. Now, sit down in the corner and learn that prayer off by heart.”

Anne set the card up against the jugful of apple blossoms she had brought in to decorate the dinnertable — Marilla had eyed that decoration askance, but had said nothing — propped her chin on her hands, and fell to studying it intently for several silent minutes.

“I like this,” she announced at length. “It’s beautiful. I’ve heard it before — I heard the superintendent of the asylum Sunday school say it over once. But I didn’t like it then. He had such a cracked voice and he prayed it so mournfully. I really felt sure he thought praying was a disagreeable duty. This isn’t poetry, but it makes me feel just the same way poetry does. ‘Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name.’ That is just like a line of music. Oh, I’m so glad you thought of making me learn this, Miss — Marilla.”

“Well, learn it and hold your tongue,” said Marilla shortly.

Anne tipped the vase of apple blossoms near enough to bestow a soft kiss on a pink-cupped bud, and then studied diligently for some moments longer.

“Marilla,” she demanded presently, “do you think that I shall ever have a bosom friend in Avonlea?”

“A — a what kind of friend?”

“A bosom friend — an intimate friend, you know — a really kindred spirit to whom I can confide my inmost soul. I’ve dreamed of meeting her all my life. I never really supposed I would, but so many of my loveliest dreams have come true all at once that perhaps this one will, too. Do you think it’s possible?”

“Diana Barry lives over at Orchard Slope and she’s about your age. She’s a very nice little girl, and perhaps she will be a playmate for you when she comes home. She’s visiting her aunt over at Carmody just now. You’ll have to be careful how you behave yourself, though. Mrs. Barry is a very

particular woman. She won't let Diana play with any little girl who isn't nice and good."

Anne looked at Marilla through the apple blossoms, her eyes aglow with interest.

"What is Diana like? Her hair isn't red, is it? Oh, I hope not. It's bad enough to have red hair myself, but I positively couldn't endure it in a bosom friend."

"Diana is a very pretty little girl. She has black eyes and hair and rosy cheeks. And she is good and smart, which is better than being pretty."

Marilla was as fond of morals as the Duchess in Wonderland, and was firmly convinced that one should be tacked on to every remark made to a child who was being brought up.

But Anne waved the moral inconsequently aside and seized only on the delightful possibilities before it.

"Oh, I'm so glad she's pretty. Next to being beautiful oneself — and that's impossible in my case — it would be best to have a beautiful bosom friend. When I lived with Mrs. Thomas she had a bookcase in her sitting room with glass doors. There weren't any books in it; Mrs. Thomas kept her best china and her preserves there — when she had any preserves to keep. One of the doors was broken. Mr. Thomas smashed it one night when he was slightly intoxicated. But the other was whole and I used to pretend that my reflection in it was another little girl who lived in it. I called her Katie Maurice, and we were very intimate. I used to talk to her by the hour, especially on Sunday, and tell her everything. Katie was the comfort and consolation of my life. We used to pretend that the bookcase was enchanted and that if I only knew the spell I could open the door and step right into the room where Katie Maurice lived, instead of into Mrs. Thomas' shelves of preserves and china. And then Katie Maurice would have taken me by the hand and led me out into a wonderful place, all flowers and sunshine and fairies, and we would have lived there happy for ever after. When I went to live with Mrs. Hammond it just broke my heart to leave Katie Maurice. She felt it dreadfully, too, I know she did, for she

was crying when she kissed me goodbye through the bookcase door. There was no bookcase at Mrs. Hammond's. But just up the river a little way from the house there was a long green little valley, and the loveliest echo lived there. It echoed back every word you said, even if you didn't talk a bit loud. So I imagined that it was a little girl called Violetta and we were great friends and I loved her almost as well as I loved Katie Maurice — not quite, but almost, you know. The night before I went to the asylum I said goodbye to Violetta, and oh, her goodbye came back to me in such sad, sad tones. I had become so attached to her that I hadn't the heart to imagine a bosom friend at the asylum, even if there had been any scope for imagination there."

"I think it's just as well there wasn't," said Marilla drily. "I don't approve of such goings-on. You seem to half believe your own imaginations. It will be well for you to have a real live friend to put such nonsense out of your head. But don't let Mrs. Barry hear you talking about your Katie Maurices and your Violettas or she'll think you tell stories."

"Oh, I won't. I couldn't talk of them to everybody — their memories are too sacred for that. But I thought I'd like to have you know about them. Oh, look, here's a big bee just tumbled out of an apple blossom. Just think what a lovely place to live — in an apple blossom! Fancy going to sleep in it when the wind was rocking it. If I wasn't a human girl I think I'd like to be a bee and live among the flowers."

"Yesterday you wanted to be a sea gull," sniffed Marilla. "I think you are very fickle minded. I told you to learn that prayer and not talk. But it seems impossible for you to stop talking if you've got anybody that will listen to you. So go up to your room and learn it."

"Oh, I know it pretty nearly all now — all but just the last line."

"Well, never mind, do as I tell you. Go to your room and finish learning it well, and stay there until I call you down to help me get tea."

"Can I take the apple blossoms with me for company?" pleaded Anne.

“No; you don’t want your room cluttered up with flowers. You should have left them on the tree in the first place.”

“I did feel a little that way, too,” said Anne. “I kind of felt I shouldn’t shorten their lovely lives by picking them — I wouldn’t want to be picked if I were an apple blossom. But the temptation was IRRESISTIBLE. What do you do when you meet with an irresistible temptation?”

“Anne, did you hear me tell you to go to your room?”

Anne sighed, retreated to the east gable, and sat down in a chair by the window.

“There — I know this prayer. I learned that last sentence coming upstairs. Now I’m going to imagine things into this room so that they’ll always stay imagined. The floor is covered with a white velvet carpet with pink roses all over it and there are pink silk curtains at the windows. The walls are hung with gold and silver brocade tapestry. The furniture is mahogany. I never saw any mahogany, but it does sound SO luxurious. This is a couch all heaped with gorgeous silken cushions, pink and blue and crimson and gold, and I am reclining gracefully on it. I can see my reflection in that splendid big mirror hanging on the wall. I am tall and regal, clad in a gown of trailing white lace, with a pearl cross on my breast and pearls in my hair. My hair is of midnight darkness and my skin is a clear ivory pallor. My name is the Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald. No, it isn’t — I can’t make THAT seem real.”

She danced up to the little looking-glass and peered into it. Her pointed freckled face and solemn gray eyes peered back at her.

“You’re only Anne of Green Gables,” she said earnestly, “and I see you, just as you are looking now, whenever I try to imagine I’m the Lady Cordelia. But it’s a million times nicer to be Anne of Green Gables than Anne of nowhere in particular, isn’t it?”

She bent forward, kissed her reflection affectionately, and betook herself to the open window.

“Dear Snow Queen, good afternoon. And good afternoon dear birches down in the hollow. And good afternoon, dear gray house up on the hill. I wonder if Diana is to be my bosom friend. I hope she will, and I shall love her very much. But I must never quite forget Katie Maurice and Violetta. They would feel so hurt if I did and I’d hate to hurt anybody’s feelings, even a little bookcase girl’s or a little echo girl’s. I must be careful to remember them and send them a kiss every day.”

Anne blew a couple of airy kisses from her fingertips past the cherry blossoms and then, with her chin in her hands, drifted luxuriously out on a sea of daydreams.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde Is Properly Horrified

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Anne had been a fortnight at Green Gables before Mrs. Lynde arrived to inspect her. Mrs. Rachel, to do her justice, was not to blame for this. A severe and unseasonable attack of grippe had confined that good lady to her house ever since the occasion of her last visit to Green Gables. Mrs. Rachel was not often sick and had a well-defined contempt for people who were; but grippe, she asserted, was like no other illness on earth and could only be interpreted as one of the special visitations of Providence. As soon as her doctor allowed her to put her foot out-of-doors she hurried up to Green Gables, bursting with curiosity to see Matthew and Marilla's orphan, concerning whom all sorts of stories and suppositions had gone abroad in Avonlea.

Anne had made good use of every waking moment of that fortnight. Already she was acquainted with every tree and shrub about the place. She had discovered that a lane opened out below the apple orchard and ran up through a belt of woodland; and she had explored it to its furthest end in all its delicious vagaries of brook and bridge, fir coppice and wild cherry arch, corners thick with fern, and branching byways of maple and mountain ash.

She had made friends with the spring down in the hollow — that wonderful deep, clear icy-cold spring; it was set about with smooth red sandstones and rimmed in by great palm-like clumps of water fern; and beyond it was a log bridge over the brook.

That bridge led Anne's dancing feet up over a wooded hill beyond, where perpetual twilight reigned under the straight, thick-growing firs and spruces; the only flowers there were myriads of delicate "June bells," those shyest and sweetest of woodland blooms, and a few pale, aerial starflowers, like the spirits of last year's blossoms. Gossamers glimmered like threads of silver among the trees and the fir boughs and tassels seemed to utter friendly speech.

All these raptured voyages of exploration were made in the odd half hours which she was allowed for play, and Anne talked Matthew and Marilla half-deaf over her discoveries. Not that Matthew complained, to be sure; he listened to it all with a wordless smile of enjoyment on his face; Marilla permitted the "chatter" until she found herself becoming too interested in it, whereupon she always promptly quenched Anne by a curt command to hold her tongue.

Anne was out in the orchard when Mrs. Rachel came, wandering at her own sweet will through the lush, tremulous grasses splashed with ruddy evening sunshine; so that good lady had an excellent chance to talk her illness fully over, describing every ache and pulse beat with such evident enjoyment that Marilla thought even grippe must bring its compensations. When details were exhausted Mrs. Rachel introduced the real reason of her call.

"I've been hearing some surprising things about you and Matthew."

"I don't suppose you are any more surprised than I am myself," said Marilla. "I'm getting over my surprise now."

"It was too bad there was such a mistake," said Mrs. Rachel sympathetically. "Couldn't you have sent her back?"

“I suppose we could, but we decided not to. Matthew took a fancy to her. And I must say I like her myself — although I admit she has her faults. The house seems a different place already. She’s a real bright little thing.”

Marilla said more than she had intended to say when she began, for she read disapproval in Mrs. Rachel’s expression.

“It’s a great responsibility you’ve taken on yourself,” said that lady gloomily, “especially when you’ve never had any experience with children. You don’t know much about her or her real disposition, I suppose, and there’s no guessing how a child like that will turn out. But I don’t want to discourage you I’m sure, Marilla.”

“I’m not feeling discouraged,” was Marilla’s dry response, “when I make up my mind to do a thing it stays made up. I suppose you’d like to see Anne. I’ll call her in.”

Anne came running in presently, her face sparkling with the delight of her orchard roving; but, abashed at finding the delight herself in the unexpected presence of a stranger, she halted confusedly inside the door. She certainly was an odd-looking little creature in the short tight wincey dress she had worn from the asylum, below which her thin legs seemed ungracefully long. Her freckles were more numerous and obtrusive than ever; the wind had ruffled her hatless hair into over-brilliant disorder; it had never looked redder than at that moment.

“Well, they didn’t pick you for your looks, that’s sure and certain,” was Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s emphatic comment. Mrs. Rachel was one of those delightful and popular people who pride themselves on speaking their mind without fear or favor. “She’s terrible skinny and homely, Marilla. Come here, child, and let me have a look at you. Lawful heart, did any one ever see such freckles? And hair as red as carrots! Come here, child, I say.”

Anne “came there,” but not exactly as Mrs. Rachel expected. With one bound she crossed the kitchen floor and stood before Mrs. Rachel, her face scarlet with anger, her lips quivering, and her whole slender form trembling from head to foot.

“I hate you,” she cried in a choked voice, stamping her foot on the floor. “I hate you — I hate you — I hate you—” a louder stamp with each assertion of hatred. “How dare you call me skinny and ugly? How dare you say I’m freckled and redheaded? You are a rude, impolite, unfeeling woman!”

“Anne!” exclaimed Marilla in consternation.

But Anne continued to face Mrs. Rachel undauntedly, head up, eyes blazing, hands clenched, passionate indignation exhaling from her like an atmosphere.

“How dare you say such things about me?” she repeated vehemently. “How would you like to have such things said about you? How would you like to be told that you are fat and clumsy and probably hadn’t a spark of imagination in you? I don’t care if I do hurt your feelings by saying so! I hope I hurt them. You have hurt mine worse than they were ever hurt before even by Mrs. Thomas’ intoxicated husband. And I’ll NEVER forgive you for it, never, never!”

Stamp! Stamp!

“Did anybody ever see such a temper!” exclaimed the horrified Mrs. Rachel.

“Anne go to your room and stay there until I come up,” said Marilla, recovering her powers of speech with difficulty.

Anne, bursting into tears, rushed to the hall door, slammed it until the tins on the porch wall outside rattled in sympathy, and fled through the hall and up the stairs like a whirlwind. A subdued slam above told that the door of the east gable had been shut with equal vehemence.

“Well, I don’t envy you your job bringing THAT up, Marilla,” said Mrs. Rachel with unspeakable solemnity.

Marilla opened her lips to say she knew not what of apology or deprecation. What she did say was a surprise to herself then and ever afterwards.

“You shouldn’t have twitted her about her looks, Rachel.”

“Marilla Cuthbert, you don’t mean to say that you are upholding her in such a terrible display of temper as we’ve just seen?” demanded Mrs. Rachel indignantly.

“No,” said Marilla slowly, “I’m not trying to excuse her. She’s been very naughty and I’ll have to give her a talking to about it. But we must make allowances for her. She’s never been taught what is right. And you WERE too hard on her, Rachel.”

Marilla could not help tacking on that last sentence, although she was again surprised at herself for doing it. Mrs. Rachel got up with an air of offended dignity.

“Well, I see that I’ll have to be very careful what I say after this, Marilla, since the fine feelings of orphans, brought from goodness knows where, have to be considered before anything else. Oh, no, I’m not vexed — don’t worry yourself. I’m too sorry for you to leave any room for anger in my mind. You’ll have your own troubles with that child. But if you’ll take my advice — which I suppose you won’t do, although I’ve brought up ten children and buried two — you’ll do that ‘talking to’ you mention with a fair-sized birch switch. I should think THAT would be the most effective language for that kind of a child. Her temper matches her hair I guess. Well, good evening, Marilla. I hope you’ll come down to see me often as usual. But you can’t expect me to visit here again in a hurry, if I’m liable to be flown at and insulted in such a fashion. It’s something new in MY experience.”

Whereat Mrs. Rachel swept out and away — if a fat woman who always waddled COULD be said to sweep away — and Marilla with a very solemn face betook herself to the east gable.

On the way upstairs she pondered uneasily as to what she ought to do. She felt no little dismay over the scene that had just been enacted. How unfortunate that Anne should have displayed such temper before Mrs. Rachel Lynde, of all people! Then Marilla suddenly became aware of an uncomfortable and rebuking consciousness that she felt more humiliation

over this than sorrow over the discovery of such a serious defect in Anne's disposition. And how was she to punish her? The amiable suggestion of the birch switch — to the efficiency of which all of Mrs. Rachel's own children could have borne smarting testimony — did not appeal to Marilla. She did not believe she could whip a child. No, some other method of punishment must be found to bring Anne to a proper realization of the enormity of her offense.

Marilla found Anne face downward on her bed, crying bitterly, quite oblivious of muddy boots on a clean counterpane.

"Anne," she said not ungently.

No answer.

"Anne," with greater severity, "get off that bed this minute and listen to what I have to say to you."

Anne squirmed off the bed and sat rigidly on a chair beside it, her face swollen and tearstained and her eyes fixed stubbornly on the floor.

"This is a nice way for you to behave. Anne! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"She hadn't any right to call me ugly and redheaded," retorted Anne, evasive and defiant.

"You hadn't any right to fly into such a fury and talk the way you did to her, Anne. I was ashamed of you — thoroughly ashamed of you. I wanted you to behave nicely to Mrs. Lynde, and instead of that you have disgraced me. I'm sure I don't know why you should lose your temper like that just because Mrs. Lynde said you were redhaired and homely. You say it yourself often enough."

"Oh, but there's such a difference between saying a thing yourself and hearing other people say it," wailed Anne. "You may know a thing is so, but you can't help hoping other people don't quite think it is. I suppose you think I have an awful temper, but I couldn't help it. When she said

those things something just rose right up in me and choked me. I HAD to fly out at her.”

“Well, you made a fine exhibition of yourself I must say. Mrs. Lynde will have a nice story to tell about you everywhere — and she’ll tell it, too. It was a dreadful thing for you to lose your temper like that, Anne.”

“Just imagine how you would feel if somebody told you to your face that you were skinny and ugly,” pleaded Anne tearfully.

An old remembrance suddenly rose up before Marilla. She had been a very small child when she had heard one aunt say of her to another, “What a pity she is such a dark, homely little thing.” Marilla was every day of fifty before the sting had gone out of that memory.

“I don’t say that I think Mrs. Lynde was exactly right in saying what she did to you, Anne,” she admitted in a softer tone. “Rachel is too outspoken. But that is no excuse for such behavior on your part. She was a stranger and an elderly person and my visitor — all three very good reasons why you should have been respectful to her. You were rude and saucy and” — Marilla had a saving inspiration of punishment—“you must go to her and tell her you are very sorry for your bad temper and ask her to forgive you.”

“I can never do that,” said Anne determinedly and darkly. “You can punish me in any way you like, Marilla. You can shut me up in a dark, damp dungeon inhabited by snakes and toads and feed me only on bread and water and I shall not complain. But I cannot ask Mrs. Lynde to forgive me.”

“We’re not in the habit of shutting people up in dark damp dungeons,” said Marilla drily, “especially as they’re rather scarce in Avonlea. But apologize to Mrs. Lynde you must and shall and you’ll stay here in your room until you can tell me you’re willing to do it.”

“I shall have to stay here forever then,” said Anne mournfully, “because I can’t tell Mrs. Lynde I’m sorry I said those things to her. How can I? I’m NOT sorry. I’m sorry I’ve vexed you; but I’m GLAD I told her just what I

did. It was a great satisfaction. I can't say I'm sorry when I'm not, can I? I can't even IMAGINE I'm sorry."

"Perhaps your imagination will be in better working order by the morning," said Marilla, rising to depart. "You'll have the night to think over your conduct in and come to a better frame of mind. You said you would try to be a very good girl if we kept you at Green Gables, but I must say it hasn't seemed very much like it this evening."

Leaving this Parthian shaft to rankle in Anne's stormy bosom, Marilla descended to the kitchen, grievously troubled in mind and vexed in soul. She was as angry with herself as with Anne, because, whenever she recalled Mrs. Rachel's dumbfounded countenance her lips twitched with amusement and she felt a most reprehensible desire to laugh.

CHAPTER X.

Anne's Apology

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Marilla said nothing to Matthew about the affair that evening; but when Anne proved still refractory the next morning an explanation had to be made to account for her absence from the breakfast table. Marilla told Matthew the whole story, taking pains to impress him with a due sense of the enormity of Anne's behavior.

"It's a good thing Rachel Lynde got a calling down; she's a meddlesome old gossip," was Matthew's consolatory rejoinder.

"Matthew Cuthbert, I'm astonished at you. You know that Anne's behavior was dreadful, and yet you take her part! I suppose you'll be saying next thing that she oughtn't to be punished at all!"

"Well now — no — not exactly," said Matthew uneasily. "I reckon she ought to be punished a little. But don't be too hard on her, Marilla. Recollect she hasn't ever had anyone to teach her right. You're — you're going to give her something to eat, aren't you?"

"When did you ever hear of me starving people into good behavior?" demanded Marilla indignantly. "She'll have her meals regular, and I'll carry them up to her myself. But she'll stay up there until she's willing to apologize to Mrs. Lynde, and that's final, Matthew."

Breakfast, dinner, and supper were very silent meals — for Anne still remained obdurate. After each meal Marilla carried a well-filled tray to the east gable and brought it down later on not noticeably depleted. Matthew eyed its last descent with a troubled eye. Had Anne eaten anything at all?

When Marilla went out that evening to bring the cows from the back pasture, Matthew, who had been hanging about the barns and watching, slipped into the house with the air of a burglar and crept upstairs. As a general thing Matthew gravitated between the kitchen and the little bedroom off the hall where he slept; once in a while he ventured uncomfortably into the parlor or sitting room when the minister came to tea. But he had never been upstairs in his own house since the spring he helped Marilla paper the spare bedroom, and that was four years ago.

He tiptoed along the hall and stood for several minutes outside the door of the east gable before he summoned courage to tap on it with his fingers and then open the door to peep in.

Anne was sitting on the yellow chair by the window gazing mournfully out into the garden. Very small and unhappy she looked, and Matthew's heart smote him. He softly closed the door and tiptoed over to her.

"Anne," he whispered, as if afraid of being overheard, "how are you making it, Anne?"

Anne smiled wanly.

"Pretty well. I imagine a good deal, and that helps to pass the time. Of course, it's rather lonesome. But then, I may as well get used to that."

Anne smiled again, bravely facing the long years of solitary imprisonment before her.

Matthew recollected that he must say what he had come to say without loss of time, lest Marilla return prematurely. "Well now, Anne, don't you think you'd better do it and have it over with?" he whispered. "It'll have to be done sooner or later, you know, for Marilla's a dreadful determined woman — dreadful determined, Anne. Do it right off, I say, and have it over."

"Do you mean apologize to Mrs. Lynde?"

“Yes — apologize — that’s the very word,” said Matthew eagerly. “Just smooth it over so to speak. That’s what I was trying to get at.”

“I suppose I could do it to oblige you,” said Anne thoughtfully. “It would be true enough to say I am sorry, because I AM sorry now. I wasn’t a bit sorry last night. I was mad clear through, and I stayed mad all night. I know I did because I woke up three times and I was just furious every time. But this morning it was over. I wasn’t in a temper anymore — and it left a dreadful sort of goneness, too. I felt so ashamed of myself. But I just couldn’t think of going and telling Mrs. Lynde so. It would be so humiliating. I made up my mind I’d stay shut up here forever rather than do that. But still — I’d do anything for you — if you really want me to—”

“Well now, of course I do. It’s terrible lonesome downstairs without you. Just go and smooth things over — that’s a good girl.”

“Very well,” said Anne resignedly. “I’ll tell Marilla as soon as she comes in I’ve repented.”

“That’s right — that’s right, Anne. But don’t tell Marilla I said anything about it. She might think I was putting my oar in and I promised not to do that.”

“Wild horses won’t drag the secret from me,” promised Anne solemnly. “How would wild horses drag a secret from a person anyhow?”

But Matthew was gone, scared at his own success. He fled hastily to the remotest corner of the horse pasture lest Marilla should suspect what he had been up to. Marilla herself, upon her return to the house, was agreeably surprised to hear a plaintive voice calling, “Marilla” over the banisters.

“Well?” she said, going into the hall.

“I’m sorry I lost my temper and said rude things, and I’m willing to go and tell Mrs. Lynde so.”

“Very well.” Marilla’s crispness gave no sign of her relief. She had been wondering what under the canopy she should do if Anne did not give in. “I’ll take you down after milking.”

Accordingly, after milking, behold Marilla and Anne walking down the lane, the former erect and triumphant, the latter drooping and dejected. But halfway down Anne’s dejection vanished as if by enchantment. She lifted her head and stepped lightly along, her eyes fixed on the sunset sky and an air of subdued exhilaration about her. Marilla beheld the change disapprovingly. This was no meek penitent such as it behooved her to take into the presence of the offended Mrs. Lynde.

“What are you thinking of, Anne?” she asked sharply.

“I’m imagining out what I must say to Mrs. Lynde,” answered Anne dreamily.

This was satisfactory — or should have been so. But Marilla could not rid herself of the notion that something in her scheme of punishment was going askew. Anne had no business to look so rapt and radiant.

Rapt and radiant Anne continued until they were in the very presence of Mrs. Lynde, who was sitting knitting by her kitchen window. Then the radiance vanished. Mournful penitence appeared on every feature. Before a word was spoken Anne suddenly went down on her knees before the astonished Mrs. Rachel and held out her hands beseechingly.

“Oh, Mrs. Lynde, I am so extremely sorry,” she said with a quiver in her voice. “I could never express all my sorrow, no, not if I used up a whole dictionary. You must just imagine it. I behaved terribly to you — and I’ve disgraced the dear friends, Matthew and Marilla, who have let me stay at Green Gables although I’m not a boy. I’m a dreadfully wicked and ungrateful girl, and I deserve to be punished and cast out by respectable people forever. It was very wicked of me to fly into a temper because you told me the truth. It WAS the truth; every word you said was true. My hair is red and I’m freckled and skinny and ugly. What I said to you was true, too, but I shouldn’t have said it. Oh, Mrs. Lynde, please, please, forgive me. If you refuse it will be a lifelong sorrow on a poor little orphan girl,

would you, even if she had a dreadful temper? Oh, I am sure you wouldn't. Please say you forgive me, Mrs. Lynde."

Anne clasped her hands together, bowed her head, and waited for the word of judgment.

There was no mistaking her sincerity — it breathed in every tone of her voice. Both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde recognized its unmistakable ring. But the former understood in dismay that Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation — was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement. Where was the wholesome punishment upon which she, Marilla, had plumed herself? Anne had turned it into a species of positive pleasure.

Good Mrs. Lynde, not being overburdened with perception, did not see this. She only perceived that Anne had made a very thorough apology and all resentment vanished from her kindly, if somewhat officious, heart.

"There, there, get up, child," she said heartily. "Of course I forgive you. I guess I was a little too hard on you, anyway. But I'm such an outspoken person. You just mustn't mind me, that's what. It can't be denied your hair is terrible red; but I knew a girl once — went to school with her, in fact — whose hair was every mite as red as yours when she was young, but when she grew up it darkened to a real handsome auburn. I wouldn't be a mite surprised if yours did, too — not a mite."

"Oh, Mrs. Lynde!" Anne drew a long breath as she rose to her feet. "You have given me a hope. I shall always feel that you are a benefactor. Oh, I could endure anything if I only thought my hair would be a handsome auburn when I grew up. It would be so much easier to be good if one's hair was a handsome auburn, don't you think? And now may I go out into your garden and sit on that bench under the apple-trees while you and Marilla are talking? There is so much more scope for imagination out there."

"Laws, yes, run along, child. And you can pick a bouquet of them white June lilies over in the corner if you like."

As the door closed behind Anne Mrs. Lynde got briskly up to light a lamp.

“She’s a real odd little thing. Take this chair, Marilla; it’s easier than the one you’ve got; I just keep that for the hired boy to sit on. Yes, she certainly is an odd child, but there is something kind of taking about her after all. I don’t feel so surprised at you and Matthew keeping her as I did — nor so sorry for you, either. She may turn out all right. Of course, she has a queer way of expressing herself — a little too — well, too kind of forcible, you know; but she’ll likely get over that now that she’s come to live among civilized folks. And then, her temper’s pretty quick, I guess; but there’s one comfort, a child that has a quick temper, just blaze up and cool down, ain’t never likely to be sly or deceitful. Preserve me from a sly child, that’s what. On the whole, Marilla, I kind of like her.”

When Marilla went home Anne came out of the fragrant twilight of the orchard with a sheaf of white narcissi in her hands.

“I apologized pretty well, didn’t I?” she said proudly as they went down the lane. “I thought since I had to do it I might as well do it thoroughly.”

“You did it thoroughly, all right enough,” was Marilla’s comment. Marilla was dismayed at finding herself inclined to laugh over the recollection. She had also an uneasy feeling that she ought to scold Anne for apologizing so well; but then, that was ridiculous! She compromised with her conscience by saying severely:

“I hope you won’t have occasion to make many more such apologies. I hope you’ll try to control your temper now, Anne.”

“That wouldn’t be so hard if people wouldn’t twit me about my looks,” said Anne with a sigh. “I don’t get cross about other things; but I’m SO tired of being twitted about my hair and it just makes me boil right over. Do you suppose my hair will really be a handsome auburn when I grow up?”

“You shouldn’t think so much about your looks, Anne. I’m afraid you are a very vain little girl.”

“How can I be vain when I know I’m homely?” protested Anne. “I love pretty things; and I hate to look in the glass and see something that isn’t

pretty. It makes me feel so sorrowful — just as I feel when I look at any ugly thing. I pity it because it isn't beautiful."

"Handsome is as handsome does," quoted Marilla. "I've had that said to me before, but I have my doubts about it," remarked skeptical Anne, sniffing at her narcissi. "Oh, aren't these flowers sweet! It was lovely of Mrs. Lynde to give them to me. I have no hard feelings against Mrs. Lynde now. It gives you a lovely, comfortable feeling to apologize and be forgiven, doesn't it? Aren't the stars bright tonight? If you could live in a star, which one would you pick? I'd like that lovely clear big one away over there above that dark hill."

"Anne, do hold your tongue," said Marilla, thoroughly worn out trying to follow the gyrations of Anne's thoughts.

Anne said no more until they turned into their own lane. A little gypsy wind came down it to meet them, laden with the spicy perfume of young dew-wet ferns. Far up in the shadows a cheerful light gleamed out through the trees from the kitchen at Green Gables. Anne suddenly came close to Marilla and slipped her hand into the older woman's hard palm.

"It's lovely to be going home and know it's home," she said. "I love Green Gables already, and I never loved any place before. No place ever seemed like home. Oh, Marilla, I'm so happy. I could pray right now and not find it a bit hard."

Something warm and pleasant welled up in Marilla's heart at touch of that thin little hand in her own — a throb of the maternity she had missed, perhaps. Its very unaccustomedness and sweetness disturbed her. She hastened to restore her sensations to their normal calm by inculcating a moral.

"If you'll be a good girl you'll always be happy, Anne. And you should never find it hard to say your prayers."

"Saying one's prayers isn't exactly the same thing as praying," said Anne meditatively. "But I'm going to imagine that I'm the wind that is blowing up there in those tree tops. When I get tired of the trees I'll imagine I'm

gently waving down here in the ferns — and then I'll fly over to Mrs. Lynde's garden and set the flowers dancing — and then I'll go with one great swoop over the clover field — and then I'll blow over the Lake of Shining Waters and ripple it all up into little sparkling waves. Oh, there's so much scope for imagination in a wind! So I'll not talk any more just now, Marilla."

"Thanks be to goodness for that," breathed Marilla in devout relief.

CHAPTER XI.

Anne's Impressions of Sunday-School

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“Well, how do you like them?” said Marilla.

Anne was standing in the gable room, looking solemnly at three new dresses spread out on the bed. One was of snuffy colored gingham which Marilla had been tempted to buy from a peddler the preceding summer because it looked so serviceable; one was of black-and-white checkered sateen which she had picked up at a bargain counter in the winter; and one was a stiff print of an ugly blue shade which she had purchased that week at a Carmody store.

She had made them up herself, and they were all made alike — plain skirts fulled tightly to plain waists, with sleeves as plain as waist and skirt and tight as sleeves could be.

“I’ll imagine that I like them,” said Anne soberly.

“I don’t want you to imagine it,” said Marilla, offended. “Oh, I can see you don’t like the dresses! What is the matter with them? Aren’t they neat and clean and new?”

“Yes.”

“Then why don’t you like them?”

“They’re — they’re not — pretty,” said Anne reluctantly.

“Pretty!” Marilla sniffed. “I didn’t trouble my head about getting pretty dresses for you. I don’t believe in pampering vanity, Anne, I’ll tell you that right off. Those dresses are good, sensible, serviceable dresses,

without any frills or furbelows about them, and they're all you'll get this summer. The brown gingham and the blue print will do you for school when you begin to go. The sateen is for church and Sunday school. I'll expect you to keep them neat and clean and not to tear them. I should think you'd be grateful to get most anything after those skimpy wincey things you've been wearing."

"Oh, I AM grateful," protested Anne. "But I'd be ever so much gratefuller if — if you'd made just one of them with puffed sleeves. Puffed sleeves are so fashionable now. It would give me such a thrill, Marilla, just to wear a dress with puffed sleeves."

"Well, you'll have to do without your thrill. I hadn't any material to waste on puffed sleeves. I think they are ridiculous-looking things anyhow. I prefer the plain, sensible ones."

"But I'd rather look ridiculous when everybody else does than plain and sensible all by myself," persisted Anne mournfully.

"Trust you for that! Well, hang those dresses carefully up in your closet, and then sit down and learn the Sunday school lesson. I got a quarterly from Mr. Bell for you and you'll go to Sunday school tomorrow," said Marilla, disappearing downstairs in high dudgeon.

Anne clasped her hands and looked at the dresses.

"I did hope there would be a white one with puffed sleeves," she whispered disconsolately. "I prayed for one, but I didn't much expect it on that account. I didn't suppose God would have time to bother about a little orphan girl's dress. I knew I'd just have to depend on Marilla for it. Well, fortunately I can imagine that one of them is of snow-white muslin with lovely lace frills and three-puffed sleeves."

The next morning warnings of a sick headache prevented Marilla from going to Sunday-school with Anne.

"You'll have to go down and call for Mrs. Lynde, Anne," she said. "She'll see that you get into the right class. Now, mind you behave yourself

properly. Stay to preaching afterwards and ask Mrs. Lynde to show you our pew. Here's a cent for collection. Don't stare at people and don't fidget. I shall expect you to tell me the text when you come home."

Anne started off irreproachable, arrayed in the stiff black-and-white sateen, which, while decent as regards length and certainly not open to the charge of skimpiness, contrived to emphasize every corner and angle of her thin figure. Her hat was a little, flat, glossy, new sailor, the extreme plainness of which had likewise much disappointed Anne, who had permitted herself secret visions of ribbon and flowers. The latter, however, were supplied before Anne reached the main road, for being confronted halfway down the lane with a golden frenzy of wind-stirred buttercups and a glory of wild roses, Anne promptly and liberally garlanded her hat with a heavy wreath of them. Whatever other people might have thought of the result it satisfied Anne, and she tripped gaily down the road, holding her ruddy head with its decoration of pink and yellow very proudly.

When she had reached Mrs. Lynde's house she found that lady gone. Nothing daunted, Anne proceeded onward to the church alone. In the porch she found a crowd of little girls, all more or less gaily attired in whites and blues and pinks, and all staring with curious eyes at this stranger in their midst, with her extraordinary head adornment. Avonlea little girls had already heard queer stories about Anne. Mrs. Lynde said she had an awful temper; Jerry Buote, the hired boy at Green Gables, said she talked all the time to herself or to the trees and flowers like a crazy girl. They looked at her and whispered to each other behind their quarterlies. Nobody made any friendly advances, then or later on when the opening exercises were over and Anne found herself in Miss Rogerson's class.

Miss Rogerson was a middle-aged lady who had taught a Sunday-school class for twenty years. Her method of teaching was to ask the printed questions from the quarterly and look sternly over its edge at the particular little girl she thought ought to answer the question. She looked very often at Anne, and Anne, thanks to Marilla's drilling, answered promptly; but it may be questioned if she understood very much about either question or answer.

She did not think she liked Miss Rogerson, and she felt very miserable; every other little girl in the class had puffed sleeves. Anne felt that life was really not worth living without puffed sleeves.

“Well, how did you like Sunday school?” Marilla wanted to know when Anne came home. Her wreath having faded, Anne had discarded it in the lane, so Marilla was spared the knowledge of that for a time.

“I didn’t like it a bit. It was horrid.”

“Anne Shirley!” said Marilla rebukingly.

Anne sat down on the rocker with a long sigh, kissed one of Bonny’s leaves, and waved her hand to a blossoming fuchsia.

“They might have been lonesome while I was away,” she explained. “And now about the Sunday school. I behaved well, just as you told me. Mrs. Lynde was gone, but I went right on myself. I went into the church, with a lot of other little girls, and I sat in the corner of a pew by the window while the opening exercises went on. Mr. Bell made an awfully long prayer. I would have been dreadfully tired before he got through if I hadn’t been sitting by that window. But it looked right out on the Lake of Shining Waters, so I just gazed at that and imagined all sorts of splendid things.”

“You shouldn’t have done anything of the sort. You should have listened to Mr. Bell.”

“But he wasn’t talking to me,” protested Anne. “He was talking to God and he didn’t seem to be very much interested in it, either. I think he thought God was too far off though. There was a long row of white birches hanging over the lake and the sunshine fell down through them, ‘way, ‘way down, deep into the water. Oh, Marilla, it was like a beautiful dream! It gave me a thrill and I just said, ‘Thank you for it, God,’ two or three times.”

“Not out loud, I hope,” said Marilla anxiously.

“Oh, no, just under my breath. Well, Mr. Bell did get through at last and they told me to go into the classroom with Miss Rogerson’s class. There

were nine other girls in it. They all had puffed sleeves. I tried to imagine mine were puffed, too, but I couldn't. Why couldn't I? It was as easy as could be to imagine they were puffed when I was alone in the east gable, but it was awfully hard there among the others who had really truly puffs."

"You shouldn't have been thinking about your sleeves in Sunday school. You should have been attending to the lesson. I hope you knew it."

"Oh, yes; and I answered a lot of questions. Miss Rogerson asked ever so many. I don't think it was fair for her to do all the asking. There were lots I wanted to ask her, but I didn't like to because I didn't think she was a kindred spirit. Then all the other little girls recited a paraphrase. She asked me if I knew any. I told her I didn't, but I could recite, 'The Dog at His Master's Grave' if she liked. That's in the Third Royal Reader. It isn't a really truly religious piece of poetry, but it's so sad and melancholy that it might as well be. She said it wouldn't do and she told me to learn the nineteenth paraphrase for next Sunday. I read it over in church afterwards and it's splendid. There are two lines in particular that just thrill me.

"'Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell

In Midian's evil day.'

"I don't know what 'squadrons' means nor 'Midian,' either, but it sounds SO tragical. I can hardly wait until next Sunday to recite it. I'll practice it all the week. After Sunday school I asked Miss Rogerson — because Mrs. Lynde was too far away — to show me your pew. I sat just as still as I could and the text was Revelations, third chapter, second and third verses. It was a very long text. If I was a minister I'd pick the short, snappy ones. The sermon was awfully long, too. I suppose the minister had to match it to the text. I didn't think he was a bit interesting. The trouble with him seems to be that he hasn't enough imagination. I didn't listen to him very much. I just let my thoughts run and I thought of the most surprising things."

Marilla felt helplessly that all this should be sternly reprov'd, but she was hampered by the undeniable fact that some of the things Anne had said, especially about the minister's sermons and Mr. Bell's prayers, were what

she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never given expression to. It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form in the person of this outspoken morsel of neglected humanity.

CHAPTER XII.

A Solemn Vow and Promise

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It was not until the next Friday that Marilla heard the story of the flower-wreathed hat. She came home from Mrs. Lynde's and called Anne to account.

"Anne, Mrs. Rachel says you went to church last Sunday with your hat rigged out ridiculous with roses and buttercups. What on earth put you up to such a caper? A pretty-looking object you must have been!"

"Oh. I know pink and yellow aren't becoming to me," began Anne.

"Becoming fiddlesticks! It was putting flowers on your hat at all, no matter what color they were, that was ridiculous. You are the most aggravating child!"

"I don't see why it's any more ridiculous to wear flowers on your hat than on your dress," protested Anne. "Lots of little girls there had bouquets pinned on their dresses. What's the difference?"

Marilla was not to be drawn from the safe concrete into dubious paths of the abstract.

"Don't answer me back like that, Anne. It was very silly of you to do such a thing. Never let me catch you at such a trick again. Mrs. Rachel says she thought she would sink through the floor when she saw you come in all rigged out like that. She couldn't get near enough to tell you to take them off till it was too late. She says people talked about it something dreadful. Of course they would think I had no better sense than to let you go decked out like that."

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” said Anne, tears welling into her eyes. “I never thought you’d mind. The roses and buttercups were so sweet and pretty I thought they’d look lovely on my hat. Lots of the little girls had artificial flowers on their hats. I’m afraid I’m going to be a dreadful trial to you. Maybe you’d better send me back to the asylum. That would be terrible; I don’t think I could endure it; most likely I would go into consumption; I’m so thin as it is, you see. But that would be better than being a trial to you.”

“Nonsense,” said Marilla, vexed at herself for having made the child cry. “I don’t want to send you back to the asylum, I’m sure. All I want is that you should behave like other little girls and not make yourself ridiculous. Don’t cry any more. I’ve got some news for you. Diana Barry came home this afternoon. I’m going up to see if I can borrow a skirt pattern from Mrs. Barry, and if you like you can come with me and get acquainted with Diana.”

Anne rose to her feet, with clasped hands, the tears still glistening on her cheeks; the dish towel she had been hemming slipped unheeded to the floor.

“Oh, Marilla, I’m frightened — now that it has come I’m actually frightened. What if she shouldn’t like me! It would be the most tragical disappointment of my life.”

“Now, don’t get into a fluster. And I do wish you wouldn’t use such long words. It sounds so funny in a little girl. I guess Diana’ll like you well enough. It’s her mother you’ve got to reckon with. If she doesn’t like you it won’t matter how much Diana does. If she has heard about your outburst to Mrs. Lynde and going to church with buttercups round your hat I don’t know what she’ll think of you. You must be polite and well behaved, and don’t make any of your startling speeches. For pity’s sake, if the child isn’t actually trembling!”

Anne WAS trembling. Her face was pale and tense.

“Oh, Marilla, you’d be excited, too, if you were going to meet a little girl you hoped to be your bosom friend and whose mother mightn’t like you,” she said as she hastened to get her hat.

They went over to Orchard Slope by the short cut across the brook and up the firry hill grove. Mrs. Barry came to the kitchen door in answer to Marilla's knock. She was a tall black-eyed, black-haired woman, with a very resolute mouth. She had the reputation of being very strict with her children.

"How do you do, Marilla?" she said cordially. "Come in. And this is the little girl you have adopted, I suppose?"

"Yes, this is Anne Shirley," said Marilla.

"Spelled with an E," gasped Anne, who, tremulous and excited as she was, was determined there should be no misunderstanding on that important point.

Mrs. Barry, not hearing or not comprehending, merely shook hands and said kindly:

"How are you?"

"I am well in body although considerable ruffled up in spirit, thank you ma'am," said Anne gravely. Then aside to Marilla in an audible whisper, "There wasn't anything startling in that, was there, Marilla?"

Diana was sitting on the sofa, reading a book which she dropped when the callers entered. She was a very pretty little girl, with her mother's black eyes and hair, and rosy cheeks, and the merry expression which was her inheritance from her father.

"This is my little girl Diana," said Mrs. Barry. "Diana, you might take Anne out into the garden and show her your flowers. It will be better for you than straining your eyes over that book. She reads entirely too much—" this to Marilla as the little girls went out—"and I can't prevent her, for her father aids and abets her. She's always poring over a book. I'm glad she has the prospect of a playmate — perhaps it will take her more out-of-doors."

Outside in the garden, which was full of mellow sunset light streaming through the dark old firs to the west of it, stood Anne and Diana, gazing bashfully at each other over a clump of gorgeous tiger lilies.

The Barry garden was a bowery wilderness of flowers which would have delighted Anne's heart at any time less fraught with destiny. It was encircled by huge old willows and tall firs, beneath which flourished flowers that loved the shade. Prim, right-angled paths neatly bordered with clamshells, intersected it like moist red ribbons and in the beds between old-fashioned flowers ran riot. There were rosy bleeding-hearts and great splendid crimson peonies; white, fragrant narcissi and thorny, sweet Scotch roses; pink and blue and white columbines and lilac-tinted Bouncing Bets; clumps of southernwood and ribbon grass and mint; purple Adam-and-Eve, daffodils, and masses of sweet clover white with its delicate, fragrant, feathery sprays; scarlet lightning that shot its fiery lances over prim white musk-flowers; a garden it was where sunshine lingered and bees hummed, and winds, beguiled into loitering, purred and rustled.

"Oh, Diana," said Anne at last, clasping her hands and speaking almost in a whisper, "oh, do you think you can like me a little — enough to be my bosom friend?"

Diana laughed. Diana always laughed before she spoke.

"Why, I guess so," she said frankly. "I'm awfully glad you've come to live at Green Gables. It will be jolly to have somebody to play with. There isn't any other girl who lives near enough to play with, and I've no sisters big enough."

"Will you swear to be my friend forever and ever?" demanded Anne eagerly.

Diana looked shocked.

"Why it's dreadfully wicked to swear," she said rebukingly.

"Oh no, not my kind of swearing. There are two kinds, you know."

“I never heard of but one kind,” said Diana doubtfully.

“There really is another. Oh, it isn’t wicked at all. It just means vowing and promising solemnly.”

“Well, I don’t mind doing that,” agreed Diana, relieved. “How do you do it?”

“We must join hands — so,” said Anne gravely. “It ought to be over running water. We’ll just imagine this path is running water. I’ll repeat the oath first. I solemnly swear to be faithful to my bosom friend, Diana Barry, as long as the sun and moon shall endure. Now you say it and put my name in.”

Diana repeated the “oath” with a laugh fore and aft. Then she said:

“You’re a queer girl, Anne. I heard before that you were queer. But I believe I’m going to like you real well.”

When Marilla and Anne went home Diana went with them as far as the log bridge. The two little girls walked with their arms about each other. At the brook they parted with many promises to spend the next afternoon together.

“Well, did you find Diana a kindred spirit?” asked Marilla as they went up through the garden of Green Gables.

“Oh yes,” sighed Anne, blissfully unconscious of any sarcasm on Marilla’s part. “Oh Marilla, I’m the happiest girl on Prince Edward Island this very moment. I assure you I’ll say my prayers with a right goodwill tonight. Diana and I are going to build a playhouse in Mr. William Bell’s birch grove tomorrow. Can I have those broken pieces of china that are out in the woodshed? Diana’s birthday is in February and mine is in March. Don’t you think that is a very strange coincidence? Diana is going to lend me a book to read. She says it’s perfectly splendid and tremendously exciting. She’s going to show me a place back in the woods where rice lilies grow. Don’t you think Diana has got very soulful eyes? I wish I had soulful eyes. Diana is going to teach me to sing a song called ‘Nelly in the Hazel Dell.’

She's going to give me a picture to put up in my room; it's a perfectly beautiful picture, she says — a lovely lady in a pale blue silk dress. A sewing-machine agent gave it to her. I wish I had something to give Diana. I'm an inch taller than Diana, but she is ever so much fatter; she says she'd like to be thin because it's so much more graceful, but I'm afraid she only said it to soothe my feelings. We're going to the shore some day to gather shells. We have agreed to call the spring down by the log bridge the Dryad's Bubble. Isn't that a perfectly elegant name? I read a story once about a spring called that. A dryad is sort of a grownup fairy, I think."

"Well, all I hope is you won't talk Diana to death," said Marilla. "But remember this in all your planning, Anne. You're not going to play all the time nor most of it. You'll have your work to do and it'll have to be done first."

Anne's cup of happiness was full, and Matthew caused it to overflow. He had just got home from a trip to the store at Carmody, and he sheepishly produced a small parcel from his pocket and handed it to Anne, with a deprecatory look at Marilla.

"I heard you say you liked chocolate sweeties, so I got you some," he said.

"Humph," sniffed Marilla. "It'll ruin her teeth and stomach. There, there, child, don't look so dismal. You can eat those, since Matthew has gone and got them. He'd better have brought you peppermints. They're wholesomer. Don't sicken yourself eating all them at once now."

"Oh, no, indeed, I won't," said Anne eagerly. "I'll just eat one tonight, Marilla. And I can give Diana half of them, can't I? The other half will taste twice as sweet to me if I give some to her. It's delightful to think I have something to give her."

"I will say it for the child," said Marilla when Anne had gone to her gable, "she isn't stingy. I'm glad, for of all faults I detest stinginess in a child. Dear me, it's only three weeks since she came, and it seems as if she'd been here always. I can't imagine the place without her. Now, don't be looking I told-you-so, Matthew. That's bad enough in a woman, but it isn't to be endured in a man. I'm perfectly willing to own up that I'm glad I

consented to keep the child and that I'm getting fond of her, but don't you rub it in, Matthew Cuthbert."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Delights of Anticipation

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“It’s time Anne was in to do her sewing,” said Marilla, glancing at the clock and then out into the yellow August afternoon where everything drowsed in the heat. “She stayed playing with Diana more than half an hour more’n I gave her leave to; and now she’s perched out there on the woodpile talking to Matthew, nineteen to the dozen, when she knows perfectly well she ought to be at her work. And of course he’s listening to her like a perfect ninny. I never saw such an infatuated man. The more she talks and the odder the things she says, the more he’s delighted evidently. Anne Shirley, you come right in here this minute, do you hear me!”

A series of staccato taps on the west window brought Anne flying in from the yard, eyes shining, cheeks faintly flushed with pink, unbraided hair streaming behind her in a torrent of brightness.

“Oh, Marilla,” she exclaimed breathlessly, “there’s going to be a Sunday-school picnic next week — in Mr. Harmon Andrews’s field, right near the lake of Shining Waters. And Mrs. Superintendent Bell and Mrs. Rachel Lynde are going to make ice cream — think of it, Marilla — ICE CREAM! And, oh, Marilla, can I go to it?”

“Just look at the clock, if you please, Anne. What time did I tell you to come in?”

“Two o’clock — but isn’t it splendid about the picnic, Marilla? Please can I go? Oh, I’ve never been to a picnic — I’ve dreamed of picnics, but I’ve never—”

“Yes, I told you to come at two o’clock. And it’s a quarter to three. I’d like to know why you didn’t obey me, Anne.”

“Why, I meant to, Marilla, as much as could be. But you have no idea how fascinating Idlewild is. And then, of course, I had to tell Matthew about the picnic. Matthew is such a sympathetic listener. Please can I go?”

“You’ll have to learn to resist the fascination of Idle-whatever-you-call-it. When I tell you to come in at a certain time I mean that time and not half an hour later. And you needn’t stop to discourse with sympathetic listeners on your way, either. As for the picnic, of course you can go. You’re a Sunday-school scholar, and it’s not likely I’d refuse to let you go when all the other little girls are going.”

“But — but,” faltered Anne, “Diana says that everybody must take a basket of things to eat. I can’t cook, as you know, Marilla, and — and — I don’t mind going to a picnic without puffed sleeves so much, but I’d feel terribly humiliated if I had to go without a basket. It’s been preying on my mind ever since Diana told me.”

“Well, it needn’t prey any longer. I’ll bake you a basket.”

“Oh, you dear good Marilla. Oh, you are so kind to me. Oh, I’m so much obliged to you.”

Getting through with her “ohs” Anne cast herself into Marilla’s arms and rapturously kissed her sallow cheek. It was the first time in her whole life that childish lips had voluntarily touched Marilla’s face. Again that sudden sensation of startling sweetness thrilled her. She was secretly vastly pleased at Anne’s impulsive caress, which was probably the reason why she said brusquely:

“There, there, never mind your kissing nonsense. I’d sooner see you doing strictly as you’re told. As for cooking, I mean to begin giving you lessons in that some of these days. But you’re so featherbrained, Anne, I’ve been waiting to see if you’d sober down a little and learn to be steady before I begin. You’ve got to keep your wits about you in cooking and not stop in the middle of things to let your thoughts rove all over creation. Now, get out your patchwork and have your square done before teatime.”

“I do NOT like patchwork,” said Anne dolefully, hunting out her workbasket and sitting down before a little heap of red and white diamonds with a sigh. “I think some kinds of sewing would be nice; but there’s no scope for imagination in patchwork. It’s just one little seam after another and you never seem to be getting anywhere. But of course I’d rather be Anne of Green Gables sewing patchwork than Anne of any other place with nothing to do but play. I wish time went as quick sewing patches as it does when I’m playing with Diana, though. Oh, we do have such elegant times, Marilla. I have to furnish most of the imagination, but I’m well able to do that. Diana is simply perfect in every other way. You know that little piece of land across the brook that runs up between our farm and Mr. Barry’s. It belongs to Mr. William Bell, and right in the corner there is a little ring of white birch trees — the most romantic spot, Marilla. Diana and I have our playhouse there. We call it Idlewild. Isn’t that a poetical name? I assure you it took me some time to think it out. I stayed awake nearly a whole night before I invented it. Then, just as I was dropping off to sleep, it came like an inspiration. Diana was ENRAPPED when she heard it. We have got our house fixed up elegantly. You must come and see it, Marilla — won’t you? We have great big stones, all covered with moss, for seats, and boards from tree to tree for shelves. And we have all our dishes on them. Of course, they’re all broken but it’s the easiest thing in the world to imagine that they are whole. There’s a piece of a plate with a spray of red and yellow ivy on it that is especially beautiful. We keep it in the parlor and we have the fairy glass there, too. The fairy glass is as lovely as a dream. Diana found it out in the woods behind their chicken house. It’s all full of rainbows — just little young rainbows that haven’t grown big yet — and Diana’s mother told her it was broken off a hanging lamp they once had. But it’s nice to imagine the fairies lost it one night when they had a ball, so we call it the fairy glass. Matthew is going to make us a table. Oh, we have named that little round pool over in Mr. Barry’s field Willowmere. I got that name out of the book Diana lent me. That was a thrilling book, Marilla. The heroine had five lovers. I’d be satisfied with one, wouldn’t you? She was very handsome and she went through great tribulations. She could faint as easy as anything. I’d love to be able to faint, wouldn’t you, Marilla? It’s so romantic. But I’m really very healthy for all I’m so thin. I believe I’m getting fatter, though. Don’t you think I am? I look at my elbows every

morning when I get up to see if any dimples are coming. Diana is having a new dress made with elbow sleeves. She is going to wear it to the picnic. Oh, I do hope it will be fine next Wednesday. I don't feel that I could endure the disappointment if anything happened to prevent me from getting to the picnic. I suppose I'd live through it, but I'm certain it would be a lifelong sorrow. It wouldn't matter if I got to a hundred picnics in after years; they wouldn't make up for missing this one. They're going to have boats on the Lake of Shining Waters — and ice cream, as I told you. I have never tasted ice cream. Diana tried to explain what it was like, but I guess ice cream is one of those things that are beyond imagination."

"Anne, you have talked even on for ten minutes by the clock," said Marilla. "Now, just for curiosity's sake, see if you can hold your tongue for the same length of time."

Anne held her tongue as desired. But for the rest of the week she talked picnic and thought picnic and dreamed picnic. On Saturday it rained and she worked herself up into such a frantic state lest it should keep on raining until and over Wednesday that Marilla made her sew an extra patchwork square by way of steadying her nerves.

On Sunday Anne confided to Marilla on the way home from church that she grew actually cold all over with excitement when the minister announced the picnic from the pulpit.

"Such a thrill as went up and down my back, Marilla! I don't think I'd ever really believed until then that there was honestly going to be a picnic. I couldn't help fearing I'd only imagined it. But when a minister says a thing in the pulpit you just have to believe it."

"You set your heart too much on things, Anne," said Marilla, with a sigh. "I'm afraid there'll be a great many disappointments in store for you through life."

"Oh, Marilla, looking forward to things is half the pleasure of them," exclaimed Anne. "You mayn't get the things themselves; but nothing can prevent you from having the fun of looking forward to them. Mrs. Lynde says, 'Blessed are they who expect nothing for they shall not be

disappointed.’ But I think it would be worse to expect nothing than to be disappointed.”

Marilla wore her amethyst brooch to church that day as usual. Marilla always wore her amethyst brooch to church. She would have thought it rather sacrilegious to leave it off — as bad as forgetting her Bible or her collection dime. That amethyst brooch was Marilla’s most treasured possession. A seafaring uncle had given it to her mother who in turn had bequeathed it to Marilla. It was an old-fashioned oval, containing a braid of her mother’s hair, surrounded by a border of very fine amethysts. Marilla knew too little about precious stones to realize how fine the amethysts actually were; but she thought them very beautiful and was always pleasantly conscious of their violet shimmer at her throat, above her good brown satin dress, even although she could not see it.

Anne had been smitten with delighted admiration when she first saw that brooch.

“Oh, Marilla, it’s a perfectly elegant brooch. I don’t know how you can pay attention to the sermon or the prayers when you have it on. I couldn’t, I know. I think amethysts are just sweet. They are what I used to think diamonds were like. Long ago, before I had ever seen a diamond, I read about them and I tried to imagine what they would be like. I thought they would be lovely glimmering purple stones. When I saw a real diamond in a lady’s ring one day I was so disappointed I cried. Of course, it was very lovely but it wasn’t my idea of a diamond. Will you let me hold the brooch for one minute, Marilla? Do you think amethysts can be the souls of good violets?”

CHAPTER XIV.

Anne's Confession

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ON the Monday evening before the picnic Marilla came down from her room with a troubled face.

"Anne," she said to that small personage, who was shelling peas by the spotless table and singing, "Nelly of the Hazel Dell" with a vigor and expression that did credit to Diana's teaching, "did you see anything of my amethyst brooch? I thought I stuck it in my pincushion when I came home from church yesterday evening, but I can't find it anywhere."

"I — I saw it this afternoon when you were away at the Aid Society," said Anne, a little slowly. "I was passing your door when I saw it on the cushion, so I went in to look at it."

"Did you touch it?" said Marilla sternly.

"Y-e-e-s," admitted Anne, "I took it up and I pinned it on my breast just to see how it would look."

"You had no business to do anything of the sort. It's very wrong in a little girl to meddle. You shouldn't have gone into my room in the first place and you shouldn't have touched a brooch that didn't belong to you in the second. Where did you put it?"

"Oh, I put it back on the bureau. I hadn't it on a minute. Truly, I didn't mean to meddle, Marilla. I didn't think about its being wrong to go in and try on the brooch; but I see now that it was and I'll never do it again. That's one good thing about me. I never do the same naughty thing twice."

“You didn’t put it back,” said Marilla. “That brooch isn’t anywhere on the bureau. You’ve taken it out or something, Anne.”

“I did put it back,” said Anne quickly — pertly, Marilla thought. “I don’t just remember whether I stuck it on the pincushion or laid it in the china tray. But I’m perfectly certain I put it back.”

“I’ll go and have another look,” said Marilla, determining to be just. “If you put that brooch back it’s there still. If it isn’t I’ll know you didn’t, that’s all!”

Marilla went to her room and made a thorough search, not only over the bureau but in every other place she thought the brooch might possibly be. It was not to be found and she returned to the kitchen.

“Anne, the brooch is gone. By your own admission you were the last person to handle it. Now, what have you done with it? Tell me the truth at once. Did you take it out and lose it?”

“No, I didn’t,” said Anne solemnly, meeting Marilla’s angry gaze squarely. “I never took the brooch out of your room and that is the truth, if I was to be led to the block for it — although I’m not very certain what a block is. So there, Marilla.”

Anne’s “so there” was only intended to emphasize her assertion, but Marilla took it as a display of defiance.

“I believe you are telling me a falsehood, Anne,” she said sharply. “I know you are. There now, don’t say anything more unless you are prepared to tell the whole truth. Go to your room and stay there until you are ready to confess.”

“Will I take the peas with me?” said Anne meekly.

“No, I’ll finish shelling them myself. Do as I bid you.”

When Anne had gone Marilla went about her evening tasks in a very disturbed state of mind. She was worried about her valuable brooch. What

if Anne had lost it? And how wicked of the child to deny having taken it, when anybody could see she must have! With such an innocent face, too!

“I don’t know what I wouldn’t sooner have had happen,” thought Marilla, as she nervously shelled the peas. “Of course, I don’t suppose she meant to steal it or anything like that. She’s just taken it to play with or help along that imagination of hers. She must have taken it, that’s clear, for there hasn’t been a soul in that room since she was in it, by her own story, until I went up tonight. And the brooch is gone, there’s nothing surer. I suppose she has lost it and is afraid to own up for fear she’ll be punished. It’s a dreadful thing to think she tells falsehoods. It’s a far worse thing than her fit of temper. It’s a fearful responsibility to have a child in your house you can’t trust. Slyness and untruthfulness — that’s what she has displayed. I declare I feel worse about that than about the brooch. If she’d only have told the truth about it I wouldn’t mind so much.”

Marilla went to her room at intervals all through the evening and searched for the brooch, without finding it. A bedtime visit to the east gable produced no result. Anne persisted in denying that she knew anything about the brooch but Marilla was only the more firmly convinced that she did.

She told Matthew the story the next morning. Matthew was confounded and puzzled; he could not so quickly lose faith in Anne but he had to admit that circumstances were against her.

“You’re sure it hasn’t fell down behind the bureau?” was the only suggestion he could offer.

“I’ve moved the bureau and I’ve taken out the drawers and I’ve looked in every crack and cranny” was Marilla’s positive answer. “The brooch is gone and that child has taken it and lied about it. That’s the plain, ugly truth, Matthew Cuthbert, and we might as well look it in the face.”

“Well now, what are you going to do about it?” Matthew asked forlornly, feeling secretly thankful that Marilla and not he had to deal with the situation. He felt no desire to put his oar in this time.

“She’ll stay in her room until she confesses,” said Marilla grimly, remembering the success of this method in the former case. “Then we’ll see. Perhaps we’ll be able to find the brooch if she’ll only tell where she took it; but in any case she’ll have to be severely punished, Matthew.”

“Well now, you’ll have to punish her,” said Matthew, reaching for his hat. “I’ve nothing to do with it, remember. You warned me off yourself.”

Marilla felt deserted by everyone. She could not even go to Mrs. Lynde for advice. She went up to the east gable with a very serious face and left it with a face more serious still. Anne steadfastly refused to confess. She persisted in asserting that she had not taken the brooch. The child had evidently been crying and Marilla felt a pang of pity which she sternly repressed. By night she was, as she expressed it, “beat out.”

“You’ll stay in this room until you confess, Anne. You can make up your mind to that,” she said firmly.

“But the picnic is tomorrow, Marilla,” cried Anne. “You won’t keep me from going to that, will you? You’ll just let me out for the afternoon, won’t you? Then I’ll stay here as long as you like AFTERWARDS cheerfully. But I MUST go to the picnic.”

“You’ll not go to picnics nor anywhere else until you’ve confessed, Anne.”

“Oh, Marilla,” gasped Anne.

But Marilla had gone out and shut the door.

Wednesday morning dawned as bright and fair as if expressly made to order for the picnic. Birds sang around Green Gables; the Madonna lilies in the garden sent out whiffs of perfume that entered in on viewless winds at every door and window, and wandered through halls and rooms like spirits of benediction. The birches in the hollow waved joyful hands as if watching for Anne’s usual morning greeting from the east gable. But Anne was not at her window. When Marilla took her breakfast up to her she found the child sitting primly on her bed, pale and resolute, with tight-shut lips and gleaming eyes.

“Marilla, I’m ready to confess.”

“Ah!” Marilla laid down her tray. Once again her method had succeeded; but her success was very bitter to her. “Let me hear what you have to say then, Anne.”

“I took the amethyst brooch,” said Anne, as if repeating a lesson she had learned. “I took it just as you said. I didn’t mean to take it when I went in. But it did look so beautiful, Marilla, when I pinned it on my breast that I was overcome by an irresistible temptation. I imagined how perfectly thrilling it would be to take it to Idlewild and play I was the Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald. It would be so much easier to imagine I was the Lady Cordelia if I had a real amethyst brooch on. Diana and I make necklaces of roseberries but what are roseberries compared to amethysts? So I took the brooch. I thought I could put it back before you came home. I went all the way around by the road to lengthen out the time. When I was going over the bridge across the Lake of Shining Waters I took the brooch off to have another look at it. Oh, how it did shine in the sunlight! And then, when I was leaning over the bridge, it just slipped through my fingers — so — and went down — down — down, all purply-sparkling, and sank forevermore beneath the Lake of Shining Waters. And that’s the best I can do at confessing, Marilla.”

Marilla felt hot anger surge up into her heart again. This child had taken and lost her treasured amethyst brooch and now sat there calmly reciting the details thereof without the least apparent compunction or repentance.

“Anne, this is terrible,” she said, trying to speak calmly. “You are the very wickedest girl I ever heard of.”

“Yes, I suppose I am,” agreed Anne tranquilly. “And I know I’ll have to be punished. It’ll be your duty to punish me, Marilla. Won’t you please get it over right off because I’d like to go to the picnic with nothing on my mind.”

“Picnic, indeed! You’ll go to no picnic today, Anne Shirley. That shall be your punishment. And it isn’t half severe enough either for what you’ve done!”

“Not go to the picnic!” Anne sprang to her feet and clutched Marilla’s hand. “But you PROMISED me I might! Oh, Marilla, I must go to the picnic. That was why I confessed. Punish me any way you like but that. Oh, Marilla, please, please, let me go to the picnic. Think of the ice cream! For anything you know I may never have a chance to taste ice cream again.”

Marilla disengaged Anne’s clinging hands stonily.

“You needn’t plead, Anne. You are not going to the picnic and that’s final. No, not a word.”

Anne realized that Marilla was not to be moved. She clasped her hands together, gave a piercing shriek, and then flung herself face downward on the bed, crying and writhing in an utter abandonment of disappointment and despair.

“For the land’s sake!” gasped Marilla, hastening from the room. “I believe the child is crazy. No child in her senses would behave as she does. If she isn’t she’s utterly bad. Oh dear, I’m afraid Rachel was right from the first. But I’ve put my hand to the plow and I won’t look back.”

That was a dismal morning. Marilla worked fiercely and scrubbed the porch floor and the dairy shelves when she could find nothing else to do. Neither the shelves nor the porch needed it — but Marilla did. Then she went out and raked the yard.

When dinner was ready she went to the stairs and called Anne. A tearstained face appeared, looking tragically over the banisters.

“Come down to your dinner, Anne.”

“I don’t want any dinner, Marilla,” said Anne, sobbingly. “I couldn’t eat anything. My heart is broken. You’ll feel remorse of conscience someday, I expect, for breaking it, Marilla, but I forgive you. Remember when the time comes that I forgive you. But please don’t ask me to eat anything, especially boiled pork and greens. Boiled pork and greens are so unromantic when one is in affliction.”

Exasperated, Marilla returned to the kitchen and poured out her tale of woe to Matthew, who, between his sense of justice and his unlawful sympathy with Anne, was a miserable man.

“Well now, she shouldn’t have taken the brooch, Marilla, or told stories about it,” he admitted, mournfully surveying his plateful of unromantic pork and greens as if he, like Anne, thought it a food unsuited to crises of feeling, “but she’s such a little thing — such an interesting little thing. Don’t you think it’s pretty rough not to let her go to the picnic when she’s so set on it?”

“Matthew Cuthbert, I’m amazed at you. I think I’ve let her off entirely too easy. And she doesn’t appear to realize how wicked she’s been at all — that’s what worries me most. If she’d really felt sorry it wouldn’t be so bad. And you don’t seem to realize it, neither; you’re making excuses for her all the time to yourself — I can see that.”

“Well now, she’s such a little thing,” feebly reiterated Matthew. “And there should be allowances made, Marilla. You know she’s never had any bringing up.”

“Well, she’s having it now” retorted Marilla.

The retort silenced Matthew if it did not convince him. That dinner was a very dismal meal. The only cheerful thing about it was Jerry Buote, the hired boy, and Marilla resented his cheerfulness as a personal insult.

When her dishes were washed and her bread sponge set and her hens fed Marilla remembered that she had noticed a small rent in her best black lace shawl when she had taken it off on Monday afternoon on returning from the Ladies’ Aid.

She would go and mend it. The shawl was in a box in her trunk. As Marilla lifted it out, the sunlight, falling through the vines that clustered thickly about the window, struck upon something caught in the shawl — something that glittered and sparkled in facets of violet light. Marilla snatched at it with a gasp. It was the amethyst brooch, hanging to a thread of the lace by its catch!

“Dear life and heart,” said Marilla blankly, “what does this mean? Here’s my brooch safe and sound that I thought was at the bottom of Barry’s pond. Whatever did that girl mean by saying she took it and lost it? I declare I believe Green Gables is bewitched. I remember now that when I took off my shawl Monday afternoon I laid it on the bureau for a minute. I suppose the brooch got caught in it somehow. Well!”

Marilla betook herself to the east gable, brooch in hand. Anne had cried herself out and was sitting dejectedly by the window.

“Anne Shirley,” said Marilla solemnly, “I’ve just found my brooch hanging to my black lace shawl. Now I want to know what that rigmorole you told me this morning meant.”

“Why, you said you’d keep me here until I confessed,” returned Anne wearily, “and so I decided to confess because I was bound to get to the picnic. I thought out a confession last night after I went to bed and made it as interesting as I could. And I said it over and over so that I wouldn’t forget it. But you wouldn’t let me go to the picnic after all, so all my trouble was wasted.”

Marilla had to laugh in spite of herself. But her conscience pricked her.

“Anne, you do beat all! But I was wrong — I see that now. I shouldn’t have doubted your word when I’d never known you to tell a story. Of course, it wasn’t right for you to confess to a thing you hadn’t done — it was very wrong to do so. But I drove you to it. So if you’ll forgive me, Anne, I’ll forgive you and we’ll start square again. And now get yourself ready for the picnic.”

Anne flew up like a rocket.

“Oh, Marilla, isn’t it too late?”

“No, it’s only two o’clock. They won’t be more than well gathered yet and it’ll be an hour before they have tea. Wash your face and comb your hair and put on your gingham. I’ll fill a basket for you. There’s plenty of stuff

baked in the house. And I'll get Jerry to hitch up the sorrel and drive you down to the picnic ground."

"Oh, Marilla," exclaimed Anne, flying to the washstand. "Five minutes ago I was so miserable I was wishing I'd never been born and now I wouldn't change places with an angel!"

That night a thoroughly happy, completely tired-out Anne returned to Green Gables in a state of beatification impossible to describe.

"Oh, Marilla, I've had a perfectly scrumptious time. Scrumptious is a new word I learned today. I heard Mary Alice Bell use it. Isn't it very expressive? Everything was lovely. We had a splendid tea and then Mr. Harmon Andrews took us all for a row on the Lake of Shining Waters — six of us at a time. And Jane Andrews nearly fell overboard. She was leaning out to pick water lilies and if Mr. Andrews hadn't caught her by her sash just in the nick of time she'd fallen in and prob'ly been drowned. I wish it had been me. It would have been such a romantic experience to have been nearly drowned. It would be such a thrilling tale to tell. And we had the ice cream. Words fail me to describe that ice cream. Marilla, I assure you it was sublime."

That evening Marilla told the whole story to Matthew over her stocking basket.

"I'm willing to own up that I made a mistake," she concluded candidly, "but I've learned a lesson. I have to laugh when I think of Anne's 'confession,' although I suppose I shouldn't for it really was a falsehood. But it doesn't seem as bad as the other would have been, somehow, and anyhow I'm responsible for it. That child is hard to understand in some respects. But I believe she'll turn out all right yet. And there's one thing certain, no house will ever be dull that she's in."

CHAPTER XV.

A Tempest in the School Teapot

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“What a splendid day!” said Anne, drawing a long breath. “Isn’t it good just to be alive on a day like this? I pity the people who aren’t born yet for missing it. They may have good days, of course, but they can never have this one. And it’s splendor still to have such a lovely way to go to school by, isn’t it?”

“It’s a lot nicer than going round by the road; that is so dusty and hot,” said Diana practically, peeping into her dinner basket and mentally calculating if the three juicy, toothsome, raspberry tarts reposing there were divided among ten girls how many bites each girl would have.

The little girls of Avonlea school always pooled their lunches, and to eat three raspberry tarts all alone or even to share them only with one’s best chum would have forever and ever branded as “awful mean” the girl who did it. And yet, when the tarts were divided among ten girls you just got enough to tantalize you.

The way Anne and Diana went to school WAS a pretty one. Anne thought those walks to and from school with Diana couldn’t be improved upon even by imagination. Going around by the main road would have been so unromantic; but to go by Lover’s Lane and Willowmere and Violet Vale and the Birch Path was romantic, if ever anything was.

Lover’s Lane opened out below the orchard at Green Gables and stretched far up into the woods to the end of the Cuthbert farm. It was the way by which the cows were taken to the back pasture and the wood hauled home in winter. Anne had named it Lover’s Lane before she had been a month at Green Gables.

“Not that lovers ever really walk there,” she explained to Marilla, “but Diana and I are reading a perfectly magnificent book and there’s a Lover’s Lane in it. So we want to have one, too. And it’s a very pretty name, don’t you think? So romantic! We can’t imagine the lovers into it, you know. I like that lane because you can think out loud there without people calling you crazy.”

Anne, starting out alone in the morning, went down Lover’s Lane as far as the brook. Here Diana met her, and the two little girls went on the lane under the leafy arch of maples—“maples are such sociable trees,” said Anne; “they’re always rustling and whispering to you” — until they came to a rustic bridge. Then they left the lane and walked through Mr. Barry’s back field and past Willowmere. Beyond Willowmere came Violet Vale — a little green dimple in the shadow of Mr. Andrew Bell’s big woods. “Of course there are no violets there now,” Anne told Marilla, “but Diana says there are millions of them in spring. Oh, Marilla, can’t you just imagine you see them? It actually takes away my breath. I named it Violet Vale. Diana says she never saw the beat of me for hitting on fancy names for places. It’s nice to be clever at something, isn’t it? But Diana named the Birch Path. She wanted to, so I let her; but I’m sure I could have found something more poetical than plain Birch Path. Anybody can think of a name like that. But the Birch Path is one of the prettiest places in the world, Marilla.”

It was. Other people besides Anne thought so when they stumbled on it. It was a little narrow, twisting path, winding down over a long hill straight through Mr. Bell’s woods, where the light came down sifted through so many emerald screens that it was as flawless as the heart of a diamond. It was fringed in all its length with slim young birches, white stemmed and lissom boughed; ferns and starflowers and wild lilies-of-the-valley and scarlet tufts of pigeonberries grew thickly along it; and always there was a delightful spiciness in the air and music of bird calls and the murmur and laugh of wood winds in the trees overhead. Now and then you might see a rabbit skipping across the road if you were quiet — which, with Anne and Diana, happened about once in a blue moon. Down in the valley the path came out to the main road and then it was just up the spruce hill to the school.

The Avonlea school was a whitewashed building, low in the eaves and wide in the windows, furnished inside with comfortable substantial old-fashioned desks that opened and shut, and were carved all over their lids with the initials and hieroglyphics of three generations of school children. The schoolhouse was set back from the road and behind it was a dusky fir wood and a brook where all the children put their bottles of milk in the morning to keep cool and sweet until dinner hour.

Marilla had seen Anne start off to school on the first day of September with many secret misgivings. Anne was such an odd girl. How would she get on with the other children? And how on earth would she ever manage to hold her tongue during school hours?

Things went better than Marilla feared, however. Anne came home that evening in high spirits.

“I think I’m going to like school here,” she announced. “I don’t think much of the master, though. He’s all the time curling his mustache and making eyes at Prissy Andrews. Prissy is grown up, you know. She’s sixteen and she’s studying for the entrance examination into Queen’s Academy at Charlottetown next year. Tillie Boulter says the master is DEAD GONE on her. She’s got a beautiful complexion and curly brown hair and she does it up so elegantly. She sits in the long seat at the back and he sits there, too, most of the time — to explain her lessons, he says. But Ruby Gillis says she saw him writing something on her slate and when Prissy read it she blushed as red as a beet and giggled; and Ruby Gillis says she doesn’t believe it had anything to do with the lesson.”

“Anne Shirley, don’t let me hear you talking about your teacher in that way again,” said Marilla sharply. “You don’t go to school to criticize the master. I guess he can teach YOU something, and it’s your business to learn. And I want you to understand right off that you are not to come home telling tales about him. That is something I won’t encourage. I hope you were a good girl.”

“Indeed I was,” said Anne comfortably. “It wasn’t so hard as you might imagine, either. I sit with Diana. Our seat is right by the window and we can look down to the Lake of Shining Waters. There are a lot of nice girls

in school and we had scrumptious fun playing at dinnertime. It's so nice to have a lot of little girls to play with. But of course I like Diana best and always will. I ADORE Diana. I'm dreadfully far behind the others. They're all in the fifth book and I'm only in the fourth. I feel that it's kind of a disgrace. But there's not one of them has such an imagination as I have and I soon found that out. We had reading and geography and Canadian history and dictation today. Mr. Phillips said my spelling was disgraceful and he held up my slate so that everybody could see it, all marked over. I felt so mortified, Marilla; he might have been politer to a stranger, I think. Ruby Gillis gave me an apple and Sophia Sloane lent me a lovely pink card with 'May I see you home?' on it. I'm to give it back to her tomorrow. And Tillie Boulter let me wear her bead ring all the afternoon. Can I have some of those pearl beads off the old pincushion in the garret to make myself a ring? And oh, Marilla, Jane Andrews told me that Minnie MacPherson told her that she heard Prissy Andrews tell Sara Gillis that I had a very pretty nose. Marilla, that is the first compliment I have ever had in my life and you can't imagine what a strange feeling it gave me. Marilla, have I really a pretty nose? I know you'll tell me the truth."

"Your nose is well enough," said Marilla shortly. Secretly she thought Anne's nose was a remarkable pretty one; but she had no intention of telling her so.

That was three weeks ago and all had gone smoothly so far. And now, this crisp September morning, Anne and Diana were tripping blithely down the Birch Path, two of the happiest little girls in Avonlea.

"I guess Gilbert Blythe will be in school today," said Diana. "He's been visiting his cousins over in New Brunswick all summer and he only came home Saturday night. He's AW'FLY handsome, Anne. And he teases the girls something terrible. He just torments our lives out."

Diana's voice indicated that she rather liked having her life tormented out than not.

"Gilbert Blythe?" said Anne. "Isn't his name that's written up on the porch wall with Julia Bell's and a big 'Take Notice' over them?"

“Yes,” said Diana, tossing her head, “but I’m sure he doesn’t like Julia Bell so very much. I’ve heard him say he studied the multiplication table by her freckles.”

“Oh, don’t speak about freckles to me,” implored Anne. “It isn’t delicate when I’ve got so many. But I do think that writing take-notices up on the wall about the boys and girls is the silliest ever. I should just like to see anybody dare to write my name up with a boy’s. Not, of course,” she hastened to add, “that anybody would.”

Anne sighed. She didn’t want her name written up. But it was a little humiliating to know that there was no danger of it.

“Nonsense,” said Diana, whose black eyes and glossy tresses had played such havoc with the hearts of Avonlea schoolboys that her name figured on the porch walls in half a dozen take-notices. “It’s only meant as a joke. And don’t you be too sure your name won’t ever be written up. Charlie Sloane is DEAD GONE on you. He told his mother — his MOTHER, mind you — that you were the smartest girl in school. That’s better than being good looking.”

“No, it isn’t,” said Anne, feminine to the core. “I’d rather be pretty than clever. And I hate Charlie Sloane, I can’t bear a boy with goggle eyes. If anyone wrote my name up with his I’d never GET over it, Diana Barry. But it IS nice to keep head of your class.”

“You’ll have Gilbert in your class after this,” said Diana, “and he’s used to being head of his class, I can tell you. He’s only in the fourth book although he’s nearly fourteen. Four years ago his father was sick and had to go out to Alberta for his health and Gilbert went with him. They were there three years and Gil didn’t go to school hardly any until they came back. You won’t find it so easy to keep head after this, Anne.”

“I’m glad,” said Anne quickly. “I couldn’t really feel proud of keeping head of little boys and girls of just nine or ten. I got up yesterday spelling ‘ebullition.’ Josie Pye was head and, mind you, she peeped in her book. Mr. Phillips didn’t see her — he was looking at Prissy Andrews — but I

did. I just swept her a look of freezing scorn and she got as red as a beet and spelled it wrong after all.”

“Those Pye girls are cheats all round,” said Diana indignantly, as they climbed the fence of the main road. “Gertie Pye actually went and put her milk bottle in my place in the brook yesterday. Did you ever? I don’t speak to her now.”

When Mr. Phillips was in the back of the room hearing Prissy Andrews’s Latin, Diana whispered to Anne,

“That’s Gilbert Blythe sitting right across the aisle from you, Anne. Just look at him and see if you don’t think he’s handsome.”

Anne looked accordingly. She had a good chance to do so, for the said Gilbert Blythe was absorbed in stealthily pinning the long yellow braid of Ruby Gillis, who sat in front of him, to the back of her seat. He was a tall boy, with curly brown hair, roguish hazel eyes, and a mouth twisted into a teasing smile. Presently Ruby Gillis started up to take a sum to the master; she fell back into her seat with a little shriek, believing that her hair was pulled out by the roots. Everybody looked at her and Mr. Phillips glared so sternly that Ruby began to cry. Gilbert had whisked the pin out of sight and was studying his history with the soberest face in the world; but when the commotion subsided he looked at Anne and winked with inexpressible drollery.

“I think your Gilbert Blythe IS handsome,” confided Anne to Diana, “but I think he’s very bold. It isn’t good manners to wink at a strange girl.”

But it was not until the afternoon that things really began to happen.

Mr. Phillips was back in the corner explaining a problem in algebra to Prissy Andrews and the rest of the scholars were doing pretty much as they pleased eating green apples, whispering, drawing pictures on their slates, and driving crickets harnessed to strings, up and down aisle. Gilbert Blythe was trying to make Anne Shirley look at him and failing utterly, because Anne was at that moment totally oblivious not only to the very existence of Gilbert Blythe, but of every other scholar in Avonlea school

itself. With her chin propped on her hands and her eyes fixed on the blue glimpse of the Lake of Shining Waters that the west window afforded, she was far away in a gorgeous dreamland hearing and seeing nothing save her own wonderful visions.

Gilbert Blythe wasn't used to putting himself out to make a girl look at him and meeting with failure. She SHOULD look at him, that redhaired Shirley girl with the little pointed chin and the big eyes that weren't like the eyes of any other girl in Avonlea school.

Gilbert reached across the aisle, picked up the end of Anne's long red braid, held it out at arm's length and said in a piercing whisper:

"Carrots! Carrots!"

Then Anne looked at him with a vengeance!

She did more than look. She sprang to her feet, her bright fancies fallen into cureless ruin. She flashed one indignant glance at Gilbert from eyes whose angry sparkle was swiftly quenched in equally angry tears.

"You mean, hateful boy!" she exclaimed passionately. "How dare you!"

And then — thwack! Anne had brought her slate down on Gilbert's head and cracked it — slate not head — clear across.

Avonlea school always enjoyed a scene. This was an especially enjoyable one. Everybody said "Oh" in horrified delight. Diana gasped. Ruby Gillis, who was inclined to be hysterical, began to cry. Tommy Sloane let his team of crickets escape him altogether while he stared open-mouthed at the tableau.

Mr. Phillips stalked down the aisle and laid his hand heavily on Anne's shoulder.

"Anne Shirley, what does this mean?" he said angrily. Anne returned no answer. It was asking too much of flesh and blood to expect her to tell

before the whole school that she had been called “carrots.” Gilbert it was who spoke up stoutly.

“It was my fault Mr. Phillips. I teased her.”

Mr. Phillips paid no heed to Gilbert.

“I am sorry to see a pupil of mine displaying such a temper and such a vindictive spirit,” he said in a solemn tone, as if the mere fact of being a pupil of his ought to root out all evil passions from the hearts of small imperfect mortals. “Anne, go and stand on the platform in front of the blackboard for the rest of the afternoon.”

Anne would have infinitely preferred a whipping to this punishment under which her sensitive spirit quivered as from a whiplash. With a white, set face she obeyed. Mr. Phillips took a chalk crayon and wrote on the blackboard above her head.

“Ann Shirley has a very bad temper. Ann Shirley must learn to control her temper,” and then read it out loud so that even the primer class, who couldn’t read writing, should understand it.

Anne stood there the rest of the afternoon with that legend above her. She did not cry or hang her head. Anger was still too hot in her heart for that and it sustained her amid all her agony of humiliation. With resentful eyes and passion-red cheeks she confronted alike Diana’s sympathetic gaze and Charlie Sloane’s indignant nods and Josie Pye’s malicious smiles. As for Gilbert Blythe, she would not even look at him. She would NEVER look at him again! She would never speak to him!!

When school was dismissed Anne marched out with her red head held high. Gilbert Blythe tried to intercept her at the porch door.

“I’m awfully sorry I made fun of your hair, Anne,” he whispered contritely. “Honest I am. Don’t be mad for keeps, now.”

Anne swept by disdainfully, without look or sign of hearing. “Oh how could you, Anne?” breathed Diana as they went down the road half

reproachfully, half admiringly. Diana felt that SHE could never have resisted Gilbert's plea.

"I shall never forgive Gilbert Blythe," said Anne firmly. "And Mr. Phillips spelled my name without an e, too. The iron has entered into my soul, Diana."

Diana hadn't the least idea what Anne meant but she understood it was something terrible.

"You mustn't mind Gilbert making fun of your hair," she said soothingly. "Why, he makes fun of all the girls. He laughs at mine because it's so black. He's called me a crow a dozen times; and I never heard him apologize for anything before, either."

"There's a great deal of difference between being called a crow and being called carrots," said Anne with dignity. "Gilbert Blythe has hurt my feelings EXCRUCIATINGLY, Diana."

It is possible the matter might have blown over without more excruciation if nothing else had happened. But when things begin to happen they are apt to keep on.

Avonlea scholars often spent noon hour picking gum in Mr. Bell's spruce grove over the hill and across his big pasture field. From there they could keep an eye on Eben Wright's house, where the master boarded. When they saw Mr. Phillips emerging therefrom they ran for the schoolhouse; but the distance being about three times longer than Mr. Wright's lane they were very apt to arrive there, breathless and gasping, some three minutes too late.

On the following day Mr. Phillips was seized with one of his spasmodic fits of reform and announced before going home to dinner, that he should expect to find all the scholars in their seats when he returned. Anyone who came in late would be punished.

All the boys and some of the girls went to Mr. Bell's spruce grove as usual, fully intending to stay only long enough to "pick a chew." But

spruce groves are seductive and yellow nuts of gum beguiling; they picked and loitered and strayed; and as usual the first thing that recalled them to a sense of the flight of time was Jimmy Glover shouting from the top of a patriarchal old spruce "Master's coming."

The girls who were on the ground, started first and managed to reach the schoolhouse in time but without a second to spare. The boys, who had to wriggle hastily down from the trees, were later; and Anne, who had not been picking gum at all but was wandering happily in the far end of the grove, waist deep among the bracken, singing softly to herself, with a wreath of rice lilies on her hair as if she were some wild divinity of the shadowy places, was latest of all. Anne could run like a deer, however; run she did with the impish result that she overtook the boys at the door and was swept into the schoolhouse among them just as Mr. Phillips was in the act of hanging up his hat.

Mr. Phillips's brief reforming energy was over; he didn't want the bother of punishing a dozen pupils; but it was necessary to do something to save his word, so he looked about for a scapegoat and found it in Anne, who had dropped into her seat, gasping for breath, with a forgotten lily wreath hanging askew over one ear and giving her a particularly rakish and disheveled appearance.

"Anne Shirley, since you seem to be so fond of the boys' company we shall indulge your taste for it this afternoon," he said sarcastically. "Take those flowers out of your hair and sit with Gilbert Blythe."

The other boys snickered. Diana, turning pale with pity, plucked the wreath from Anne's hair and squeezed her hand. Anne stared at the master as if turned to stone.

"Did you hear what I said, Anne?" queried Mr. Phillips sternly.

"Yes, sir," said Anne slowly "but I didn't suppose you really meant it."

"I assure you I did" — still with the sarcastic inflection which all the children, and Anne especially, hated. It flicked on the raw. "Obey me at once."

For a moment Anne looked as if she meant to disobey. Then, realizing that there was no help for it, she rose haughtily, stepped across the aisle, sat down beside Gilbert Blythe, and buried her face in her arms on the desk. Ruby Gillis, who got a glimpse of it as it went down, told the others going home from school that she'd "acksually never seen anything like it — it was so white, with awful little red spots in it."

To Anne, this was as the end of all things. It was bad enough to be singled out for punishment from among a dozen equally guilty ones; it was worse still to be sent to sit with a boy, but that that boy should be Gilbert Blythe was heaping insult on injury to a degree utterly unbearable. Anne felt that she could not bear it and it would be of no use to try. Her whole being seethed with shame and anger and humiliation.

At first the other scholars looked and whispered and giggled and nudged. But as Anne never lifted her head and as Gilbert worked fractions as if his whole soul was absorbed in them and them only, they soon returned to their own tasks and Anne was forgotten. When Mr. Phillips called the history class out Anne should have gone, but Anne did not move, and Mr. Phillips, who had been writing some verses "To Priscilla" before he called the class, was thinking about an obstinate rhyme still and never missed her. Once, when nobody was looking, Gilbert took from his desk a little pink candy heart with a gold motto on it, "You are sweet," and slipped it under the curve of Anne's arm. Whereupon Anne arose, took the pink heart gingerly between the tips of her fingers, dropped it on the floor, ground it to powder beneath her heel, and resumed her position without deigning to bestow a glance on Gilbert.

When school went out Anne marched to her desk, ostentatiously took out everything therein, books and writing tablet, pen and ink, testament and arithmetic, and piled them neatly on her cracked slate.

"What are you taking all those things home for, Anne?" Diana wanted to know, as soon as they were out on the road. She had not dared to ask the question before.

"I am not coming back to school any more," said Anne. Diana gasped and stared at Anne to see if she meant it.

“Will Marilla let you stay home?” she asked.

“She’ll have to,” said Anne. “I’ll NEVER go to school to that man again.”

“Oh, Anne!” Diana looked as if she were ready to cry. “I do think you’re mean. What shall I do? Mr. Phillips will make me sit with that horrid Gertie Pye — I know he will because she is sitting alone. Do come back, Anne.”

“I’d do almost anything in the world for you, Diana,” said Anne sadly. “I’d let myself be torn limb from limb if it would do you any good. But I can’t do this, so please don’t ask it. You harrow up my very soul.”

“Just think of all the fun you will miss,” mourned Diana. “We are going to build the loveliest new house down by the brook; and we’ll be playing ball next week and you’ve never played ball, Anne. It’s tremendously exciting. And we’re going to learn a new song — Jane Andrews is practicing it up now; and Alice Andrews is going to bring a new Pansy book next week and we’re all going to read it out loud, chapter about, down by the brook. And you know you are so fond of reading out loud, Anne.”

Nothing moved Anne in the least. Her mind was made up. She would not go to school to Mr. Phillips again; she told Marilla so when she got home.

“Nonsense,” said Marilla.

“It isn’t nonsense at all,” said Anne, gazing at Marilla with solemn, reproachful eyes. “Don’t you understand, Marilla? I’ve been insulted.”

“Insulted fiddlesticks! You’ll go to school tomorrow as usual.”

“Oh, no.” Anne shook her head gently. “I’m not going back, Marilla. I’ll learn my lessons at home and I’ll be as good as I can be and hold my tongue all the time if it’s possible at all. But I will not go back to school, I assure you.”

Marilla saw something remarkably like unyielding stubbornness looking out of Anne’s small face. She understood that she would have trouble in

overcoming it; but she resolved wisely to say nothing more just then. "I'll run down and see Rachel about it this evening," she thought. "There's no use reasoning with Anne now. She's too worked up and I've an idea she can be awful stubborn if she takes the notion. Far as I can make out from her story, Mr. Phillips has been carrying matters with a rather high hand. But it would never do to say so to her. I'll just talk it over with Rachel. She's sent ten children to school and she ought to know something about it. She'll have heard the whole story, too, by this time."

Marilla found Mrs. Lynde knitting quilts as industriously and cheerfully as usual.

"I suppose you know what I've come about," she said, a little shamefacedly.

Mrs. Rachel nodded.

"About Anne's fuss in school, I reckon," she said. "Tillie Boulter was in on her way home from school and told me about it." "I don't know what to do with her," said Marilla. "She declares she won't go back to school. I never saw a child so worked up. I've been expecting trouble ever since she started to school. I knew things were going too smooth to last. She's so high strung. What would you advise, Rachel?"

"Well, since you've asked my advice, Marilla," said Mrs. Lynde amiably — Mrs. Lynde dearly loved to be asked for advice — "I'd just humor her a little at first, that's what I'd do. It's my belief that Mr. Phillips was in the wrong. Of course, it doesn't do to say so to the children, you know. And of course he did right to punish her yesterday for giving way to temper. But today it was different. The others who were late should have been punished as well as Anne, that's what. And I don't believe in making the girls sit with the boys for punishment. It isn't modest. Tillie Boulter was real indignant. She took Anne's part right through and said all the scholars did too. Anne seems real popular among them, somehow. I never thought she'd take with them so well."

"Then you really think I'd better let her stay home," said Marilla in amazement.

“Yes. That is I wouldn’t say school to her again until she said it herself. Depend upon it, Marilla, she’ll cool off in a week or so and be ready enough to go back of her own accord, that’s what, while, if you were to make her go back right off, dear knows what freak or tantrum she’d take next and make more trouble than ever. The less fuss made the better, in my opinion. She won’t miss much by not going to school, as far as THAT goes. Mr. Phillips isn’t any good at all as a teacher. The order he keeps is scandalous, that’s what, and he neglects the young fry and puts all his time on those big scholars he’s getting ready for Queen’s. He’d never have got the school for another year if his uncle hadn’t been a trustee — THE trustee, for he just leads the other two around by the nose, that’s what. I declare, I don’t know what education in this Island is coming to.”

Mrs. Rachel shook her head, as much as to say if she were only at the head of the educational system of the Province things would be much better managed.

Marilla took Mrs. Rachel’s advice and not another word was said to Anne about going back to school. She learned her lessons at home, did her chores, and played with Diana in the chilly purple autumn twilights; but when she met Gilbert Blythe on the road or encountered him in Sunday school she passed him by with an icy contempt that was no whit thawed by his evident desire to appease her. Even Diana’s efforts as a peacemaker were of no avail. Anne had evidently made up her mind to hate Gilbert Blythe to the end of life.

As much as she hated Gilbert, however, did she love Diana, with all the love of her passionate little heart, equally intense in its likes and dislikes. One evening Marilla, coming in from the orchard with a basket of apples, found Anne sitting along by the east window in the twilight, crying bitterly.

“Whatever’s the matter now, Anne?” she asked.

“It’s about Diana,” sobbed Anne luxuriously. “I love Diana so, Marilla. I cannot ever live without her. But I know very well when we grow up that Diana will get married and go away and leave me. And oh, what shall I do? I hate her husband — I just hate him furiously. I’ve been imagining it all

out — the wedding and everything — Diana dressed in snowy garments, with a veil, and looking as beautiful and regal as a queen; and me the bridesmaid, with a lovely dress too, and puffed sleeves, but with a breaking heart hid beneath my smiling face. And then bidding Diana goodbye-e-e—” Here Anne broke down entirely and wept with increasing bitterness.

Marilla turned quickly away to hide her twitching face; but it was no use; she collapsed on the nearest chair and burst into such a hearty and unusual peal of laughter that Matthew, crossing the yard outside, halted in amazement. When had he heard Marilla laugh like that before?

“Well, Anne Shirley,” said Marilla as soon as she could speak, “if you must borrow trouble, for pity’s sake borrow it handier home. I should think you had an imagination, sure enough.”

CHAPTER XVI.

Diana Is Invited to Tea with Tragic Results

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OCTOBER was a beautiful month at Green Gables, when the birches in the hollow turned as golden as sunshine and the maples behind the orchard were royal crimson and the wild cherry trees along the lane put on the loveliest shades of dark red and bronzy green, while the fields sunned themselves in aftermaths.

Anne reveled in the world of color about her.

“Oh, Marilla,” she exclaimed one Saturday morning, coming dancing in with her arms full of gorgeous boughs, “I’m so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. It would be terrible if we just skipped from September to November, wouldn’t it? Look at these maple branches. Don’t they give you a thrill — several thrills? I’m going to decorate my room with them.”

“Messy things,” said Marilla, whose aesthetic sense was not noticeably developed. “You clutter up your room entirely too much with out-of-doors stuff, Anne. Bedrooms were made to sleep in.”

“Oh, and dream in too, Marilla. And you know one can dream so much better in a room where there are pretty things. I’m going to put these boughs in the old blue jug and set them on my table.”

“Mind you don’t drop leaves all over the stairs then. I’m going on a meeting of the Aid Society at Carmody this afternoon, Anne, and I won’t likely be home before dark. You’ll have to get Matthew and Jerry their supper, so mind you don’t forget to put the tea to draw until you sit down at the table as you did last time.”

“It was dreadful of me to forget,” said Anne apologetically, “but that was the afternoon I was trying to think of a name for Violet Vale and it crowded other things out. Matthew was so good. He never scolded a bit. He put the tea down himself and said we could wait awhile as well as not. And I told him a lovely fairy story while we were waiting, so he didn’t find the time long at all. It was a beautiful fairy story, Marilla. I forgot the end of it, so I made up an end for it myself and Matthew said he couldn’t tell where the join came in.”

“Matthew would think it all right, Anne, if you took a notion to get up and have dinner in the middle of the night. But you keep your wits about you this time. And — I don’t really know if I’m doing right — it may make you more addled than ever — but you can ask Diana to come over and spend the afternoon with you and have tea here.”

“Oh, Marilla!” Anne clasped her hands. “How perfectly lovely! You ARE able to imagine things after all or else you’d never have understood how I’ve longed for that very thing. It will seem so nice and grown-upish. No fear of my forgetting to put the tea to draw when I have company. Oh, Marilla, can I use the rosebud spray tea set?”

“No, indeed! The rosebud tea set! Well, what next? You know I never use that except for the minister or the Aids. You’ll put down the old brown tea set. But you can open the little yellow crock of cherry preserves. It’s time it was being used anyhow — I believe it’s beginning to work. And you can cut some fruit cake and have some of the cookies and snaps.”

“I can just imagine myself sitting down at the head of the table and pouring out the tea,” said Anne, shutting her eyes ecstatically. “And asking Diana if she takes sugar! I know she doesn’t but of course I’ll ask her just as if I didn’t know. And then pressing her to take another piece of fruit cake and another helping of preserves. Oh, Marilla, it’s a wonderful sensation just to think of it. Can I take her into the spare room to lay off her hat when she comes? And then into the parlor to sit?”

“No. The sitting room will do for you and your company. But there’s a bottle half full of raspberry cordial that was left over from the church social the other night. It’s on the second shelf of the sitting-room closet

and you and Diana can have it if you like, and a cooky to eat with it along in the afternoon, for I daresay Matthew'll be late coming in to tea since he's hauling potatoes to the vessel."

Anne flew down to the hollow, past the Dryad's Bubble and up the spruce path to Orchard Slope, to ask Diana to tea. As a result just after Marilla had driven off to Carmody, Diana came over, dressed in HER second-best dress and looking exactly as it is proper to look when asked out to tea. At other times she was wont to run into the kitchen without knocking; but now she knocked primly at the front door. And when Anne, dressed in her second best, as primly opened it, both little girls shook hands as gravely as if they had never met before. This unnatural solemnity lasted until after Diana had been taken to the east gable to lay off her hat and then had sat for ten minutes in the sitting room, toes in position.

"How is your mother?" inquired Anne politely, just as if she had not seen Mrs. Barry picking apples that morning in excellent health and spirits.

"She is very well, thank you. I suppose Mr. Cuthbert is hauling potatoes to the LILY SANDS this afternoon, is he?" said Diana, who had ridden down to Mr. Harmon Andrews's that morning in Matthew's cart.

"Yes. Our potato crop is very good this year. I hope your father's crop is good too."

"It is fairly good, thank you. Have you picked many of your apples yet?"

"Oh, ever so many," said Anne forgetting to be dignified and jumping up quickly. "Let's go out to the orchard and get some of the Red Sweetings, Diana. Marilla says we can have all that are left on the tree. Marilla is a very generous woman. She said we could have fruit cake and cherry preserves for tea. But it isn't good manners to tell your company what you are going to give them to eat, so I won't tell you what she said we could have to drink. Only it begins with an R and a C and it's bright red color. I love bright red drinks, don't you? They taste twice as good as any other color."

The orchard, with its great sweeping boughs that bent to the ground with fruit, proved so delightful that the little girls spent most of the afternoon in it, sitting in a grassy corner where the frost had spared the green and the mellow autumn sunshine lingered warmly, eating apples and talking as hard as they could. Diana had much to tell Anne of what went on in school. She had to sit with Gertie Pye and she hated it; Gertie squeaked her pencil all the time and it just made her — Diana's — blood run cold; Ruby Gillis had charmed all her warts away, true's you live, with a magic pebble that old Mary Joe from the Creek gave her. You had to rub the warts with the pebble and then throw it away over your left shoulder at the time of the new moon and the warts would all go. Charlie Sloane's name was written up with Em White's on the porch wall and Em White was AWFUL MAD about it; Sam Boulter had "sassed" Mr. Phillips in class and Mr. Phillips whipped him and Sam's father came down to the school and dared Mr. Phillips to lay a hand on one of his children again; and Mattie Andrews had a new red hood and a blue crossover with tassels on it and the airs she put on about it were perfectly sickening; and Lizzie Wright didn't speak to Mamie Wilson because Mamie Wilson's grownup sister had cut out Lizzie Wright's grownup sister with her beau; and everybody missed Anne so and wished she's come to school again; and Gilbert Blythe —

But Anne didn't want to hear about Gilbert Blythe. She jumped up hurriedly and said suppose they go in and have some raspberry cordial.

Anne looked on the second shelf of the room pantry but there was no bottle of raspberry cordial there. Search revealed it away back on the top shelf. Anne put it on a tray and set it on the table with a tumbler.

"Now, please help yourself, Diana," she said politely. "I don't believe I'll have any just now. I don't feel as if I wanted any after all those apples."

Diana poured herself out a tumblerful, looked at its bright-red hue admiringly, and then sipped it daintily.

"That's awfully nice raspberry cordial, Anne," she said. "I didn't know raspberry cordial was so nice."

“I’m real glad you like it. Take as much as you want. I’m going to run out and stir the fire up. There are so many responsibilities on a person’s mind when they’re keeping house, isn’t there?”

When Anne came back from the kitchen Diana was drinking her second glassful of cordial; and, being entreated thereto by Anne, she offered no particular objection to the drinking of a third. The tumblerfuls were generous ones and the raspberry cordial was certainly very nice.

“The nicest I ever drank,” said Diana. “It’s ever so much nicer than Mrs. Lynde’s, although she brags of hers so much. It doesn’t taste a bit like hers.”

“I should think Marilla’s raspberry cordial would prob’ly be much nicer than Mrs. Lynde’s,” said Anne loyally. “Marilla is a famous cook. She is trying to teach me to cook but I assure you, Diana, it is uphill work. There’s so little scope for imagination in cookery. You just have to go by rules. The last time I made a cake I forgot to put the flour in. I was thinking the loveliest story about you and me, Diana. I thought you were desperately ill with smallpox and everybody deserted you, but I went boldly to your bedside and nursed you back to life; and then I took the smallpox and died and I was buried under those poplar trees in the graveyard and you planted a rosebush by my grave and watered it with your tears; and you never, never forgot the friend of your youth who sacrificed her life for you. Oh, it was such a pathetic tale, Diana. The tears just rained down over my cheeks while I mixed the cake. But I forgot the flour and the cake was a dismal failure. Flour is so essential to cakes, you know. Marilla was very cross and I don’t wonder. I’m a great trial to her. She was terribly mortified about the pudding sauce last week. We had a plum pudding for dinner on Tuesday and there was half the pudding and a pitcherful of sauce left over. Marilla said there was enough for another dinner and told me to set it on the pantry shelf and cover it. I meant to cover it just as much as could be, Diana, but when I carried it in I was imagining I was a nun — of course I’m a Protestant but I imagined I was a Catholic — taking the veil to bury a broken heart in cloistered seclusion; and I forgot all about covering the pudding sauce. I thought of it next morning and ran to the pantry. Diana, fancy if you can my extreme horror

at finding a mouse drowned in that pudding sauce! I lifted the mouse out with a spoon and threw it out in the yard and then I washed the spoon in three waters. Marilla was out milking and I fully intended to ask her when she came in if I'd give the sauce to the pigs; but when she did come in I was imagining that I was a frost fairy going through the woods turning the trees red and yellow, whichever they wanted to be, so I never thought about the pudding sauce again and Marilla sent me out to pick apples. Well, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Ross from Spencervale came here that morning. You know they are very stylish people, especially Mrs. Chester Ross. When Marilla called me in dinner was all ready and everybody was at the table. I tried to be as polite and dignified as I could be, for I wanted Mrs. Chester Ross to think I was a ladylike little girl even if I wasn't pretty. Everything went right until I saw Marilla coming with the plum pudding in one hand and the pitcher of pudding sauce WARMED UP, in the other. Diana, that was a terrible moment. I remembered everything and I just stood up in my place and shrieked out 'Marilla, you mustn't use that pudding sauce. There was a mouse drowned in it. I forgot to tell you before.' Oh, Diana, I shall never forget that awful moment if I live to be a hundred. Mrs. Chester Ross just LOOKED at me and I thought I would sink through the floor with mortification. She is such a perfect housekeeper and fancy what she must have thought of us. Marilla turned red as fire but she never said a word — then. She just carried that sauce and pudding out and brought in some strawberry preserves. She even offered me some, but I couldn't swallow a mouthful. It was like heaping coals of fire on my head. After Mrs. Chester Ross went away, Marilla gave me a dreadful scolding. Why, Diana, what is the matter?"

Diana had stood up very unsteadily; then she sat down again, putting her hands to her head.

"I'm — I'm awful sick," she said, a little thickly. "I — I — must go right home."

"Oh, you mustn't dream of going home without your tea," cried Anne in distress. "I'll get it right off — I'll go and put the tea down this very minute."

"I must go home," repeated Diana, stupidly but determinedly.

“Let me get you a lunch anyhow,” implored Anne. “Let me give you a bit of fruit cake and some of the cherry preserves. Lie down on the sofa for a little while and you’ll be better. Where do you feel bad?”

“I must go home,” said Diana, and that was all she would say. In vain Anne pleaded.

“I never heard of company going home without tea,” she mourned. “Oh, Diana, do you suppose that it’s possible you’re really taking the smallpox? If you are I’ll go and nurse you, you can depend on that. I’ll never forsake you. But I do wish you’d stay till after tea. Where do you feel bad?”

“I’m awful dizzy,” said Diana.

And indeed, she walked very dizzily. Anne, with tears of disappointment in her eyes, got Diana’s hat and went with her as far as the Barry yard fence. Then she wept all the way back to Green Gables, where she sorrowfully put the remainder of the raspberry cordial back into the pantry and got tea ready for Matthew and Jerry, with all the zest gone out of the performance.

The next day was Sunday and as the rain poured down in torrents from dawn till dusk Anne did not stir abroad from Green Gables. Monday afternoon Marilla sent her down to Mrs. Lynde’s on an errand. In a very short space of time Anne came flying back up the lane with tears rolling down her cheeks. Into the kitchen she dashed and flung herself face downward on the sofa in an agony.

“Whatever has gone wrong now, Anne?” queried Marilla in doubt and dismay. “I do hope you haven’t gone and been saucy to Mrs. Lynde again.”

No answer from Anne save more tears and stormier sobs!

“Anne Shirley, when I ask you a question I want to be answered. Sit right up this very minute and tell me what you are crying about.”

Anne sat up, tragedy personified.

“Mrs. Lynde was up to see Mrs. Barry today and Mrs. Barry was in an awful state,” she wailed. “She says that I set Diana DRUNK Saturday and sent her home in a disgraceful condition. And she says I must be a thoroughly bad, wicked little girl and she’s never, never going to let Diana play with me again. Oh, Marilla, I’m just overcome with woe.”

Marilla stared in blank amazement.

“Set Diana drunk!” she said when she found her voice. “Anne are you or Mrs. Barry crazy? What on earth did you give her?”

“Not a thing but raspberry cordial,” sobbed Anne. “I never thought raspberry cordial would set people drunk, Marilla — not even if they drank three big tumblerfuls as Diana did. Oh, it sounds so — so — like Mrs. Thomas’s husband! But I didn’t mean to set her drunk.”

“Drunk fiddlesticks!” said Marilla, marching to the sitting room pantry. There on the shelf was a bottle which she at once recognized as one containing some of her three-year-old homemade currant wine for which she was celebrated in Avonlea, although certain of the stricter sort, Mrs. Barry among them, disapproved strongly of it. And at the same time Marilla recollected that she had put the bottle of raspberry cordial down in the cellar instead of in the pantry as she had told Anne.

She went back to the kitchen with the wine bottle in her hand. Her face was twitching in spite of herself.

“Anne, you certainly have a genius for getting into trouble. You went and gave Diana currant wine instead of raspberry cordial. Didn’t you know the difference yourself?”

“I never tasted it,” said Anne. “I thought it was the cordial. I meant to be so — so — hospitable. Diana got awfully sick and had to go home. Mrs. Barry told Mrs. Lynde she was simply dead drunk. She just laughed silly-like when her mother asked her what was the matter and went to sleep and slept for hours. Her mother smelled her breath and knew she was drunk. She had a fearful headache all day yesterday. Mrs. Barry is so indignant. She will never believe but what I did it on purpose.”

“I should think she would better punish Diana for being so greedy as to drink three glassfuls of anything,” said Marilla shortly. “Why, three of those big glasses would have made her sick even if it had only been cordial. Well, this story will be a nice handle for those folks who are so down on me for making currant wine, although I haven’t made any for three years ever since I found out that the minister didn’t approve. I just kept that bottle for sickness. There, there, child, don’t cry. I can’t see as you were to blame although I’m sorry it happened so.”

“I must cry,” said Anne. “My heart is broken. The stars in their courses fight against me, Marilla. Diana and I are parted forever. Oh, Marilla, I little dreamed of this when first we swore our vows of friendship.”

“Don’t be foolish, Anne. Mrs. Barry will think better of it when she finds you’re not to blame. I suppose she thinks you’ve done it for a silly joke or something of that sort. You’d best go up this evening and tell her how it was.”

“My courage fails me at the thought of facing Diana’s injured mother,” sighed Anne. “I wish you’d go, Marilla. You’re so much more dignified than I am. Likely she’d listen to you quicker than to me.”

“Well, I will,” said Marilla, reflecting that it would probably be the wiser course. “Don’t cry any more, Anne. It will be all right.”

Marilla had changed her mind about it being all right by the time she got back from Orchard Slope. Anne was watching for her coming and flew to the porch door to meet her.

“Oh, Marilla, I know by your face that it’s been no use,” she said sorrowfully. “Mrs. Barry won’t forgive me?”

“Mrs. Barry indeed!” snapped Marilla. “Of all the unreasonable women I ever saw she’s the worst. I told her it was all a mistake and you weren’t to blame, but she just simply didn’t believe me. And she rubbed it well in about my currant wine and how I’d always said it couldn’t have the least effect on anybody. I just told her plainly that currant wine wasn’t meant to

be drunk three tumblerfuls at a time and that if a child I had to do with was so greedy I'd sober her up with a right good spanking."

Marilla whisked into the kitchen, grievously disturbed, leaving a very much distracted little soul in the porch behind her. Presently Anne stepped out bareheaded into the chill autumn dusk; very determinedly and steadily she took her way down through the sere clover field over the log bridge and up through the spruce grove, lighted by a pale little moon hanging low over the western woods. Mrs. Barry, coming to the door in answer to a timid knock, found a white-lipped eager-eyed suppliant on the doorstep.

Her face hardened. Mrs. Barry was a woman of strong prejudices and dislikes, and her anger was of the cold, sullen sort which is always hardest to overcome. To do her justice, she really believed Anne had made Diana drunk out of sheer malice prepense, and she was honestly anxious to preserve her little daughter from the contamination of further intimacy with such a child.

"What do you want?" she said stiffly.

Anne clasped her hands.

"Oh, Mrs. Barry, please forgive me. I did not mean to — to — intoxicate Diana. How could I? Just imagine if you were a poor little orphan girl that kind people had adopted and you had just one bosom friend in all the world. Do you think you would intoxicate her on purpose? I thought it was only raspberry cordial. I was firmly convinced it was raspberry cordial. Oh, please don't say that you won't let Diana play with me any more. If you do you will cover my life with a dark cloud of woe."

This speech which would have softened good Mrs. Lynde's heart in a twinkling, had no effect on Mrs. Barry except to irritate her still more. She was suspicious of Anne's big words and dramatic gestures and imagined that the child was making fun of her. So she said, coldly and cruelly:

"I don't think you are a fit little girl for Diana to associate with. You'd better go home and behave yourself."

Anne's lips quivered.

"Won't you let me see Diana just once to say farewell?" she implored.

"Diana has gone over to Carmody with her father," said Mrs. Barry, going in and shutting the door.

Anne went back to Green Gables calm with despair.

"My last hope is gone," she told Marilla. "I went up and saw Mrs. Barry myself and she treated me very insultingly. Marilla, I do NOT think she is a well-bred woman. There is nothing more to do except to pray and I haven't much hope that that'll do much good because, Marilla, I do not believe that God Himself can do very much with such an obstinate person as Mrs. Barry."

"Anne, you shouldn't say such things" rebuked Marilla, striving to overcome that unholy tendency to laughter which she was dismayed to find growing upon her. And indeed, when she told the whole story to Matthew that night, she did laugh heartily over Anne's tribulations.

But when she slipped into the east gable before going to bed and found that Anne had cried herself to sleep an unaccustomed softness crept into her face.

"Poor little soul," she murmured, lifting a loose curl of hair from the child's tearstained face. Then she bent down and kissed the flushed cheek on the pillow.

CHAPTER XVII.

A New Interest in Life

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THE next afternoon Anne, bending over her patchwork at the kitchen window, happened to glance out and beheld Diana down by the Dryad's Bubble beckoning mysteriously. In a trice Anne was out of the house and flying down to the hollow, astonishment and hope struggling in her expressive eyes. But the hope faded when she saw Diana's dejected countenance.

"Your mother hasn't relented?" she gasped.

Diana shook her head mournfully.

"No; and oh, Anne, she says I'm never to play with you again. I've cried and cried and I told her it wasn't your fault, but it wasn't any use. I had ever such a time coaxing her to let me come down and say goodbye to you. She said I was only to stay ten minutes and she's timing me by the clock."

"Ten minutes isn't very long to say an eternal farewell in," said Anne tearfully. "Oh, Diana, will you promise faithfully never to forget me, the friend of your youth, no matter what dearer friends may caress thee?"

"Indeed I will," sobbed Diana, "and I'll never have another bosom friend — I don't want to have. I couldn't love anybody as I love you."

"Oh, Diana," cried Anne, clasping her hands, "do you LOVE me?"

"Why, of course I do. Didn't you know that?"

"No." Anne drew a long breath. "I thought you LIKED me of course but I never hoped you LOVED me. Why, Diana, I didn't think anybody could

love me. Nobody ever has loved me since I can remember. Oh, this is wonderful! It's a ray of light which will forever shine on the darkness of a path severed from thee, Diana. Oh, just say it once again."

"I love you devotedly, Anne," said Diana stanchly, "and I always will, you may be sure of that."

"And I will always love thee, Diana," said Anne, solemnly extending her hand. "In the years to come thy memory will shine like a star over my lonely life, as that last story we read together says. Diana, wilt thou give me a lock of thy jet-black tresses in parting to treasure forevermore?"

"Have you got anything to cut it with?" queried Diana, wiping away the tears which Anne's affecting accents had caused to flow afresh, and returning to practicalities.

"Yes. I've got my patchwork scissors in my apron pocket fortunately," said Anne. She solemnly clipped one of Diana's curls. "Fare thee well, my beloved friend. Henceforth we must be as strangers though living side by side. But my heart will ever be faithful to thee."

Anne stood and watched Diana out of sight, mournfully waving her hand to the latter whenever she turned to look back. Then she returned to the house, not a little consoled for the time being by this romantic parting.

"It is all over," she informed Marilla. "I shall never have another friend. I'm really worse off than ever before, for I haven't Katie Maurice and Violetta now. And even if I had it wouldn't be the same. Somehow, little dream girls are not satisfying after a real friend. Diana and I had such an affecting farewell down by the spring. It will be sacred in my memory forever. I used the most pathetic language I could think of and said 'thou' and 'thee.' 'Thou' and 'thee' seem so much more romantic than 'you.' Diana gave me a lock of her hair and I'm going to sew it up in a little bag and wear it around my neck all my life. Please see that it is buried with me, for I don't believe I'll live very long. Perhaps when she sees me lying cold and dead before her Mrs. Barry may feel remorse for what she has done and will let Diana come to my funeral."

“I don’t think there is much fear of your dying of grief as long as you can talk, Anne,” said Marilla unsympathetically.

The following Monday Anne surprised Marilla by coming down from her room with her basket of books on her arm and hip and her lips primmed up into a line of determination.

“I’m going back to school,” she announced. “That is all there is left in life for me, now that my friend has been ruthlessly torn from me. In school I can look at her and muse over days departed.”

“You’d better muse over your lessons and sums,” said Marilla, concealing her delight at this development of the situation. “If you’re going back to school I hope we’ll hear no more of breaking slates over people’s heads and such carryings on. Behave yourself and do just what your teacher tells you.”

“I’ll try to be a model pupil,” agreed Anne dolefully. “There won’t be much fun in it, I expect. Mr. Phillips said Minnie Andrews was a model pupil and there isn’t a spark of imagination or life in her. She is just dull and poky and never seems to have a good time. But I feel so depressed that perhaps it will come easy to me now. I’m going round by the road. I couldn’t bear to go by the Birch Path all alone. I should weep bitter tears if I did.”

Anne was welcomed back to school with open arms. Her imagination had been sorely missed in games, her voice in the singing and her dramatic ability in the perusal aloud of books at dinner hour. Ruby Gillis smuggled three blue plums over to her during testament reading; Ella May MacPherson gave her an enormous yellow pansy cut from the covers of a floral catalogue — a species of desk decoration much prized in Avonlea school. Sophia Sloane offered to teach her a perfectly elegant new pattern of knit lace, so nice for trimming aprons. Katie Boulter gave her a perfume bottle to keep slate water in, and Julia Bell copied carefully on a piece of pale pink paper scalloped on the edges the following effusion:

When twilight drops her curtain down

And pins it with a star

Remember that you have a friend

Though she may wander far.

“It’s so nice to be appreciated,” sighed Anne rapturously to Marilla that night.

The girls were not the only scholars who “appreciated” her. When Anne went to her seat after dinner hour — she had been told by Mr. Phillips to sit with the model Minnie Andrews — she found on her desk a big luscious “strawberry apple.” Anne caught it up all ready to take a bite when she remembered that the only place in Avonlea where strawberry apples grew was in the old Blythe orchard on the other side of the Lake of Shining Waters. Anne dropped the apple as if it were a red-hot coal and ostentatiously wiped her fingers on her handkerchief. The apple lay untouched on her desk until the next morning, when little Timothy Andrews, who swept the school and kindled the fire, annexed it as one of his perquisites. Charlie Sloane’s slate pencil, gorgeously bedizened with striped red and yellow paper, costing two cents where ordinary pencils cost only one, which he sent up to her after dinner hour, met with a more favorable reception. Anne was graciously pleased to accept it and rewarded the donor with a smile which exalted that infatuated youth straightway into the seventh heaven of delight and caused him to make such fearful errors in his dictation that Mr. Phillips kept him in after school to rewrite it.

But as,

The Caesar’s pageant shorn of Brutus’ bust

Did but of Rome’s best son remind her more,

so the marked absence of any tribute or recognition from Diana Barry who was sitting with Gertie Pye embittered Anne’s little triumph.

“Diana might just have smiled at me once, I think,” she mourned to Marilla that night. But the next morning a note most fearfully and wonderfully twisted and folded, and a small parcel were passed across to Anne.

Dear Anne (ran the former)

Mother says I'm not to play with you or talk to you even in school. It isn't my fault and don't be cross at me, because I love you as much as ever. I miss you awfully to tell all my secrets to and I don't like Gertie Pye one bit. I made you one of the new bookmarkers out of red tissue paper. They are awfully fashionable now and only three girls in school know how to make them. When you look at it remember

Your true friend

Diana Barry.

Anne read the note, kissed the bookmark, and dispatched a prompt reply back to the other side of the school.

My own darling Diana: —

Of course I am not cross at you because you have to obey your mother. Our spirits can commune. I shall keep your lovely present forever. Minnie Andrews is a very nice little girl — although she has no imagination — but after having been Diana's busum friend I cannot be Minnie's. Please excuse mistakes because my spelling isn't very good yet, although much improved.

Yours until death us do part

Anne or Cordelia Shirley.

P.S. I shall sleep with your letter under my pillow tonight. A. OR C.S.

Marilla pessimistically expected more trouble since Anne had again begun to go to school. But none developed. Perhaps Anne caught something of the "model" spirit from Minnie Andrews; at least she got on very well with Mr. Phillips thenceforth. She flung herself into her studies heart and soul, determined not to be outdone in any class by Gilbert Blythe. The rivalry between them was soon apparent; it was entirely good natured on Gilbert's side; but it is much to be feared that the same thing cannot be said of Anne, who had certainly an unpraiseworthy tenacity for holding grudges. She was as intense in her hatreds as in her loves. She would not

stoop to admit that she meant to rival Gilbert in schoolwork, because that would have been to acknowledge his existence which Anne persistently ignored; but the rivalry was there and honors fluctuated between them. Now Gilbert was head of the spelling class; now Anne, with a toss of her long red braids, spelled him down. One morning Gilbert had all his sums done correctly and had his name written on the blackboard on the roll of honor; the next morning Anne, having wrestled wildly with decimals the entire evening before, would be first. One awful day they were ties and their names were written up together. It was almost as bad as a take-notice and Anne's mortification was as evident as Gilbert's satisfaction. When the written examinations at the end of each month were held the suspense was terrible. The first month Gilbert came out three marks ahead. The second Anne beat him by five. But her triumph was marred by the fact that Gilbert congratulated her heartily before the whole school. It would have been ever so much sweeter to her if he had felt the sting of his defeat.

Mr. Phillips might not be a very good teacher; but a pupil so inflexibly determined on learning as Anne was could hardly escape making progress under any kind of teacher. By the end of the term Anne and Gilbert were both promoted into the fifth class and allowed to begin studying the elements of "the branches" — by which Latin, geometry, French, and algebra were meant. In geometry Anne met her Waterloo.

"It's perfectly awful stuff, Marilla," she groaned. "I'm sure I'll never be able to make head or tail of it. There is no scope for imagination in it at all. Mr. Phillips says I'm the worst dunce he ever saw at it. And Gil — I mean some of the others are so smart at it. It is extremely mortifying, Marilla.

"Even Diana gets along better than I do. But I don't mind being beaten by Diana. Even although we meet as strangers now I still love her with an INEXTINGUISHABLE love. It makes me very sad at times to think about her. But really, Marilla, one can't stay sad very long in such an interesting world, can one?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Anne to the Rescue

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ALL things great are wound up with all things little. At first glance it might not seem that the decision of a certain Canadian Premier to include Prince Edward Island in a political tour could have much or anything to do with the fortunes of little Anne Shirley at Green Gables. But it had.

It was a January the Premier came, to address his loyal supporters and such of his nonsupporters as chose to be present at the monster mass meeting held in Charlottetown. Most of the Avonlea people were on Premier's side of politics; hence on the night of the meeting nearly all the men and a goodly proportion of the women had gone to town thirty miles away. Mrs. Rachel Lynde had gone too. Mrs. Rachel Lynde was a red-hot politician and couldn't have believed that the political rally could be carried through without her, although she was on the opposite side of politics. So she went to town and took her husband — Thomas would be useful in looking after the horse — and Marilla Cuthbert with her. Marilla had a sneaking interest in politics herself, and as she thought it might be her only chance to see a real live Premier, she promptly took it, leaving Anne and Matthew to keep house until her return the following day.

Hence, while Marilla and Mrs. Rachel were enjoying themselves hugely at the mass meeting, Anne and Matthew had the cheerful kitchen at Green Gables all to themselves. A bright fire was glowing in the old-fashioned Waterloo stove and blue-white frost crystals were shining on the windowpanes. Matthew nodded over a FARMERS' ADVOCATE on the sofa and Anne at the table studied her lessons with grim determination, despite sundry wistful glances at the clock shelf, where lay a new book that Jane Andrews had lent her that day. Jane had assured her that it was warranted to produce any number of thrills, or words to that effect, and Anne's fingers tingled to reach out for it. But that would mean Gilbert

Blythe's triumph on the morrow. Anne turned her back on the clock shelf and tried to imagine it wasn't there.

"Matthew, did you ever study geometry when you went to school?"

"Well now, no, I didn't," said Matthew, coming out of his doze with a start.

"I wish you had," sighed Anne, "because then you'd be able to sympathize with me. You can't sympathize properly if you've never studied it. It is casting a cloud over my whole life. I'm such a dunce at it, Matthew."

"Well now, I dunno," said Matthew soothingly. "I guess you're all right at anything. Mr. Phillips told me last week in Blair's store at Carmody that you was the smartest scholar in school and was making rapid progress. 'Rapid progress' was his very words. There's them as runs down Teddy Phillips and says he ain't much of a teacher, but I guess he's all right."

Matthew would have thought anyone who praised Anne was "all right."

"I'm sure I'd get on better with geometry if only he wouldn't change the letters," complained Anne. "I learn the proposition off by heart and then he draws it on the blackboard and puts different letters from what are in the book and I get all mixed up. I don't think a teacher should take such a mean advantage, do you? We're studying agriculture now and I've found out at last what makes the roads red. It's a great comfort. I wonder how Marilla and Mrs. Lynde are enjoying themselves. Mrs. Lynde says Canada is going to the dogs the way things are being run at Ottawa and that it's an awful warning to the electors. She says if women were allowed to vote we would soon see a blessed change. What way do you vote, Matthew?"

"Conservative," said Matthew promptly. To vote Conservative was part of Matthew's religion.

"Then I'm Conservative too," said Anne decidedly. "I'm glad because Gil — because some of the boys in school are Grits. I guess Mr. Phillips is a Grit too because Prissy Andrews's father is one, and Ruby Gillis says that when a man is courting he always has to agree with the girl's mother in religion and her father in politics. Is that true, Matthew?"

“Well now, I dunno,” said Matthew.

“Did you ever go courting, Matthew?”

“Well now, no, I dunno’s I ever did,” said Matthew, who had certainly never thought of such a thing in his whole existence.

Anne reflected with her chin in her hands.

“It must be rather interesting, don’t you think, Matthew? Ruby Gillis says when she grows up she’s going to have ever so many beaus on the string and have them all crazy about her; but I think that would be too exciting. I’d rather have just one in his right mind. But Ruby Gillis knows a great deal about such matters because she has so many big sisters, and Mrs. Lynde says the Gillis girls have gone off like hot cakes. Mr. Phillips goes up to see Prissy Andrews nearly every evening. He says it is to help her with her lessons but Miranda Sloane is studying for Queen’s too, and I should think she needed help a lot more than Prissy because she’s ever so much stupider, but he never goes to help her in the evenings at all. There are a great many things in this world that I can’t understand very well, Matthew.”

“Well now, I dunno as I comprehend them all myself,” acknowledged Matthew.

“Well, I suppose I must finish up my lessons. I won’t allow myself to open that new book Jane lent me until I’m through. But it’s a terrible temptation, Matthew. Even when I turn my back on it I can see it there just as plain. Jane said she cried herself sick over it. I love a book that makes me cry. But I think I’ll carry that book into the sitting room and lock it in the jam closet and give you the key. And you must NOT give it to me, Matthew, until my lessons are done, not even if I implore you on my bended knees. It’s all very well to say resist temptation, but it’s ever so much easier to resist it if you can’t get the key. And then shall I run down the cellar and get some russets, Matthew? Wouldn’t you like some russets?”

“Well now, I dunno but what I would,” said Matthew, who never ate russets but knew Anne’s weakness for them.

Just as Anne emerged triumphantly from the cellar with her plateful of russets came the sound of flying footsteps on the icy board walk outside and the next moment the kitchen door was flung open and in rushed Diana Barry, white faced and breathless, with a shawl wrapped hastily around her head. Anne promptly let go of her candle and plate in her surprise, and plate, candle, and apples crashed together down the cellar ladder and were found at the bottom embedded in melted grease, the next day, by Marilla, who gathered them up and thanked mercy the house hadn’t been set on fire.

“Whatever is the matter, Diana?” cried Anne. “Has your mother relented at last?”

“Oh, Anne, do come quick,” implored Diana nervously. “Minnie May is awful sick — she’s got croup. Young Mary Joe says — and Father and Mother are away to town and there’s nobody to go for the doctor. Minnie May is awful bad and Young Mary Joe doesn’t know what to do — and oh, Anne, I’m so scared!”

Matthew, without a word, reached out for cap and coat, slipped past Diana and away into the darkness of the yard.

“He’s gone to harness the sorrel mare to go to Carmody for the doctor,” said Anne, who was hurrying on hood and jacket. “I know it as well as if he’d said so. Matthew and I are such kindred spirits I can read his thoughts without words at all.”

“I don’t believe he’ll find the doctor at Carmody,” sobbed Diana. “I know that Dr. Blair went to town and I guess Dr. Spencer would go too. Young Mary Joe never saw anybody with croup and Mrs. Lynde is away. Oh, Anne!”

“Don’t cry, Di,” said Anne cheerily. “I know exactly what to do for croup. You forget that Mrs. Hammond had twins three times. When you look after three pairs of twins you naturally get a lot of experience. They all had

croup regularly. Just wait till I get the ipecac bottle — you mayn't have any at your house. Come on now."

The two little girls hastened out hand in hand and hurried through Lover's Lane and across the crusted field beyond, for the snow was too deep to go by the shorter wood way. Anne, although sincerely sorry for Minnie May, was far from being insensible to the romance of the situation and to the sweetness of once more sharing that romance with a kindred spirit.

The night was clear and frosty, all ebony of shadow and silver of snowy slope; big stars were shining over the silent fields; here and there the dark pointed firs stood up with snow powdering their branches and the wind whistling through them. Anne thought it was truly delightful to go skimming through all this mystery and loveliness with your bosom friend who had been so long estranged.

Minnie May, aged three, was really very sick. She lay on the kitchen sofa feverish and restless, while her hoarse breathing could be heard all over the house. Young Mary Joe, a buxom, broad-faced French girl from the creek, whom Mrs. Barry had engaged to stay with the children during her absence, was helpless and bewildered, quite incapable of thinking what to do, or doing it if she thought of it.

Anne went to work with skill and promptness.

"Minnie May has croup all right; she's pretty bad, but I've seen them worse. First we must have lots of hot water. I declare, Diana, there isn't more than a cupful in the kettle! There, I've filled it up, and, Mary Joe, you may put some wood in the stove. I don't want to hurt your feelings but it seems to me you might have thought of this before if you'd any imagination. Now, I'll undress Minnie May and put her to bed and you try to find some soft flannel cloths, Diana. I'm going to give her a dose of ipecac first of all."

Minnie May did not take kindly to the ipecac but Anne had not brought up three pairs of twins for nothing. Down that ipecac went, not only once, but many times during the long, anxious night when the two little girls worked patiently over the suffering Minnie May, and Young Mary Joe, honestly

anxious to do all she could, kept up a roaring fire and heated more water than would have been needed for a hospital of croupy babies.

It was three o'clock when Matthew came with a doctor, for he had been obliged to go all the way to Spencervale for one. But the pressing need for assistance was past. Minnie May was much better and was sleeping soundly.

"I was awfully near giving up in despair," explained Anne. "She got worse and worse until she was sicker than ever the Hammond twins were, even the last pair. I actually thought she was going to choke to death. I gave her every drop of ipecac in that bottle and when the last dose went down I said to myself — not to Diana or Young Mary Joe, because I didn't want to worry them any more than they were worried, but I had to say it to myself just to relieve my feelings—'This is the last lingering hope and I fear, tis a vain one.' But in about three minutes she coughed up the phlegm and began to get better right away. You must just imagine my relief, doctor, because I can't express it in words. You know there are some things that cannot be expressed in words."

"Yes, I know," nodded the doctor. He looked at Anne as if he were thinking some things about her that couldn't be expressed in words. Later on, however, he expressed them to Mr. and Mrs. Barry.

"That little redheaded girl they have over at Cuthbert's is as smart as they make 'em. I tell you she saved that baby's life, for it would have been too late by the time I got there. She seems to have a skill and presence of mind perfectly wonderful in a child of her age. I never saw anything like the eyes of her when she was explaining the case to me."

Anne had gone home in the wonderful, white-frosted winter morning, heavy eyed from loss of sleep, but still talking unweariedly to Matthew as they crossed the long white field and walked under the glittering fairy arch of the Lover's Lane maples.

"Oh, Matthew, isn't it a wonderful morning? The world looks like something God had just imagined for His own pleasure, doesn't it? Those trees look as if I could blow them away with a breath — pouf! I'm so glad

I live in a world where there are white frosts, aren't you? And I'm so glad Mrs. Hammond had three pairs of twins after all. If she hadn't I mightn't have known what to do for Minnie May. I'm real sorry I was ever cross with Mrs. Hammond for having twins. But, oh, Matthew, I'm so sleepy. I can't go to school. I just know I couldn't keep my eyes open and I'd be so stupid. But I hate to stay home, for Gil — some of the others will get head of the class, and it's so hard to get up again — although of course the harder it is the more satisfaction you have when you do get up, haven't you?"

"Well now, I guess you'll manage all right," said Matthew, looking at Anne's white little face and the dark shadows under her eyes. "You just go right to bed and have a good sleep. I'll do all the chores."

Anne accordingly went to bed and slept so long and soundly that it was well on in the white and rosy winter afternoon when she awoke and descended to the kitchen where Marilla, who had arrived home in the meantime, was sitting knitting.

"Oh, did you see the Premier?" exclaimed Anne at once. "What did he look like Marilla?"

"Well, he never got to be Premier on account of his looks," said Marilla. "Such a nose as that man had! But he can speak. I was proud of being a Conservative. Rachel Lynde, of course, being a Liberal, had no use for him. Your dinner is in the oven, Anne, and you can get yourself some blue plum preserve out of the pantry. I guess you're hungry. Matthew has been telling me about last night. I must say it was fortunate you knew what to do. I wouldn't have had any idea myself, for I never saw a case of croup. There now, never mind talking till you've had your dinner. I can tell by the look of you that you're just full up with speeches, but they'll keep."

Marilla had something to tell Anne, but she did not tell it just then for she knew if she did Anne's consequent excitement would lift her clear out of the region of such material matters as appetite or dinner. Not until Anne had finished her saucer of blue plums did Marilla say:

“Mrs. Barry was here this afternoon, Anne. She wanted to see you, but I wouldn’t wake you up. She says you saved Minnie May’s life, and she is very sorry she acted as she did in that affair of the currant wine. She says she knows now you didn’t mean to set Diana drunk, and she hopes you’ll forgive her and be good friends with Diana again. You’re to go over this evening if you like for Diana can’t stir outside the door on account of a bad cold she caught last night. Now, Anne Shirley, for pity’s sake don’t fly up into the air.”

The warning seemed not unnecessary, so uplifted and aerial was Anne’s expression and attitude as she sprang to her feet, her face irradiated with the flame of her spirit.

“Oh, Marilla, can I go right now — without washing my dishes? I’ll wash them when I come back, but I cannot tie myself down to anything so unromantic as dishwashing at this thrilling moment.”

“Yes, yes, run along,” said Marilla indulgently. “Anne Shirley — are you crazy? Come back this instant and put something on you. I might as well call to the wind. She’s gone without a cap or wrap. Look at her tearing through the orchard with her hair streaming. It’ll be a mercy if she doesn’t catch her death of cold.”

Anne came dancing home in the purple winter twilight across the snowy places. Afar in the southwest was the great shimmering, pearl-like sparkle of an evening star in a sky that was pale golden and ethereal rose over gleaming white spaces and dark glens of spruce. The tinkles of sleigh bells among the snowy hills came like elfin chimes through the frosty air, but their music was not sweeter than the song in Anne’s heart and on her lips.

“You see before you a perfectly happy person, Marilla,” she announced. “I’m perfectly happy — yes, in spite of my red hair. Just at present I have a soul above red hair. Mrs. Barry kissed me and cried and said she was so sorry and she could never repay me. I felt fearfully embarrassed, Marilla, but I just said as politely as I could, ‘I have no hard feelings for you, Mrs. Barry. I assure you once for all that I did not mean to intoxicate Diana and henceforth I shall cover the past with the mantle of oblivion.’ That was a pretty dignified way of speaking wasn’t it, Marilla?”

“I felt that I was heaping coals of fire on Mrs. Barry’s head. And Diana and I had a lovely afternoon. Diana showed me a new fancy crochet stitch her aunt over at Carmody taught her. Not a soul in Avonlea knows it but us, and we pledged a solemn vow never to reveal it to anyone else. Diana gave me a beautiful card with a wreath of roses on it and a verse of poetry:

“If you love me as I love you

Nothing but death can part us two.

“And that is true, Marilla. We’re going to ask Mr. Phillips to let us sit together in school again, and Gertie Pye can go with Minnie Andrews. We had an elegant tea. Mrs. Barry had the very best china set out, Marilla, just as if I was real company. I can’t tell you what a thrill it gave me. Nobody ever used their very best china on my account before. And we had fruit cake and pound cake and doughnuts and two kinds of preserves, Marilla. And Mrs. Barry asked me if I took tea and said ‘Pa, why don’t you pass the biscuits to Anne?’ It must be lovely to be grown up, Marilla, when just being treated as if you were is so nice.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Marilla, with a brief sigh.

“Well, anyway, when I am grown up,” said Anne decidedly, “I’m always going to talk to little girls as if they were too, and I’ll never laugh when they use big words. I know from sorrowful experience how that hurts one’s feelings. After tea Diana and I made taffy. The taffy wasn’t very good, I suppose because neither Diana nor I had ever made any before. Diana left me to stir it while she buttered the plates and I forgot and let it burn; and then when we set it out on the platform to cool the cat walked over one plate and that had to be thrown away. But the making of it was splendid fun. Then when I came home Mrs. Barry asked me to come over as often as I could and Diana stood at the window and threw kisses to me all the way down to Lover’s Lane. I assure you, Marilla, that I feel like praying tonight and I’m going to think out a special brand-new prayer in honor of the occasion.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A Concert a Catastrophe and a Confession

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“MARILLA, can I go over to see Diana just for a minute?” asked Anne, running breathlessly down from the east gable one February evening.

“I don’t see what you want to be traipsing about after dark for,” said Marilla shortly. “You and Diana walked home from school together and then stood down there in the snow for half an hour more, your tongues going the whole blessed time, clickety-clack. So I don’t think you’re very badly off to see her again.”

“But she wants to see me,” pleaded Anne. “She has something very important to tell me.”

“How do you know she has?”

“Because she just signaled to me from her window. We have arranged a way to signal with our candles and cardboard. We set the candle on the window sill and make flashes by passing the cardboard back and forth. So many flashes mean a certain thing. It was my idea, Marilla.”

“I’ll warrant you it was,” said Marilla emphatically. “And the next thing you’ll be setting fire to the curtains with your signaling nonsense.”

“Oh, we’re very careful, Marilla. And it’s so interesting. Two flashes mean, ‘Are you there?’ Three mean ‘yes’ and four ‘no.’ Five mean, ‘Come over as soon as possible, because I have something important to reveal.’ Diana has just signaled five flashes, and I’m really suffering to know what it is.”

“Well, you needn’t suffer any longer,” said Marilla sarcastically. “You can go, but you’re to be back here in just ten minutes, remember that.”

Anne did remember it and was back in the stipulated time, although probably no mortal will ever know just what it cost her to confine the discussion of Diana’s important communication within the limits of ten minutes. But at least she had made good use of them.

“Oh, Marilla, what do you think? You know tomorrow is Diana’s birthday. Well, her mother told her she could ask me to go home with her from school and stay all night with her. And her cousins are coming over from Newbridge in a big pung sleigh to go to the Debating Club concert at the hall tomorrow night. And they are going to take Diana and me to the concert — if you’ll let me go, that is. You will, won’t you, Marilla? Oh, I feel so excited.”

“You can calm down then, because you’re not going. You’re better at home in your own bed, and as for that club concert, it’s all nonsense, and little girls should not be allowed to go out to such places at all.”

“I’m sure the Debating Club is a most respectable affair,” pleaded Anne.

“I’m not saying it isn’t. But you’re not going to begin gadding about to concerts and staying out all hours of the night. Pretty doings for children. I’m surprised at Mrs. Barry’s letting Diana go.”

“But it’s such a very special occasion,” mourned Anne, on the verge of tears. “Diana has only one birthday in a year. It isn’t as if birthdays were common things, Marilla. Prissy Andrews is going to recite ‘Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight.’ That is such a good moral piece, Marilla, I’m sure it would do me lots of good to hear it. And the choir are going to sing four lovely pathetic songs that are pretty near as good as hymns. And oh, Marilla, the minister is going to take part; yes, indeed, he is; he’s going to give an address. That will be just about the same thing as a sermon. Please, mayn’t I go, Marilla?”

“You heard what I said, Anne, didn’t you? Take off your boots now and go to bed. It’s past eight.”

“There’s just one more thing, Marilla,” said Anne, with the air of producing the last shot in her locker. “Mrs. Barry told Diana that we might sleep in the spare-room bed. Think of the honor of your little Anne being put in the spare-room bed.”

“It’s an honor you’ll have to get along without. Go to bed, Anne, and don’t let me hear another word out of you.”

When Anne, with tears rolling over her cheeks, had gone sorrowfully upstairs, Matthew, who had been apparently sound asleep on the lounge during the whole dialogue, opened his eyes and said decidedly:

“Well now, Marilla, I think you ought to let Anne go.”

“I don’t then,” retorted Marilla. “Who’s bringing this child up, Matthew, you or me?”

“Well now, you,” admitted Matthew.

“Don’t interfere then.”

“Well now, I ain’t interfering. It ain’t interfering to have your own opinion. And my opinion is that you ought to let Anne go.”

“You’d think I ought to let Anne go to the moon if she took the notion, I’ve no doubt” was Marilla’s amiable rejoinder. “I might have let her spend the night with Diana, if that was all. But I don’t approve of this concert plan. She’d go there and catch cold like as not, and have her head filled up with nonsense and excitement. It would unsettle her for a week. I understand that child’s disposition and what’s good for it better than you, Matthew.”

“I think you ought to let Anne go,” repeated Matthew firmly. Argument was not his strong point, but holding fast to his opinion certainly was. Marilla gave a gasp of helplessness and took refuge in silence. The next morning, when Anne was washing the breakfast dishes in the pantry, Matthew paused on his way out to the barn to say to Marilla again:

“I think you ought to let Anne go, Marilla.”

For a moment Marilla looked things not lawful to be uttered. Then she yielded to the inevitable and said tartly:

“Very well, she can go, since nothing else’ll please you.”

Anne flew out of the pantry, dripping dishcloth in hand.

“Oh, Marilla, Marilla, say those blessed words again.”

“I guess once is enough to say them. This is Matthew’s doings and I wash my hands of it. If you catch pneumonia sleeping in a strange bed or coming out of that hot hall in the middle of the night, don’t blame me, blame Matthew. Anne Shirley, you’re dripping greasy water all over the floor. I never saw such a careless child.”

“Oh, I know I’m a great trial to you, Marilla,” said Anne repentantly. “I make so many mistakes. But then just think of all the mistakes I don’t make, although I might. I’ll get some sand and scrub up the spots before I go to school. Oh, Marilla, my heart was just set on going to that concert. I never was to a concert in my life, and when the other girls talk about them in school I feel so out of it. You didn’t know just how I felt about it, but you see Matthew did. Matthew understands me, and it’s so nice to be understood, Marilla.”

Anne was too excited to do herself justice as to lessons that morning in school. Gilbert Blythe spelled her down in class and left her clear out of sight in mental arithmetic. Anne’s consequent humiliation was less than it might have been, however, in view of the concert and the spare-room bed. She and Diana talked so constantly about it all day that with a stricter teacher than Mr. Phillips dire disgrace must inevitably have been their portion.

Anne felt that she could not have borne it if she had not been going to the concert, for nothing else was discussed that day in school. The Avonlea Debating Club, which met fortnightly all winter, had had several smaller free entertainments; but this was to be a big affair, admission ten cents, in

aid of the library. The Avonlea young people had been practicing for weeks, and all the scholars were especially interested in it by reason of older brothers and sisters who were going to take part. Everybody in school over nine years of age expected to go, except Carrie Sloane, whose father shared Marilla's opinions about small girls going out to night concerts. Carrie Sloane cried into her grammar all the afternoon and felt that life was not worth living.

For Anne the real excitement began with the dismissal of school and increased therefrom in crescendo until it reached to a crash of positive ecstasy in the concert itself. They had a "perfectly elegant tea;" and then came the delicious occupation of dressing in Diana's little room upstairs. Diana did Anne's front hair in the new pompadour style and Anne tied Diana's bows with the especial knack she possessed; and they experimented with at least half a dozen different ways of arranging their back hair. At last they were ready, cheeks scarlet and eyes glowing with excitement.

True, Anne could not help a little pang when she contrasted her plain black tam and shapeless, tight-sleeved, homemade gray-cloth coat with Diana's jaunty fur cap and smart little jacket. But she remembered in time that she had an imagination and could use it.

Then Diana's cousins, the Murrays from Newbridge, came; they all crowded into the big pung sleigh, among straw and furry robes. Anne reveled in the drive to the hall, slipping along over the satin-smooth roads with the snow crisping under the runners. There was a magnificent sunset, and the snowy hills and deep-blue water of the St. Lawrence Gulf seemed to rim in the splendor like a huge bowl of pearl and sapphire brimmed with wine and fire. Tinkles of sleigh bells and distant laughter, that seemed like the mirth of wood elves, came from every quarter.

"Oh, Diana," breathed Anne, squeezing Diana's mittened hand under the fur robe, "isn't it all like a beautiful dream? Do I really look the same as usual? I feel so different that it seems to me it must show in my looks."

"You look awfully nice," said Diana, who having just received a compliment from one of her cousins, felt that she ought to pass it on.

“You’ve got the loveliest color.”

The program that night was a series of “thrills” for at least one listener in the audience, and, as Anne assured Diana, every succeeding thrill was thrillier than the last. When Prissy Andrews, attired in a new pink-silk waist with a string of pearls about her smooth white throat and real carnations in her hair — rumor whispered that the master had sent all the way to town for them for her—”climbed the slimy ladder, dark without one ray of light,” Anne shivered in luxurious sympathy; when the choir sang “Far Above the Gentle Daisies” Anne gazed at the ceiling as if it were frescoed with angels; when Sam Sloane proceeded to explain and illustrate “How Sockery Set a Hen” Anne laughed until people sitting near her laughed too, more out of sympathy with her than with amusement at a selection that was rather threadbare even in Avonlea; and when Mr. Phillips gave Mark Antony’s oration over the dead body of Caesar in the most heart-stirring tones — looking at Prissy Andrews at the end of every sentence — Anne felt that she could rise and mutiny on the spot if but one Roman citizen led the way.

Only one number on the program failed to interest her. When Gilbert Blythe recited “Bingen on the Rhine” Anne picked up Rhoda Murray’s library book and read it until he had finished, when she sat rigidly stiff and motionless while Diana clapped her hands until they tingled.

It was eleven when they got home, sated with dissipation, but with the exceeding sweet pleasure of talking it all over still to come. Everybody seemed asleep and the house was dark and silent. Anne and Diana tiptoed into the parlor, a long narrow room out of which the spare room opened. It was pleasantly warm and dimly lighted by the embers of a fire in the grate.

“Let’s undress here,” said Diana. “It’s so nice and warm.”

“Hasn’t it been a delightful time?” sighed Anne rapturously. “It must be splendid to get up and recite there. Do you suppose we will ever be asked to do it, Diana?”

“Yes, of course, someday. They’re always wanting the big scholars to recite. Gilbert Blythe does often and he’s only two years older than us. Oh,

Anne, how could you pretend not to listen to him? When he came to the line,

“THERE’S ANOTHER, not A SISTER,

he looked right down at you.”

“Diana,” said Anne with dignity, “you are my bosom friend, but I cannot allow even you to speak to me of that person. Are you ready for bed? Let’s run a race and see who’ll get to the bed first.”

The suggestion appealed to Diana. The two little white-clad figures flew down the long room, through the spare-room door, and bounded on the bed at the same moment. And then — something — moved beneath them, there was a gasp and a cry — and somebody said in muffled accents:

“Merciful goodness!”

Anne and Diana were never able to tell just how they got off that bed and out of the room. They only knew that after one frantic rush they found themselves tiptoeing shiveringly upstairs.

“Oh, who was it — WHAT was it?” whispered Anne, her teeth chattering with cold and fright.

“It was Aunt Josephine,” said Diana, gasping with laughter. “Oh, Anne, it was Aunt Josephine, however she came to be there. Oh, and I know she will be furious. It’s dreadful — it’s really dreadful — but did you ever know anything so funny, Anne?”

“Who is your Aunt Josephine?”

“She’s father’s aunt and she lives in Charlottetown. She’s awfully old — seventy anyhow — and I don’t believe she was EVER a little girl. We were expecting her out for a visit, but not so soon. She’s awfully prim and proper and she’ll scold dreadfully about this, I know. Well, we’ll have to sleep with Minnie May — and you can’t think how she kicks.”

Miss Josephine Barry did not appear at the early breakfast the next morning. Mrs. Barry smiled kindly at the two little girls.

“Did you have a good time last night? I tried to stay awake until you came home, for I wanted to tell you Aunt Josephine had come and that you would have to go upstairs after all, but I was so tired I fell asleep. I hope you didn’t disturb your aunt, Diana.”

Diana preserved a discreet silence, but she and Anne exchanged furtive smiles of guilty amusement across the table. Anne hurried home after breakfast and so remained in blissful ignorance of the disturbance which presently resulted in the Barry household until the late afternoon, when she went down to Mrs. Lynde’s on an errand for Marilla.

“So you and Diana nearly frightened poor old Miss Barry to death last night?” said Mrs. Lynde severely, but with a twinkle in her eye. “Mrs. Barry was here a few minutes ago on her way to Carmody. She’s feeling real worried over it. Old Miss Barry was in a terrible temper when she got up this morning — and Josephine Barry’s temper is no joke, I can tell you that. She wouldn’t speak to Diana at all.”

“It wasn’t Diana’s fault,” said Anne contritely. “It was mine. I suggested racing to see who would get into bed first.”

“I knew it!” said Mrs. Lynde, with the exultation of a correct guesser. “I knew that idea came out of your head. Well, it’s made a nice lot of trouble, that’s what. Old Miss Barry came out to stay for a month, but she declares she won’t stay another day and is going right back to town tomorrow, Sunday and all as it is. She’d have gone today if they could have taken her. She had promised to pay for a quarter’s music lessons for Diana, but now she is determined to do nothing at all for such a tomboy. Oh, I guess they had a lively time of it there this morning. The Barrys must feel cut up. Old Miss Barry is rich and they’d like to keep on the good side of her. Of course, Mrs. Barry didn’t say just that to me, but I’m a pretty good judge of human nature, that’s what.”

“I’m such an unlucky girl,” mourned Anne. “I’m always getting into scrapes myself and getting my best friends — people I’d shed my heart’s

blood for — into them too. Can you tell me why it is so, Mrs. Lynde?”

“It’s because you’re too heedless and impulsive, child, that’s what. You never stop to think — whatever comes into your head to say or do you say or do it without a moment’s reflection.”

“Oh, but that’s the best of it,” protested Anne. “Something just flashes into your mind, so exciting, and you must out with it. If you stop to think it over you spoil it all. Haven’t you never felt that yourself, Mrs. Lynde?”

No, Mrs. Lynde had not. She shook her head sagely.

“You must learn to think a little, Anne, that’s what. The proverb you need to go by is ‘Look before you leap’ — especially into spare-room beds.”

Mrs. Lynde laughed comfortably over her mild joke, but Anne remained pensive. She saw nothing to laugh at in the situation, which to her eyes appeared very serious. When she left Mrs. Lynde’s she took her way across the crusted fields to Orchard Slope. Diana met her at the kitchen door.

“Your Aunt Josephine was very cross about it, wasn’t she?” whispered Anne.

“Yes,” answered Diana, stifling a giggle with an apprehensive glance over her shoulder at the closed sitting-room door. “She was fairly dancing with rage, Anne. Oh, how she scolded. She said I was the worst-behaved girl she ever saw and that my parents ought to be ashamed of the way they had brought me up. She says she won’t stay and I’m sure I don’t care. But Father and Mother do.”

“Why didn’t you tell them it was my fault?” demanded Anne.

“It’s likely I’d do such a thing, isn’t it?” said Diana with just scorn. “I’m no telltale, Anne Shirley, and anyhow I was just as much to blame as you.”

“Well, I’m going in to tell her myself,” said Anne resolutely.

Diana stared.

“Anne Shirley, you’d never! why — she’ll eat you alive!”

“Don’t frighten me any more than I am frightened,” implored Anne. “I’d rather walk up to a cannon’s mouth. But I’ve got to do it, Diana. It was my fault and I’ve got to confess. I’ve had practice in confessing, fortunately.”

“Well, she’s in the room,” said Diana. “You can go in if you want to. I wouldn’t dare. And I don’t believe you’ll do a bit of good.”

With this encouragement Anne bearded the lion in its den — that is to say, walked resolutely up to the sitting-room door and knocked faintly. A sharp “Come in” followed.

Miss Josephine Barry, thin, prim, and rigid, was knitting fiercely by the fire, her wrath quite unappeased and her eyes snapping through her gold-rimmed glasses. She wheeled around in her chair, expecting to see Diana, and beheld a white-faced girl whose great eyes were brimmed up with a mixture of desperate courage and shrinking terror.

“Who are you?” demanded Miss Josephine Barry, without ceremony.

“I’m Anne of Green Gables,” said the small visitor tremulously, clasping her hands with her characteristic gesture, “and I’ve come to confess, if you please.”

“Confess what?”

“That it was all my fault about jumping into bed on you last night. I suggested it. Diana would never have thought of such a thing, I am sure. Diana is a very ladylike girl, Miss Barry. So you must see how unjust it is to blame her.”

“Oh, I must, hey? I rather think Diana did her share of the jumping at least. Such carryings on in a respectable house!”

“But we were only in fun,” persisted Anne. “I think you ought to forgive us, Miss Barry, now that we’ve apologized. And anyhow, please forgive Diana and let her have her music lessons. Diana’s heart is set on her music

lessons, Miss Barry, and I know too well what it is to set your heart on a thing and not get it. If you must be cross with anyone, be cross with me. I've been so used in my early days to having people cross at me that I can endure it much better than Diana can."

Much of the snap had gone out of the old lady's eyes by this time and was replaced by a twinkle of amused interest. But she still said severely:

"I don't think it is any excuse for you that you were only in fun. Little girls never indulged in that kind of fun when I was young. You don't know what it is to be awakened out of a sound sleep, after a long and arduous journey, by two great girls coming bounce down on you."

"I don't KNOW, but I can IMAGINE," said Anne eagerly. "I'm sure it must have been very disturbing. But then, there is our side of it too. Have you any imagination, Miss Barry? If you have, just put yourself in our place. We didn't know there was anybody in that bed and you nearly scared us to death. It was simply awful the way we felt. And then we couldn't sleep in the spare room after being promised. I suppose you are used to sleeping in spare rooms. But just imagine what you would feel like if you were a little orphan girl who had never had such an honor."

All the snap had gone by this time. Miss Barry actually laughed — a sound which caused Diana, waiting in speechless anxiety in the kitchen outside, to give a great gasp of relief.

"I'm afraid my imagination is a little rusty — it's so long since I used it," she said. "I dare say your claim to sympathy is just as strong as mine. It all depends on the way we look at it. Sit down here and tell me about yourself."

"I am very sorry I can't," said Anne firmly. "I would like to, because you seem like an interesting lady, and you might even be a kindred spirit although you don't look very much like it. But it is my duty to go home to Miss Marilla Cuthbert. Miss Marilla Cuthbert is a very kind lady who has taken me to bring up properly. She is doing her best, but it is very discouraging work. You must not blame her because I jumped on the bed."

But before I go I do wish you would tell me if you will forgive Diana and stay just as long as you meant to in Avonlea.”

“I think perhaps I will if you will come over and talk to me occasionally,” said Miss Barry.

That evening Miss Barry gave Diana a silver bangle bracelet and told the senior members of the household that she had unpacked her valise.

“I’ve made up my mind to stay simply for the sake of getting better acquainted with that Anne-girl,” she said frankly. “She amuses me, and at my time of life an amusing person is a rarity.”

Marilla’s only comment when she heard the story was, “I told you so.” This was for Matthew’s benefit.

Miss Barry stayed her month out and over. She was a more agreeable guest than usual, for Anne kept her in good humor. They became firm friends.

When Miss Barry went away she said:

“Remember, you Anne-girl, when you come to town you’re to visit me and I’ll put you in my very sparest spare-room bed to sleep.”

“Miss Barry was a kindred spirit, after all,” Anne confided to Marilla. “You wouldn’t think so to look at her, but she is. You don’t find it right out at first, as in Matthew’s case, but after a while you come to see it. Kindred spirits are not so scarce as I used to think. It’s splendid to find out there are so many of them in the world.”

CHAPTER XX.

A Good Imagination Gone Wrong

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Spring had come once more to Green Gables — the beautiful capricious, reluctant Canadian spring, lingering along through April and May in a succession of sweet, fresh, chilly days, with pink sunsets and miracles of resurrection and growth. The maples in Lover's Lane were red budded and little curly ferns pushed up around the Dryad's Bubble. Away up in the barrens, behind Mr. Silas Sloane's place, the Mayflowers blossomed out, pink and white stars of sweetness under their brown leaves. All the school girls and boys had one golden afternoon gathering them, coming home in the clear, echoing twilight with arms and baskets full of flowery spoil.

"I'm so sorry for people who live in lands where there are no Mayflowers," said Anne. "Diana says perhaps they have something better, but there couldn't be anything better than Mayflowers, could there, Marilla? And Diana says if they don't know what they are like they don't miss them. But I think that is the saddest thing of all. I think it would be TRAGIC, Marilla, not to know what Mayflowers are like and NOT to miss them. Do you know what I think Mayflowers are, Marilla? I think they must be the souls of the flowers that died last summer and this is their heaven. But we had a splendid time today, Marilla. We had our lunch down in a big mossy hollow by an old well — such a ROMANTIC spot. Charlie Sloane dared Arty Gillis to jump over it, and Arty did because he wouldn't take a dare. Nobody would in school. It is very FASHIONABLE to dare. Mr. Phillips gave all the Mayflowers he found to Prissy Andrews and I heard him to say 'sweets to the sweet.' He got that out of a book, I know; but it shows he has some imagination. I was offered some Mayflowers too, but I rejected them with scorn. I can't tell you the person's name because I have vowed never to let it cross my lips. We made wreaths of the Mayflowers and put them on our hats; and when the time came to go home we marched in procession down the road, two by two, with our bouquets

and wreaths, singing ‘My Home on the Hill.’ Oh, it was so thrilling, Marilla. All Mr. Silas Sloane’s folks rushed out to see us and everybody we met on the road stopped and stared after us. We made a real sensation.”

“Not much wonder! Such silly doings!” was Marilla’s response.

After the Mayflowers came the violets, and Violet Vale was empurpled with them. Anne walked through it on her way to school with reverent steps and worshiping eyes, as if she trod on holy ground.

“Somehow,” she told Diana, “when I’m going through here I don’t really care whether Gil — whether anybody gets ahead of me in class or not. But when I’m up in school it’s all different and I care as much as ever. There’s such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I’m such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn’t be half so interesting.”

One June evening, when the orchards were pink blossomed again, when the frogs were singing silverly sweet in the marshes about the head of the Lake of Shining Waters, and the air was full of the savor of clover fields and balsamic fir woods, Anne was sitting by her gable window. She had been studying her lessons, but it had grown too dark to see the book, so she had fallen into wide-eyed reverie, looking out past the boughs of the Snow Queen, once more bestarred with its tufts of blossom.

In all essential respects the little gable chamber was unchanged. The walls were as white, the pincushion as hard, the chairs as stiffly and yellowly upright as ever. Yet the whole character of the room was altered. It was full of a new vital, pulsing personality that seemed to pervade it and to be quite independent of schoolgirl books and dresses and ribbons, and even of the cracked blue jug full of apple blossoms on the table. It was as if all the dreams, sleeping and waking, of its vivid occupant had taken a visible although unmaterial form and had tapestried the bare room with splendid filmy tissues of rainbow and moonshine. Presently Marilla came briskly in with some of Anne’s freshly ironed school aprons. She hung them over a chair and sat down with a short sigh. She had had one of her headaches that afternoon, and although the pain had gone she felt weak and “tuckered

out,” as she expressed it. Anne looked at her with eyes limpid with sympathy.

“I do truly wish I could have had the headache in your place, Marilla. I would have endured it joyfully for your sake.”

“I guess you did your part in attending to the work and letting me rest,” said Marilla. “You seem to have got on fairly well and made fewer mistakes than usual. Of course it wasn’t exactly necessary to starch Matthew’s handkerchiefs! And most people when they put a pie in the oven to warm up for dinner take it out and eat it when it gets hot instead of leaving it to be burned to a crisp. But that doesn’t seem to be your way evidently.”

Headaches always left Marilla somewhat sarcastic.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” said Anne penitently. “I never thought about that pie from the moment I put it in the oven till now, although I felt INSTINCTIVELY that there was something missing on the dinner table. I was firmly resolved, when you left me in charge this morning, not to imagine anything, but keep my thoughts on facts. I did pretty well until I put the pie in, and then an irresistible temptation came to me to imagine I was an enchanted princess shut up in a lonely tower with a handsome knight riding to my rescue on a coal-black steed. So that is how I came to forget the pie. I didn’t know I starched the handkerchiefs. All the time I was ironing I was trying to think of a name for a new island Diana and I have discovered up the brook. It’s the most ravishing spot, Marilla. There are two maple trees on it and the brook flows right around it. At last it struck me that it would be splendid to call it Victoria Island because we found it on the Queen’s birthday. Both Diana and I are very loyal. But I’m sorry about that pie and the handkerchiefs. I wanted to be extra good today because it’s an anniversary. Do you remember what happened this day last year, Marilla?”

“No, I can’t think of anything special.”

“Oh, Marilla, it was the day I came to Green Gables. I shall never forget it. It was the turning point in my life. Of course it wouldn’t seem so

important to you. I've been here for a year and I've been so happy. Of course, I've had my troubles, but one can live down troubles. Are you sorry you kept me, Marilla?"

"No, I can't say I'm sorry," said Marilla, who sometimes wondered how she could have lived before Anne came to Green Gables, "no, not exactly sorry. If you've finished your lessons, Anne, I want you to run over and ask Mrs. Barry if she'll lend me Diana's apron pattern."

"Oh — it's — it's too dark," cried Anne.

"Too dark? Why, it's only twilight. And goodness knows you've gone over often enough after dark."

"I'll go over early in the morning," said Anne eagerly. "I'll get up at sunrise and go over, Marilla."

"What has got into your head now, Anne Shirley? I want that pattern to cut out your new apron this evening. Go at once and be smart too."

"I'll have to go around by the road, then," said Anne, taking up her hat reluctantly.

"Go by the road and waste half an hour! I'd like to catch you!"

"I can't go through the Haunted Wood, Marilla," cried Anne desperately.

Marilla stared.

"The Haunted Wood! Are you crazy? What under the canopy is the Haunted Wood?"

"The spruce wood over the brook," said Anne in a whisper.

"Fiddlesticks! There is no such thing as a haunted wood anywhere. Who has been telling you such stuff?"

"Nobody," confessed Anne. "Diana and I just imagined the wood was haunted. All the places around here are so — so — COMMONPLACE. We

just got this up for our own amusement. We began it in April. A haunted wood is so very romantic, Marilla. We chose the spruce grove because it's so gloomy. Oh, we have imagined the most harrowing things. There's a white lady walks along the brook just about this time of the night and wrings her hands and utters wailing cries. She appears when there is to be a death in the family. And the ghost of a little murdered child haunts the corner up by Idlewild; it creeps up behind you and lays its cold fingers on your hand — so. Oh, Marilla, it gives me a shudder to think of it. And there's a headless man stalks up and down the path and skeletons glower at you between the boughs. Oh, Marilla, I wouldn't go through the Haunted Wood after dark now for anything. I'd be sure that white things would reach out from behind the trees and grab me."

"Did ever anyone hear the like!" ejaculated Marilla, who had listened in dumb amazement. "Anne Shirley, do you mean to tell me you believe all that wicked nonsense of your own imagination?"

"Not believe EXACTLY," faltered Anne. "At least, I don't believe it in daylight. But after dark, Marilla, it's different. That is when ghosts walk."

"There are no such things as ghosts, Anne."

"Oh, but there are, Marilla," cried Anne eagerly. "I know people who have seen them. And they are respectable people. Charlie Sloane says that his grandmother saw his grandfather driving home the cows one night after he'd been buried for a year. You know Charlie Sloane's grandmother wouldn't tell a story for anything. She's a very religious woman. And Mrs. Thomas's father was pursued home one night by a lamb of fire with its head cut off hanging by a strip of skin. He said he knew it was the spirit of his brother and that it was a warning he would die within nine days. He didn't, but he died two years after, so you see it was really true. And Ruby Gillis says—"

"Anne Shirley," interrupted Marilla firmly, "I never want to hear you talking in this fashion again. I've had my doubts about that imagination of yours right along, and if this is going to be the outcome of it, I won't countenance any such doings. You'll go right over to Barry's, and you'll

go through that spruce grove, just for a lesson and a warning to you. And never let me hear a word out of your head about haunted woods again.”

Anne might plead and cry as she liked — and did, for her terror was very real. Her imagination had run away with her and she held the spruce grove in mortal dread after nightfall. But Marilla was inexorable. She marched the shrinking ghost-seer down to the spring and ordered her to proceed straightaway over the bridge and into the dusky retreats of wailing ladies and headless specters beyond.

“Oh, Marilla, how can you be so cruel?” sobbed Anne. “What would you feel like if a white thing did snatch me up and carry me off?”

“I’ll risk it,” said Marilla unfeelingly. “You know I always mean what I say. I’ll cure you of imagining ghosts into places. March, now.”

Anne marched. That is, she stumbled over the bridge and went shuddering up the horrible dim path beyond. Anne never forgot that walk. Bitterly did she repent the license she had given to her imagination. The goblins of her fancy lurked in every shadow about her, reaching out their cold, fleshless hands to grasp the terrified small girl who had called them into being. A white strip of birch bark blowing up from the hollow over the brown floor of the grove made her heart stand still. The long-drawn wail of two old boughs rubbing against each other brought out the perspiration in beads on her forehead. The swoop of bats in the darkness over her was as the wings of unearthly creatures. When she reached Mr. William Bell’s field she fled across it as if pursued by an army of white things, and arrived at the Barry kitchen door so out of breath that she could hardly gasp out her request for the apron pattern. Diana was away so that she had no excuse to linger. The dreadful return journey had to be faced. Anne went back over it with shut eyes, preferring to take the risk of dashing her brains out among the boughs to that of seeing a white thing. When she finally stumbled over the log bridge she drew one long shivering breath of relief.

“Well, so nothing caught you?” said Marilla unsympathetically.

“Oh, Mar — Marilla,” chattered Anne, “I’ll b-b-be contt-tented with c-c-commonplace places after this.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A New Departure in Flavorings

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“Dear me, there is nothing but meetings and partings in this world, as Mrs. Lynde says,” remarked Anne plaintively, putting her slate and books down on the kitchen table on the last day of June and wiping her red eyes with a very damp handkerchief. “Wasn’t it fortunate, Marilla, that I took an extra handkerchief to school today? I had a presentiment that it would be needed.”

“I never thought you were so fond of Mr. Phillips that you’d require two handkerchiefs to dry your tears just because he was going away,” said Marilla.

“I don’t think I was crying because I was really so very fond of him,” reflected Anne. “I just cried because all the others did. It was Ruby Gillis started it. Ruby Gillis has always declared she hated Mr. Phillips, but just as soon as he got up to make his farewell speech she burst into tears. Then all the girls began to cry, one after the other. I tried to hold out, Marilla. I tried to remember the time Mr. Phillips made me sit with Gil — with a, boy; and the time he spelled my name without an e on the blackboard; and how he said I was the worst dunce he ever saw at geometry and laughed at my spelling; and all the times he had been so horrid and sarcastic; but somehow I couldn’t, Marilla, and I just had to cry too. Jane Andrews has been talking for a month about how glad she’d be when Mr. Phillips went away and she declared she’d never shed a tear. Well, she was worse than any of us and had to borrow a handkerchief from her brother — of course the boys didn’t cry — because she hadn’t brought one of her own, not expecting to need it. Oh, Marilla, it was heartrending. Mr. Phillips made such a beautiful farewell speech beginning, ‘The time has come for us to part.’ It was very affecting. And he had tears in his eyes too, Marilla. Oh, I felt dreadfully sorry and remorseful for all the times I’d talked in school

and drawn pictures of him on my slate and made fun of him and Prissy. I can tell you I wished I'd been a model pupil like Minnie Andrews. She hadn't anything on her conscience. The girls cried all the way home from school. Carrie Sloane kept saying every few minutes, 'The time has come for us to part,' and that would start us off again whenever we were in any danger of cheering up. I do feel dreadfully sad, Marilla. But one can't feel quite in the depths of despair with two months' vacation before them, can they, Marilla? And besides, we met the new minister and his wife coming from the station. For all I was feeling so bad about Mr. Phillips going away I couldn't help taking a little interest in a new minister, could I? His wife is very pretty. Not exactly regally lovely, of course — it wouldn't do, I suppose, for a minister to have a regally lovely wife, because it might set a bad example. Mrs. Lynde says the minister's wife over at Newbridge sets a very bad example because she dresses so fashionably. Our new minister's wife was dressed in blue muslin with lovely puffed sleeves and a hat trimmed with roses. Jane Andrews said she thought puffed sleeves were too worldly for a minister's wife, but I didn't make any such uncharitable remark, Marilla, because I know what it is to long for puffed sleeves. Besides, she's only been a minister's wife for a little while, so one should make allowances, shouldn't they? They are going to board with Mrs. Lynde until the manse is ready."

If Marilla, in going down to Mrs. Lynde's that evening, was actuated by any motive save her avowed one of returning the quilting frames she had borrowed the preceding winter, it was an amiable weakness shared by most of the Avonlea people. Many a thing Mrs. Lynde had lent, sometimes never expecting to see it again, came home that night in charge of the borrowers thereof. A new minister, and moreover a minister with a wife, was a lawful object of curiosity in a quiet little country settlement where sensations were few and far between.

Old Mr. Bentley, the minister whom Anne had found lacking in imagination, had been pastor of Avonlea for eighteen years. He was a widower when he came, and a widower he remained, despite the fact that gossip regularly married him to this, that, or the other one, every year of his sojourn. In the preceding February he had resigned his charge and departed amid the regrets of his people, most of whom had the affection

born of long intercourse for their good old minister in spite of his shortcomings as an orator. Since then the Avonlea church had enjoyed a variety of religious dissipation in listening to the many and various candidates and “supplies” who came Sunday after Sunday to preach on trial. These stood or fell by the judgment of the fathers and mothers in Israel; but a certain small, redhaired girl who sat meekly in the corner of the old Cuthbert pew also had her opinions about them and discussed the same in full with Matthew, Marilla always declining from principle to criticize ministers in any shape or form.

“I don’t think Mr. Smith would have done, Matthew” was Anne’s final summing up. “Mrs. Lynde says his delivery was so poor, but I think his worst fault was just like Mr. Bentley’s — he had no imagination. And Mr. Terry had too much; he let it run away with him just as I did mine in the matter of the Haunted Wood. Besides, Mrs. Lynde says his theology wasn’t sound. Mr. Gresham was a very good man and a very religious man, but he told too many funny stories and made the people laugh in church; he was undignified, and you must have some dignity about a minister, mustn’t you, Matthew? I thought Mr. Marshall was decidedly attractive; but Mrs. Lynde says he isn’t married, or even engaged, because she made special inquiries about him, and she says it would never do to have a young unmarried minister in Avonlea, because he might marry in the congregation and that would make trouble. Mrs. Lynde is a very farseeing woman, isn’t she, Matthew? I’m very glad they’ve called Mr. Allan. I liked him because his sermon was interesting and he prayed as if he meant it and not just as if he did it because he was in the habit of it. Mrs. Lynde says he isn’t perfect, but she says she supposes we couldn’t expect a perfect minister for seven hundred and fifty dollars a year, and anyhow his theology is sound because she questioned him thoroughly on all the points of doctrine. And she knows his wife’s people and they are most respectable and the women are all good housekeepers. Mrs. Lynde says that sound doctrine in the man and good housekeeping in the woman make an ideal combination for a minister’s family.”

The new minister and his wife were a young, pleasant-faced couple, still on their honeymoon, and full of all good and beautiful enthusiasms for their chosen lifework. Avonlea opened its heart to them from the start. Old

and young liked the frank, cheerful young man with his high ideals, and the bright, gentle little lady who assumed the mistress-ship of the manse. With Mrs. Allan Anne fell promptly and wholeheartedly in love. She had discovered another kindred spirit.

“Mrs. Allan is perfectly lovely,” she announced one Sunday afternoon. “She’s taken our class and she’s a splendid teacher. She said right away she didn’t think it was fair for the teacher to ask all the questions, and you know, Marilla, that is exactly what I’ve always thought. She said we could ask her any question we liked and I asked ever so many. I’m good at asking questions, Marilla.”

“I believe you” was Marilla’s emphatic comment.

“Nobody else asked any except Ruby Gillis, and she asked if there was to be a Sunday-school picnic this summer. I didn’t think that was a very proper question to ask because it hadn’t any connection with the lesson — the lesson was about Daniel in the lions’ den — but Mrs. Allan just smiled and said she thought there would be. Mrs. Allan has a lovely smile; she has such EXQUISITE dimples in her cheeks. I wish I had dimples in my cheeks, Marilla. I’m not half so skinny as I was when I came here, but I have no dimples yet. If I had perhaps I could influence people for good. Mrs. Allan said we ought always to try to influence other people for good. She talked so nice about everything. I never knew before that religion was such a cheerful thing. I always thought it was kind of melancholy, but Mrs. Allan’s isn’t, and I’d like to be a Christian if I could be one like her. I wouldn’t want to be one like Mr. Superintendent Bell.”

“It’s very naughty of you to speak so about Mr. Bell,” said Marilla severely. “Mr. Bell is a real good man.”

“Oh, of course he’s good,” agreed Anne, “but he doesn’t seem to get any comfort out of it. If I could be good I’d dance and sing all day because I was glad of it. I suppose Mrs. Allan is too old to dance and sing and of course it wouldn’t be dignified in a minister’s wife. But I can just feel she’s glad she’s a Christian and that she’d be one even if she could get to heaven without it.”

“I suppose we must have Mr. and Mrs. Allan up to tea someday soon,” said Marilla reflectively. “They’ve been most everywhere but here. Let me see. Next Wednesday would be a good time to have them. But don’t say a word to Matthew about it, for if he knew they were coming he’d find some excuse to be away that day. He’d got so used to Mr. Bentley he didn’t mind him, but he’s going to find it hard to get acquainted with a new minister, and a new minister’s wife will frighten him to death.”

“I’ll be as secret as the dead,” assured Anne. “But oh, Marilla, will you let me make a cake for the occasion? I’d love to do something for Mrs. Allan, and you know I can make a pretty good cake by this time.”

“You can make a layer cake,” promised Marilla.

Monday and Tuesday great preparations went on at Green Gables. Having the minister and his wife to tea was a serious and important undertaking, and Marilla was determined not to be eclipsed by any of the Avonlea housekeepers. Anne was wild with excitement and delight. She talked it all over with Diana Tuesday night in the twilight, as they sat on the big red stones by the Dryad’s Bubble and made rainbows in the water with little twigs dipped in fir balsam.

“Everything is ready, Diana, except my cake which I’m to make in the morning, and the baking-powder biscuits which Marilla will make just before teatime. I assure you, Diana, that Marilla and I have had a busy two days of it. It’s such a responsibility having a minister’s family to tea. I never went through such an experience before. You should just see our pantry. It’s a sight to behold. We’re going to have jellied chicken and cold tongue. We’re to have two kinds of jelly, red and yellow, and whipped cream and lemon pie, and cherry pie, and three kinds of cookies, and fruit cake, and Marilla’s famous yellow plum preserves that she keeps especially for ministers, and pound cake and layer cake, and biscuits as aforesaid; and new bread and old both, in case the minister is dyspeptic and can’t eat new. Mrs. Lynde says ministers are dyspeptic, but I don’t think Mr. Allan has been a minister long enough for it to have had a bad effect on him. I just grow cold when I think of my layer cake. Oh, Diana, what if it shouldn’t be good! I dreamed last night that I was chased all around by a fearful goblin with a big layer cake for a head.”

“It’ll be good, all right,” assured Diana, who was a very comfortable sort of friend. “I’m sure that piece of the one you made that we had for lunch in Idlewild two weeks ago was perfectly elegant.”

“Yes; but cakes have such a terrible habit of turning out bad just when you especially want them to be good,” sighed Anne, setting a particularly well-balsamed twig afloat. “However, I suppose I shall just have to trust to Providence and be careful to put in the flour. Oh, look, Diana, what a lovely rainbow! Do you suppose the dryad will come out after we go away and take it for a scarf?”

“You know there is no such thing as a dryad,” said Diana. Diana’s mother had found out about the Haunted Wood and had been decidedly angry over it. As a result Diana had abstained from any further imitative flights of imagination and did not think it prudent to cultivate a spirit of belief even in harmless dryads.

“But it’s so easy to imagine there is,” said Anne. “Every night before I go to bed, I look out of my window and wonder if the dryad is really sitting here, combing her locks with the spring for a mirror. Sometimes I look for her footprints in the dew in the morning. Oh, Diana, don’t give up your faith in the dryad!”

Wednesday morning came. Anne got up at sunrise because she was too excited to sleep. She had caught a severe cold in the head by reason of her dabbling in the spring on the preceding evening; but nothing short of absolute pneumonia could have quenched her interest in culinary matters that morning. After breakfast she proceeded to make her cake. When she finally shut the oven door upon it she drew a long breath.

“I’m sure I haven’t forgotten anything this time, Marilla. But do you think it will rise? Just suppose perhaps the baking powder isn’t good? I used it out of the new can. And Mrs. Lynde says you can never be sure of getting good baking powder nowadays when everything is so adulterated. Mrs. Lynde says the Government ought to take the matter up, but she says we’ll never see the day when a Tory Government will do it. Marilla, what if that cake doesn’t rise?”

“We’ll have plenty without it” was Marilla’s unimpassioned way of looking at the subject.

The cake did rise, however, and came out of the oven as light and feathery as golden foam. Anne, flushed with delight, clapped it together with layers of ruby jelly and, in imagination, saw Mrs. Allan eating it and possibly asking for another piece!

“You’ll be using the best tea set, of course, Marilla,” she said. “Can I fix the table with ferns and wild roses?”

“I think that’s all nonsense,” sniffed Marilla. “In my opinion it’s the eatables that matter and not flummery decorations.”

“Mrs. Barry had HER table decorated,” said Anne, who was not entirely guiltless of the wisdom of the serpent, “and the minister paid her an elegant compliment. He said it was a feast for the eye as well as the palate.”

“Well, do as you like,” said Marilla, who was quite determined not to be surpassed by Mrs. Barry or anybody else. “Only mind you leave enough room for the dishes and the food.”

Anne laid herself out to decorate in a manner and after a fashion that should leave Mrs. Barry’s nowhere. Having abundance of roses and ferns and a very artistic taste of her own, she made that tea table such a thing of beauty that when the minister and his wife sat down to it they exclaimed in chorus over its loveliness.

“It’s Anne’s doings,” said Marilla, grimly just; and Anne felt that Mrs. Allan’s approving smile was almost too much happiness for this world.

Matthew was there, having been inveigled into the party only goodness and Anne knew how. He had been in such a state of shyness and nervousness that Marilla had given him up in despair, but Anne took him in hand so successfully that he now sat at the table in his best clothes and white collar and talked to the minister not uninterestingly. He never said a word to Mrs. Allan, but that perhaps was not to be expected.

All went merry as a marriage bell until Anne's layer cake was passed. Mrs. Allan, having already been helped to a bewildering variety, declined it. But Marilla, seeing the disappointment on Anne's face, said smilingly:

"Oh, you must take a piece of this, Mrs. Allan. Anne made it on purpose for you."

"In that case I must sample it," laughed Mrs. Allan, helping herself to a plump triangle, as did also the minister and Marilla.

Mrs. Allan took a mouthful of hers and a most peculiar expression crossed her face; not a word did she say, however, but steadily ate away at it. Marilla saw the expression and hastened to taste the cake.

"Anne Shirley!" she exclaimed, "what on earth did you put into that cake?"

"Nothing but what the recipe said, Marilla," cried Anne with a look of anguish. "Oh, isn't it all right?"

"All right! It's simply horrible. Mr. Allan, don't try to eat it. Anne, taste it yourself. What flavoring did you use?"

"Vanilla," said Anne, her face scarlet with mortification after tasting the cake. "Only vanilla. Oh, Marilla, it must have been the baking powder. I had my suspicions of that bak—"

"Baking powder fiddlesticks! Go and bring me the bottle of vanilla you used."

Anne fled to the pantry and returned with a small bottle partially filled with a brown liquid and labeled yellowly, "Best Vanilla."

Marilla took it, uncorked it, smelled it.

"Mercy on us, Anne, you've flavored that cake with ANODYNE LINIMENT. I broke the liniment bottle last week and poured what was left into an old empty vanilla bottle. I suppose it's partly my fault — I should have warned you — but for pity's sake why couldn't you have smelled it?"

Anne dissolved into tears under this double disgrace.

“I couldn’t — I had such a cold!” and with this she fairly fled to the gable chamber, where she cast herself on the bed and wept as one who refuses to be comforted.

Presently a light step sounded on the stairs and somebody entered the room.

“Oh, Marilla,” sobbed Anne, without looking up, “I’m disgraced forever. I shall never be able to live this down. It will get out — things always do get out in Avonlea. Diana will ask me how my cake turned out and I shall have to tell her the truth. I shall always be pointed at as the girl who flavored a cake with anodyne liniment. Gil — the boys in school will never get over laughing at it. Oh, Marilla, if you have a spark of Christian pity don’t tell me that I must go down and wash the dishes after this. I’ll wash them when the minister and his wife are gone, but I cannot ever look Mrs. Allan in the face again. Perhaps she’ll think I tried to poison her. Mrs. Lynde says she knows an orphan girl who tried to poison her benefactor. But the liniment isn’t poisonous. It’s meant to be taken internally — although not in cakes. Won’t you tell Mrs. Allan so, Marilla?”

“Suppose you jump up and tell her so yourself,” said a merry voice.

Anne flew up, to find Mrs. Allan standing by her bed, surveying her with laughing eyes.

“My dear little girl, you mustn’t cry like this,” she said, genuinely disturbed by Anne’s tragic face. “Why, it’s all just a funny mistake that anybody might make.”

“Oh, no, it takes me to make such a mistake,” said Anne forlornly. “And I wanted to have that cake so nice for you, Mrs. Allan.”

“Yes, I know, dear. And I assure you I appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness just as much as if it had turned out all right. Now, you mustn’t cry any more, but come down with me and show me your flower

garden. Miss Cuthbert tells me you have a little plot all your own. I want to see it, for I'm very much interested in flowers."

Anne permitted herself to be led down and comforted, reflecting that it was really providential that Mrs. Allan was a kindred spirit. Nothing more was said about the liniment cake, and when the guests went away Anne found that she had enjoyed the evening more than could have been expected, considering that terrible incident. Nevertheless, she sighed deeply.

"Marilla, isn't it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?"

"I'll warrant you'll make plenty in it," said Marilla. "I never saw your beat for making mistakes, Anne."

"Yes, and well I know it," admitted Anne mournfully. "But have you ever noticed one encouraging thing about me, Marilla? I never make the same mistake twice."

"I don't know as that's much benefit when you're always making new ones."

"Oh, don't you see, Marilla? There must be a limit to the mistakes one person can make, and when I get to the end of them, then I'll be through with them. That's a very comforting thought."

"Well, you'd better go and give that cake to the pigs," said Marilla. "It isn't fit for any human to eat, not even Jerry Boute."

CHAPTER XXII.

Anne is Invited Out to Tea

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“And what are your eyes popping out of your head about. Now?” asked Marilla, when Anne had just come in from a run to the post office. “Have you discovered another kindred spirit?” Excitement hung around Anne like a garment, shone in her eyes, kindled in every feature. She had come dancing up the lane, like a windblown sprite, through the mellow sunshine and lazy shadows of the August evening.

“No, Marilla, but oh, what do you think? I am invited to tea at the manse tomorrow afternoon! Mrs. Allan left the letter for me at the post office. Just look at it, Marilla. ‘Miss Anne Shirley, Green Gables.’ That is the first time I was ever called ‘Miss.’ Such a thrill as it gave me! I shall cherish it forever among my choicest treasures.”

“Mrs. Allan told me she meant to have all the members of her Sunday-school class to tea in turn,” said Marilla, regarding the wonderful event very coolly. “You needn’t get in such a fever over it. Do learn to take things calmly, child.”

For Anne to take things calmly would have been to change her nature. All “spirit and fire and dew,” as she was, the pleasures and pains of life came to her with trebled intensity. Marilla felt this and was vaguely troubled over it, realizing that the ups and downs of existence would probably bear hardly on this impulsive soul and not sufficiently understanding that the equally great capacity for delight might more than compensate. Therefore Marilla conceived it to be her duty to drill Anne into a tranquil uniformity of disposition as impossible and alien to her as to a dancing sunbeam in one of the brook shallows. She did not make much headway, as she sorrowfully admitted to herself. The downfall of some dear hope or plan plunged Anne into “depths of affliction.” The fulfillment thereof exalted

her to dizzy realms of delight. Marilla had almost begun to despair of ever fashioning this waif of the world into her model little girl of demure manners and prim deportment. Neither would she have believed that she really liked Anne much better as she was.

Anne went to bed that night speechless with misery because Matthew had said the wind was round northeast and he feared it would be a rainy day tomorrow. The rustle of the poplar leaves about the house worried her, it sounded so like pattering raindrops, and the full, faraway roar of the gulf, to which she listened delightedly at other times, loving its strange, sonorous, haunting rhythm, now seemed like a prophecy of storm and disaster to a small maiden who particularly wanted a fine day. Anne thought that the morning would never come.

But all things have an end, even nights before the day on which you are invited to take tea at the manse. The morning, in spite of Matthew's predictions, was fine and Anne's spirits soared to their highest. "Oh, Marilla, there is something in me today that makes me just love everybody I see," she exclaimed as she washed the breakfast dishes. "You don't know how good I feel! Wouldn't it be nice if it could last? I believe I could be a model child if I were just invited out to tea every day. But oh, Marilla, it's a solemn occasion too. I feel so anxious. What if I shouldn't behave properly? You know I never had tea at a manse before, and I'm not sure that I know all the rules of etiquette, although I've been studying the rules given in the Etiquette Department of the Family Herald ever since I came here. I'm so afraid I'll do something silly or forget to do something I should do. Would it be good manners to take a second helping of anything if you wanted to VERY much?"

"The trouble with you, Anne, is that you're thinking too much about yourself. You should just think of Mrs. Allan and what would be nicest and most agreeable to her," said Marilla, hitting for once in her life on a very sound and pithy piece of advice. Anne instantly realized this.

"You are right, Marilla. I'll try not to think about myself at all."

Anne evidently got through her visit without any serious breach of "etiquette," for she came home through the twilight, under a great, high-

sprung sky gloried over with trails of saffron and rosy cloud, in a beatified state of mind and told Marilla all about it happily, sitting on the big red-sandstone slab at the kitchen door with her tired curly head in Marilla's gingham lap.

A cool wind was blowing down over the long harvest fields from the rims of firry western hills and whistling through the poplars. One clear star hung over the orchard and the fireflies were flitting over in Lover's Lane, in and out among the ferns and rustling boughs. Anne watched them as she talked and somehow felt that wind and stars and fireflies were all tangled up together into something unutterably sweet and enchanting.

"Oh, Marilla, I've had a most FASCINATING time. I feel that I have not lived in vain and I shall always feel like that even if I should never be invited to tea at a manse again. When I got there Mrs. Allan met me at the door. She was dressed in the sweetest dress of pale-pink organdy, with dozens of frills and elbow sleeves, and she looked just like a seraph. I really think I'd like to be a minister's wife when I grow up, Marilla. A minister mightn't mind my red hair because he wouldn't be thinking of such worldly things. But then of course one would have to be naturally good and I'll never be that, so I suppose there's no use in thinking about it. Some people are naturally good, you know, and others are not. I'm one of the others. Mrs. Lynde says I'm full of original sin. No matter how hard I try to be good I can never make such a success of it as those who are naturally good. It's a good deal like geometry, I expect. But don't you think the trying so hard ought to count for something? Mrs. Allan is one of the naturally good people. I love her passionately. You know there are some people, like Matthew and Mrs. Allan that you can love right off without any trouble. And there are others, like Mrs. Lynde, that you have to try very hard to love. You know you OUGHT to love them because they know so much and are such active workers in the church, but you have to keep reminding yourself of it all the time or else you forget. There was another little girl at the manse to tea, from the White Sands Sunday school. Her name was Laurette Bradley, and she was a very nice little girl. Not exactly a kindred spirit, you know, but still very nice. We had an elegant tea, and I think I kept all the rules of etiquette pretty well. After tea Mrs. Allan played and sang and she got Laurretta and me to sing too.

Mrs. Allan says I have a good voice and she says I must sing in the Sunday-school choir after this. You can't think how I was thrilled at the mere thought. I've longed so to sing in the Sunday-school choir, as Diana does, but I feared it was an honor I could never aspire to. Laretta had to go home early because there is a big concert in the White Sands Hotel tonight and her sister is to recite at it. Laretta says that the Americans at the hotel give a concert every fortnight in aid of the Charlottetown hospital, and they ask lots of the White Sands people to recite. Laretta said she expected to be asked herself someday. I just gazed at her in awe. After she had gone Mrs. Allan and I had a heart-to-heart talk. I told her everything — about Mrs. Thomas and the twins and Katie Maurice and Violetta and coming to Green Gables and my troubles over geometry. And would you believe it, Marilla? Mrs. Allan told me she was a dunce at geometry too. You don't know how that encouraged me. Mrs. Lynde came to the manse just before I left, and what do you think, Marilla? The trustees have hired a new teacher and it's a lady. Her name is Miss Muriel Stacy. Isn't that a romantic name? Mrs. Lynde says they've never had a female teacher in Avonlea before and she thinks it is a dangerous innovation. But I think it will be splendid to have a lady teacher, and I really don't see how I'm going to live through the two weeks before school begins. I'm so impatient to see her."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Anne Comes to Grief in an Affair of Honor

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Anne had to live through more than two weeks, as it happened. Almost a month having elapsed since the liniment cake episode, it was high time for her to get into fresh trouble of some sort, little mistakes, such as absentmindedly emptying a pan of skim milk into a basket of yarn balls in the pantry instead of into the pigs' bucket, and walking clean over the edge of the log bridge into the brook while wrapped in imaginative reverie, not really being worth counting.

A week after the tea at the manse Diana Barry gave a party.

"Small and select," Anne assured Marilla. "Just the girls in our class."

They had a very good time and nothing untoward happened until after tea, when they found themselves in the Barry garden, a little tired of all their games and ripe for any enticing form of mischief which might present itself. This presently took the form of "daring."

Daring was the fashionable amusement among the Avonlea small fry just then. It had begun among the boys, but soon spread to the girls, and all the silly things that were done in Avonlea that summer because the doers thereof were "dared" to do them would fill a book by themselves.

First of all Carrie Sloane dared Ruby Gillis to climb to a certain point in the huge old willow tree before the front door; which Ruby Gillis, albeit in mortal dread of the fat green caterpillars with which said tree was infested and with the fear of her mother before her eyes if she should tear her new muslin dress, nimbly did, to the discomfiture of the aforesaid Carrie Sloane. Then Josie Pye dared Jane Andrews to hop on her left leg around the garden without stopping once or putting her right foot to the ground;

which Jane Andrews gamely tried to do, but gave out at the third corner and had to confess herself defeated.

Josie's triumph being rather more pronounced than good taste permitted, Anne Shirley dared her to walk along the top of the board fence which bounded the garden to the east. Now, to "walk" board fences requires more skill and steadiness of head and heel than one might suppose who has never tried it. But Josie Pye, if deficient in some qualities that make for popularity, had at least a natural and inborn gift, duly cultivated, for walking board fences. Josie walked the Barry fence with an airy unconcern which seemed to imply that a little thing like that wasn't worth a "dare." Reluctant admiration greeted her exploit, for most of the other girls could appreciate it, having suffered many things themselves in their efforts to walk fences. Josie descended from her perch, flushed with victory, and darted a defiant glance at Anne.

Anne tossed her red braids.

"I don't think it's such a very wonderful thing to walk a little, low, board fence," she said. "I knew a girl in Marysville who could walk the ridgepole of a roof."

"I don't believe it," said Josie flatly. "I don't believe anybody could walk a ridgepole. YOU couldn't, anyhow."

"Couldn't I?" cried Anne rashly.

"Then I dare you to do it," said Josie defiantly. "I dare you to climb up there and walk the ridgepole of Mr. Barry's kitchen roof."

Anne turned pale, but there was clearly only one thing to be done. She walked toward the house, where a ladder was leaning against the kitchen roof. All the fifth-class girls said, "Oh!" partly in excitement, partly in dismay.

"Don't you do it, Anne," entreated Diana. "You'll fall off and be killed. Never mind Josie Pye. It isn't fair to dare anybody to do anything so dangerous."

“I must do it. My honor is at stake,” said Anne solemnly. “I shall walk that ridgepole, Diana, or perish in the attempt. If I am killed you are to have my pearl bead ring.”

Anne climbed the ladder amid breathless silence, gained the ridgepole, balanced herself uprightly on that precarious footing, and started to walk along it, dizzily conscious that she was uncomfortably high up in the world and that walking ridgepoles was not a thing in which your imagination helped you out much. Nevertheless, she managed to take several steps before the catastrophe came. Then she swayed, lost her balance, stumbled, staggered, and fell, sliding down over the sun-baked roof and crashing off it through the tangle of Virginia creeper beneath — all before the dismayed circle below could give a simultaneous, terrified shriek.

If Anne had tumbled off the roof on the side up which she had ascended Diana would probably have fallen heir to the pearl bead ring then and there. Fortunately she fell on the other side, where the roof extended down over the porch so nearly to the ground that a fall therefrom was a much less serious thing. Nevertheless, when Diana and the other girls had rushed frantically around the house — except Ruby Gillis, who remained as if rooted to the ground and went into hysterics — they found Anne lying all white and limp among the wreck and ruin of the Virginia creeper.

“Anne, are you killed?” shrieked Diana, throwing herself on her knees beside her friend. “Oh, Anne, dear Anne, speak just one word to me and tell me if you’re killed.”

To the immense relief of all the girls, and especially of Josie Pye, who, in spite of lack of imagination, had been seized with horrible visions of a future branded as the girl who was the cause of Anne Shirley’s early and tragic death, Anne sat dizzily up and answered uncertainly:

“No, Diana, I am not killed, but I think I am rendered unconscious.”

“Where?” sobbed Carrie Sloane. “Oh, where, Anne?” Before Anne could answer Mrs. Barry appeared on the scene. At sight of her Anne tried to scramble to her feet, but sank back again with a sharp little cry of pain.

“What’s the matter? Where have you hurt yourself?” demanded Mrs. Barry.

“My ankle,” gasped Anne. “Oh, Diana, please find your father and ask him to take me home. I know I can never walk there. And I’m sure I couldn’t hop so far on one foot when Jane couldn’t even hop around the garden.”

Marilla was out in the orchard picking a panful of summer apples when she saw Mr. Barry coming over the log bridge and up the slope, with Mrs. Barry beside him and a whole procession of little girls trailing after him. In his arms he carried Anne, whose head lay limply against his shoulder.

At that moment Marilla had a revelation. In the sudden stab of fear that pierced her very heart she realized what Anne had come to mean to her. She would have admitted that she liked Anne — nay, that she was very fond of Anne. But now she knew as she hurried wildly down the slope that Anne was dearer to her than anything else on earth.

“Mr. Barry, what has happened to her?” she gasped, more white and shaken than the self-contained, sensible Marilla had been for many years.

Anne herself answered, lifting her head.

“Don’t be very frightened, Marilla. I was walking the ridgepole and I fell off. I expect I have sprained my ankle. But, Marilla, I might have broken my neck. Let us look on the bright side of things.”

“I might have known you’d go and do something of the sort when I let you go to that party,” said Marilla, sharp and shrewish in her very relief.

“Bring her in here, Mr. Barry, and lay her on the sofa. Mercy me, the child has gone and fainted!”

It was quite true. Overcome by the pain of her injury, Anne had one more of her wishes granted to her. She had fainted dead away.

Matthew, hastily summoned from the harvest field, was straightway dispatched for the doctor, who in due time came, to discover that the injury was more serious than they had supposed. Anne’s ankle was broken.

That night, when Marilla went up to the east gable, where a white-faced girl was lying, a plaintive voice greeted her from the bed.

“Aren’t you very sorry for me, Marilla?”

“It was your own fault,” said Marilla, twitching down the blind and lighting a lamp.

“And that is just why you should be sorry for me,” said Anne, “because the thought that it is all my own fault is what makes it so hard. If I could blame it on anybody I would feel so much better. But what would you have done, Marilla, if you had been dared to walk a ridgepole?”

“I’d have stayed on good firm ground and let them dare away. Such absurdity!” said Marilla.

Anne sighed.

“But you have such strength of mind, Marilla. I haven’t. I just felt that I couldn’t bear Josie Pye’s scorn. She would have crowed over me all my life. And I think I have been punished so much that you needn’t be very cross with me, Marilla. It’s not a bit nice to faint, after all. And the doctor hurt me dreadfully when he was setting my ankle. I won’t be able to go around for six or seven weeks and I’ll miss the new lady teacher. She won’t be new any more by the time I’m able to go to school. And Gil — everybody will get ahead of me in class. Oh, I am an afflicted mortal. But I’ll try to bear it all bravely if only you won’t be cross with me, Marilla.”

“There, there, I’m not cross,” said Marilla. “You’re an unlucky child, there’s no doubt about that; but as you say, you’ll have the suffering of it. Here now, try and eat some supper.”

“Isn’t it fortunate I’ve got such an imagination?” said Anne. “It will help me through splendidly, I expect. What do people who haven’t any imagination do when they break their bones, do you suppose, Marilla?”

Anne had good reason to bless her imagination many a time and oft during the tedious seven weeks that followed. But she was not solely dependent

on it. She had many visitors and not a day passed without one or more of the schoolgirls dropping in to bring her flowers and books and tell her all the happenings in the juvenile world of Avonlea.

“Everybody has been so good and kind, Marilla,” sighed Anne happily, on the day when she could first limp across the floor. “It isn’t very pleasant to be laid up; but there is a bright side to it, Marilla. You find out how many friends you have. Why, even Superintendent Bell came to see me, and he’s really a very fine man. Not a kindred spirit, of course; but still I like him and I’m awfully sorry I ever criticized his prayers. I believe now he really does mean them, only he has got into the habit of saying them as if he didn’t. He could get over that if he’d take a little trouble. I gave him a good broad hint. I told him how hard I tried to make my own little private prayers interesting. He told me all about the time he broke his ankle when he was a boy. It does seem so strange to think of Superintendent Bell ever being a boy. Even my imagination has its limits, for I can’t imagine THAT. When I try to imagine him as a boy I see him with gray whiskers and spectacles, just as he looks in Sunday school, only small. Now, it’s so easy to imagine Mrs. Allan as a little girl. Mrs. Allan has been to see me fourteen times. Isn’t that something to be proud of, Marilla? When a minister’s wife has so many claims on her time! She is such a cheerful person to have visit you, too. She never tells you it’s your own fault and she hopes you’ll be a better girl on account of it. Mrs. Lynde always told me that when she came to see me; and she said it in a kind of way that made me feel she might hope I’d be a better girl but didn’t really believe I would. Even Josie Pye came to see me. I received her as politely as I could, because I think she was sorry she dared me to walk a ridgepole. If I had been killed she would had to carry a dark burden of remorse all her life. Diana has been a faithful friend. She’s been over every day to cheer my lonely pillow. But oh, I shall be so glad when I can go to school for I’ve heard such exciting things about the new teacher. The girls all think she is perfectly sweet. Diana says she has the loveliest fair curly hair and such fascinating eyes. She dresses beautifully, and her sleeve puffs are bigger than anybody else’s in Avonlea. Every other Friday afternoon she has recitations and everybody has to say a piece or take part in a dialogue. Oh, it’s just glorious to think of it. Josie Pye says she hates it but that is just because Josie has so little imagination. Diana and Ruby Gillis and

Jane Andrews are preparing a dialogue, called 'A Morning Visit,' for next Friday. And the Friday afternoons they don't have recitations Miss Stacy takes them all to the woods for a 'field' day and they study ferns and flowers and birds. And they have physical culture exercises every morning and evening. Mrs. Lynde says she never heard of such goings on and it all comes of having a lady teacher. But I think it must be splendid and I believe I shall find that Miss Stacy is a kindred spirit."

"There's one thing plain to be seen, Anne," said Marilla, "and that is that your fall off the Barry roof hasn't injured your tongue at all."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Miss Stacy and Her Pupils Get Up a Concert

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It was October again when Anne was ready to go back to school — a glorious October, all red and gold, with mellow mornings when the valleys were filled with delicate mists as if the spirit of autumn had poured them in for the sun to drain — amethyst, pearl, silver, rose, and smoke-blue. The dews were so heavy that the fields glistened like cloth of silver and there were such heaps of rustling leaves in the hollows of many-stemmed woods to run crisply through. The Birch Path was a canopy of yellow and the ferns were sear and brown all along it. There was a tang in the very air that inspired the hearts of small maidens tripping, unlike snails, swiftly and willingly to school; and it WAS jolly to be back again at the little brown desk beside Diana, with Ruby Gillis nodding across the aisle and Carrie Sloane sending up notes and Julia Bell passing a “chew” of gum down from the back seat. Anne drew a long breath of happiness as she sharpened her pencil and arranged her picture cards in her desk. Life was certainly very interesting.

In the new teacher she found another true and helpful friend. Miss Stacy was a bright, sympathetic young woman with the happy gift of winning and holding the affections of her pupils and bringing out the best that was in them mentally and morally. Anne expanded like a flower under this wholesome influence and carried home to the admiring Matthew and the critical Marilla glowing accounts of schoolwork and aims.

“I love Miss Stacy with my whole heart, Marilla. She is so ladylike and she has such a sweet voice. When she pronounces my name I feel INSTINCTIVELY that she’s spelling it with an E. We had recitations this afternoon. I just wish you could have been there to hear me recite ‘Mary, Queen of Scots.’ I just put my whole soul into it. Ruby Gillis told me

coming home that the way I said the line, 'Now for my father's arm,' she said, 'my woman's heart farewell,' just made her blood run cold."

"Well now, you might recite it for me some of these days, out in the barn," suggested Matthew.

"Of course I will," said Anne meditatively, "but I won't be able to do it so well, I know. It won't be so exciting as it is when you have a whole schoolful before you hanging breathlessly on your words. I know I won't be able to make your blood run cold."

"Mrs. Lynde says it made HER blood run cold to see the boys climbing to the very tops of those big trees on Bell's hill after crows' nests last Friday," said Marilla. "I wonder at Miss Stacy for encouraging it."

"But we wanted a crow's nest for nature study," explained Anne. "That was on our field afternoon. Field afternoons are splendid, Marilla. And Miss Stacy explains everything so beautifully. We have to write compositions on our field afternoons and I write the best ones."

"It's very vain of you to say so then. You'd better let your teacher say it."

"But she DID say it, Marilla. And indeed I'm not vain about it. How can I be, when I'm such a dunce at geometry? Although I'm really beginning to see through it a little, too. Miss Stacy makes it so clear. Still, I'll never be good at it and I assure you it is a humbling reflection. But I love writing compositions. Mostly Miss Stacy lets us choose our own subjects; but next week we are to write a composition on some remarkable person. It's hard to choose among so many remarkable people who have lived. Mustn't it be splendid to be remarkable and have compositions written about you after you're dead? Oh, I would dearly love to be remarkable. I think when I grow up I'll be a trained nurse and go with the Red Crosses to the field of battle as a messenger of mercy. That is, if I don't go out as a foreign missionary. That would be very romantic, but one would have to be very good to be a missionary, and that would be a stumbling block. We have physical culture exercises every day, too. They make you graceful and promote digestion."

“Promote fiddlesticks!” said Marilla, who honestly thought it was all nonsense.

But all the field afternoons and recitation Fridays and physical culture contortions paled before a project which Miss Stacy brought forward in November. This was that the scholars of Avonlea school should get up a concert and hold it in the hall on Christmas Night, for the laudable purpose of helping to pay for a schoolhouse flag. The pupils one and all taking graciously to this plan, the preparations for a program were begun at once. And of all the excited performers-elect none was so excited as Anne Shirley, who threw herself into the undertaking heart and soul, hampered as she was by Marilla’s disapproval. Marilla thought it all rank foolishness.

“It’s just filling your heads up with nonsense and taking time that ought to be put on your lessons,” she grumbled. “I don’t approve of children’s getting up concerts and racing about to practices. It makes them vain and forward and fond of gadding.”

“But think of the worthy object,” pleaded Anne. “A flag will cultivate a spirit of patriotism, Marilla.”

“Fudge! There’s precious little patriotism in the thoughts of any of you. All you want is a good time.”

“Well, when you can combine patriotism and fun, isn’t it all right? Of course it’s real nice to be getting up a concert. We’re going to have six choruses and Diana is to sing a solo. I’m in two dialogues—‘The Society for the Suppression of Gossip’ and ‘The Fairy Queen.’ The boys are going to have a dialogue too. And I’m to have two recitations, Marilla. I just tremble when I think of it, but it’s a nice thrilly kind of tremble. And we’re to have a tableau at the last—‘Faith, Hope and Charity.’ Diana and Ruby and I are to be in it, all draped in white with flowing hair. I’m to be Hope, with my hands clasped — so — and my eyes uplifted. I’m going to practice my recitations in the garret. Don’t be alarmed if you hear me groaning. I have to groan heartrendingly in one of them, and it’s really hard to get up a good artistic groan, Marilla. Josie Pye is sulky because she didn’t get the part she wanted in the dialogue. She wanted to be the fairy

queen. That would have been ridiculous, for who ever heard of a fairy queen as fat as Josie? Fairy queens must be slender. Jane Andrews is to be the queen and I am to be one of her maids of honor. Josie says she thinks a redhaired fairy is just as ridiculous as a fat one, but I do not let myself mind what Josie says. I'm to have a wreath of white roses on my hair and Ruby Gillis is going to lend me her slippers because I haven't any of my own. It's necessary for fairies to have slippers, you know. You couldn't imagine a fairy wearing boots, could you? Especially with copper toes? We are going to decorate the hall with creeping spruce and fir mottoes with pink tissue-paper roses in them. And we are all to march in two by two after the audience is seated, while Emma White plays a march on the organ. Oh, Marilla, I know you are not so enthusiastic about it as I am, but don't you hope your little Anne will distinguish herself?"

"All I hope is that you'll behave yourself. I'll be heartily glad when all this fuss is over and you'll be able to settle down. You are simply good for nothing just now with your head stuffed full of dialogues and groans and tableaux. As for your tongue, it's a marvel it's not clean worn out."

Anne sighed and betook herself to the back yard, over which a young new moon was shining through the leafless poplar boughs from an apple-green western sky, and where Matthew was splitting wood. Anne perched herself on a block and talked the concert over with him, sure of an appreciative and sympathetic listener in this instance at least.

"Well now, I reckon it's going to be a pretty good concert. And I expect you'll do your part fine," he said, smiling down into her eager, vivacious little face. Anne smiled back at him. Those two were the best of friends and Matthew thanked his stars many a time and oft that he had nothing to do with bringing her up. That was Marilla's exclusive duty; if it had been his he would have been worried over frequent conflicts between inclination and said duty. As it was, he was free to, "spoil Anne" — Marilla's phrasing — as much as he liked. But it was not such a bad arrangement after all; a little "appreciation" sometimes does quite as much good as all the conscientious "bringing up" in the world.

CHAPTER XXV.

Matthew Insists on Puffed Sleeves

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Matthew was having a bad ten minutes of it. He had come into the kitchen, in the twilight of a cold, gray December evening, and had sat down in the woodbox corner to take off his heavy boots, unconscious of the fact that Anne and a bevy of her schoolmates were having a practice of “The Fairy Queen” in the sitting room. Presently they came trooping through the hall and out into the kitchen, laughing and chattering gaily. They did not see Matthew, who shrank bashfully back into the shadows beyond the woodbox with a boot in one hand and a bootjack in the other, and he watched them shyly for the aforesaid ten minutes as they put on caps and jackets and talked about the dialogue and the concert. Anne stood among them, bright eyed and animated as they; but Matthew suddenly became conscious that there was something about her different from her mates. And what worried Matthew was that the difference impressed him as being something that should not exist. Anne had a brighter face, and bigger, starrier eyes, and more delicate features than the other; even shy, unobservant Matthew had learned to take note of these things; but the difference that disturbed him did not consist in any of these respects. Then in what did it consist?

Matthew was haunted by this question long after the girls had gone, arm in arm, down the long, hard-frozen lane and Anne had betaken herself to her books. He could not refer it to Marilla, who, he felt, would be quite sure to sniff scornfully and remark that the only difference she saw between Anne and the other girls was that they sometimes kept their tongues quiet while Anne never did. This, Matthew felt, would be no great help.

He had recourse to his pipe that evening to help him study it out, much to Marilla’s disgust. After two hours of smoking and hard reflection Matthew

arrived at a solution of his problem. Anne was not dressed like the other girls!

The more Matthew thought about the matter the more he was convinced that Anne never had been dressed like the other girls — never since she had come to Green Gables. Marilla kept her clothed in plain, dark dresses, all made after the same unvarying pattern. If Matthew knew there was such a thing as fashion in dress it was as much as he did; but he was quite sure that Anne's sleeves did not look at all like the sleeves the other girls wore. He recalled the cluster of little girls he had seen around her that evening — all gay in waists of red and blue and pink and white — and he wondered why Marilla always kept her so plainly and soberly gowned.

Of course, it must be all right. Marilla knew best and Marilla was bringing her up. Probably some wise, inscrutable motive was to be served thereby. But surely it would do no harm to let the child have one pretty dress — something like Diana Barry always wore. Matthew decided that he would give her one; that surely could not be objected to as an unwarranted putting in of his oar. Christmas was only a fortnight off. A nice new dress would be the very thing for a present. Matthew, with a sigh of satisfaction, put away his pipe and went to bed, while Marilla opened all the doors and aired the house.

The very next evening Matthew betook himself to Carmody to buy the dress, determined to get the worst over and have done with it. It would be, he felt assured, no trifling ordeal. There were some things Matthew could buy and prove himself no mean bargainer; but he knew he would be at the mercy of shopkeepers when it came to buying a girl's dress.

After much cogitation Matthew resolved to go to Samuel Lawson's store instead of William Blair's. To be sure, the Cuthberts always had gone to William Blair's; it was almost as much a matter of conscience with them as to attend the Presbyterian church and vote Conservative. But William Blair's two daughters frequently waited on customers there and Matthew held them in absolute dread. He could contrive to deal with them when he knew exactly what he wanted and could point it out; but in such a matter as this, requiring explanation and consultation, Matthew felt that he must

be sure of a man behind the counter. So he would go to Lawson's, where Samuel or his son would wait on him.

Alas! Matthew did not know that Samuel, in the recent expansion of his business, had set up a lady clerk also; she was a niece of his wife's and a very dashing young person indeed, with a huge, drooping pompadour, big, rolling brown eyes, and a most extensive and bewildering smile. She was dressed with exceeding smartness and wore several bangle bracelets that glittered and rattled and tinkled with every movement of her hands. Matthew was covered with confusion at finding her there at all; and those bangles completely wrecked his wits at one fell swoop.

"What can I do for you this evening, Mr. Cuthbert?" Miss Lucilla Harris inquired, briskly and ingratiatingly, tapping the counter with both hands.

"Have you any — any — any — well now, say any garden rakes?" stammered Matthew.

Miss Harris looked somewhat surprised, as well she might, to hear a man inquiring for garden rakes in the middle of December.

"I believe we have one or two left over," she said, "but they're upstairs in the lumber room. I'll go and see." During her absence Matthew collected his scattered senses for another effort.

When Miss Harris returned with the rake and cheerfully inquired: "Anything else tonight, Mr. Cuthbert?" Matthew took his courage in both hands and replied: "Well now, since you suggest it, I might as well — take — that is — look at — buy some — some hayseed."

Miss Harris had heard Matthew Cuthbert called odd. She now concluded that he was entirely crazy.

"We only keep hayseed in the spring," she explained loftily. "We've none on hand just now."

"Oh, certainly — certainly — just as you say," stammered unhappy Matthew, seizing the rake and making for the door. At the threshold he

recollected that he had not paid for it and he turned miserably back. While Miss Harris was counting out his change he rallied his powers for a final desperate attempt.

“Well now — if it isn’t too much trouble — I might as well — that is — I’d like to look at — at — some sugar.”

“White or brown?” queried Miss Harris patiently.

“Oh — well now — brown,” said Matthew feebly.

“There’s a barrel of it over there,” said Miss Harris, shaking her bangles at it. “It’s the only kind we have.”

“I’ll — I’ll take twenty pounds of it,” said Matthew, with beads of perspiration standing on his forehead.

Matthew had driven halfway home before he was his own man again. It had been a gruesome experience, but it served him right, he thought, for committing the heresy of going to a strange store. When he reached home he hid the rake in the tool house, but the sugar he carried in to Marilla.

“Brown sugar!” exclaimed Marilla. “Whatever possessed you to get so much? You know I never use it except for the hired man’s porridge or black fruit cake. Jerry’s gone and I’ve made my cake long ago. It’s not good sugar, either — it’s coarse and dark — William Blair doesn’t usually keep sugar like that.”

“I — I thought it might come in handy sometime,” said Matthew, making good his escape.

When Matthew came to think the matter over he decided that a woman was required to cope with the situation. Marilla was out of the question. Matthew felt sure she would throw cold water on his project at once. Remained only Mrs. Lynde; for of no other woman in Avonlea would Matthew have dared to ask advice. To Mrs. Lynde he went accordingly, and that good lady promptly took the matter out of the harassed man’s hands.

“Pick out a dress for you to give Anne? To be sure I will. I’m going to Carmody tomorrow and I’ll attend to it. Have you something particular in mind? No? Well, I’ll just go by my own judgment then. I believe a nice rich brown would just suit Anne, and William Blair has some new gloria in that’s real pretty. Perhaps you’d like me to make it up for her, too, seeing that if Marilla was to make it Anne would probably get wind of it before the time and spoil the surprise? Well, I’ll do it. No, it isn’t a mite of trouble. I like sewing. I’ll make it to fit my niece, Jenny Gillis, for she and Anne are as like as two peas as far as figure goes.”

“Well now, I’m much obliged,” said Matthew, “and — and — I dunno — but I’d like — I think they make the sleeves different nowadays to what they used to be. If it wouldn’t be asking too much I — I’d like them made in the new way.”

“Puffs? Of course. You needn’t worry a speck more about it, Matthew. I’ll make it up in the very latest fashion,” said Mrs. Lynde. To herself she added when Matthew had gone:

“It’ll be a real satisfaction to see that poor child wearing something decent for once. The way Marilla dresses her is positively ridiculous, that’s what, and I’ve ached to tell her so plainly a dozen times. I’ve held my tongue though, for I can see Marilla doesn’t want advice and she thinks she knows more about bringing children up than I do for all she’s an old maid. But that’s always the way. Folks that has brought up children know that there’s no hard and fast method in the world that’ll suit every child. But them as never have think it’s all as plain and easy as Rule of Three — just set your three terms down so fashion, and the sum’ll work out correct. But flesh and blood don’t come under the head of arithmetic and that’s where Marilla Cuthbert makes her mistake. I suppose she’s trying to cultivate a spirit of humility in Anne by dressing her as she does; but it’s more likely to cultivate envy and discontent. I’m sure the child must feel the difference between her clothes and the other girls’. But to think of Matthew taking notice of it! That man is waking up after being asleep for over sixty years.”

Marilla knew all the following fortnight that Matthew had something on his mind, but what it was she could not guess, until Christmas Eve, when

Mrs. Lynde brought up the new dress. Marilla behaved pretty well on the whole, although it is very likely she distrusted Mrs. Lynde's diplomatic explanation that she had made the dress because Matthew was afraid Anne would find out about it too soon if Marilla made it.

"So this is what Matthew has been looking so mysterious over and grinning about to himself for two weeks, is it?" she said a little stiffly but tolerantly. "I knew he was up to some foolishness. Well, I must say I don't think Anne needed any more dresses. I made her three good, warm, serviceable ones this fall, and anything more is sheer extravagance. There's enough material in those sleeves alone to make a waist, I declare there is. You'll just pamper Anne's vanity, Matthew, and she's as vain as a peacock now. Well, I hope she'll be satisfied at last, for I know she's been hankering after those silly sleeves ever since they came in, although she never said a word after the first. The puffs have been getting bigger and more ridiculous right along; they're as big as balloons now. Next year anybody who wears them will have to go through a door sideways."

Christmas morning broke on a beautiful white world. It had been a very mild December and people had looked forward to a green Christmas; but just enough snow fell softly in the night to transfigure Avonlea. Anne peeped out from her frosted gable window with delighted eyes. The firs in the Haunted Wood were all feathery and wonderful; the birches and wild cherry trees were outlined in pearl; the plowed fields were stretches of snowy dimples; and there was a crisp tang in the air that was glorious. Anne ran downstairs singing until her voice reechoed through Green Gables.

"Merry Christmas, Marilla! Merry Christmas, Matthew! Isn't it a lovely Christmas? I'm so glad it's white. Any other kind of Christmas doesn't seem real, does it? I don't like green Christmases. They're not green — they're just nasty faded browns and grays. What makes people call them green? Why — why — Matthew, is that for me? Oh, Matthew!"

Matthew had sheepishly unfolded the dress from its paper swathings and held it out with a deprecatory glance at Marilla, who feigned to be contemptuously filling the teapot, but nevertheless watched the scene out of the corner of her eye with a rather interested air.

Anne took the dress and looked at it in reverent silence. Oh, how pretty it was — a lovely soft brown gloria with all the gloss of silk; a skirt with dainty frills and shirrings; a waist elaborately pintucked in the most fashionable way, with a little ruffle of filmy lace at the neck. But the sleeves — they were the crowning glory! Long elbow cuffs, and above them two beautiful puffs divided by rows of shirring and bows of brown-silk ribbon.

“That’s a Christmas present for you, Anne,” said Matthew shyly. “Why — why — Anne, don’t you like it? Well now — well now.”

For Anne’s eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

“Like it! Oh, Matthew!” Anne laid the dress over a chair and clasped her hands. “Matthew, it’s perfectly exquisite. Oh, I can never thank you enough. Look at those sleeves! Oh, it seems to me this must be a happy dream.”

“Well, well, let us have breakfast,” interrupted Marilla. “I must say, Anne, I don’t think you needed the dress; but since Matthew has got it for you, see that you take good care of it. There’s a hair ribbon Mrs. Lynde left for you. It’s brown, to match the dress. Come now, sit in.”

“I don’t see how I’m going to eat breakfast,” said Anne rapturously. “Breakfast seems so commonplace at such an exciting moment. I’d rather feast my eyes on that dress. I’m so glad that puffed sleeves are still fashionable. It did seem to me that I’d never get over it if they went out before I had a dress with them. I’d never have felt quite satisfied, you see. It was lovely of Mrs. Lynde to give me the ribbon too. I feel that I ought to be a very good girl indeed. It’s at times like this I’m sorry I’m not a model little girl; and I always resolve that I will be in future. But somehow it’s hard to carry out your resolutions when irresistible temptations come. Still, I really will make an extra effort after this.”

When the commonplace breakfast was over Diana appeared, crossing the white log bridge in the hollow, a gay little figure in her crimson ulster. Anne flew down the slope to meet her.

“Merry Christmas, Diana! And oh, it’s a wonderful Christmas. I’ve something splendid to show you. Matthew has given me the loveliest dress, with SUCH sleeves. I couldn’t even imagine any nicer.”

“I’ve got something more for you,” said Diana breathlessly. “Here — this box. Aunt Josephine sent us out a big box with ever so many things in it — and this is for you. I’d have brought it over last night, but it didn’t come until after dark, and I never feel very comfortable coming through the Haunted Wood in the dark now.”

Anne opened the box and peeped in. First a card with “For the Anne-girl and Merry Christmas,” written on it; and then, a pair of the daintiest little kid slippers, with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles.

“Oh,” said Anne, “Diana, this is too much. I must be dreaming.”

“I call it providential,” said Diana. “You won’t have to borrow Ruby’s slippers now, and that’s a blessing, for they’re two sizes too big for you, and it would be awful to hear a fairy shuffling. Josie Pye would be delighted. Mind you, Rob Wright went home with Gertie Pye from the practice night before last. Did you ever hear anything equal to that?”

All the Avonlea scholars were in a fever of excitement that day, for the hall had to be decorated and a last grand rehearsal held.

The concert came off in the evening and was a pronounced success. The little hall was crowded; all the performers did excellently well, but Anne was the bright particular star of the occasion, as even envy, in the shape of Josie Pye, dared not deny.

“Oh, hasn’t it been a brilliant evening?” sighed Anne, when it was all over and she and Diana were walking home together under a dark, starry sky.

“Everything went off very well,” said Diana practically. “I guess we must have made as much as ten dollars. Mind you, Mr. Allan is going to send an account of it to the Charlottetown papers.”

“Oh, Diana, will we really see our names in print? It makes me thrill to think of it. Your solo was perfectly elegant, Diana. I felt prouder than you did when it was encored. I just said to myself, ‘It is my dear bosom friend who is so honored.’”

“Well, your recitations just brought down the house, Anne. That sad one was simply splendid.”

“Oh, I was so nervous, Diana. When Mr. Allan called out my name I really cannot tell how I ever got up on that platform. I felt as if a million eyes were looking at me and through me, and for one dreadful moment I was sure I couldn’t begin at all. Then I thought of my lovely puffed sleeves and took courage. I knew that I must live up to those sleeves, Diana. So I started in, and my voice seemed to be coming from ever so far away. I just felt like a parrot. It’s providential that I practiced those recitations so often up in the garret, or I’d never have been able to get through. Did I groan all right?”

“Yes, indeed, you groaned lovely,” assured Diana.

“I saw old Mrs. Sloane wiping away tears when I sat down. It was splendid to think I had touched somebody’s heart. It’s so romantic to take part in a concert, isn’t it? Oh, it’s been a very memorable occasion indeed.”

“Wasn’t the boys’ dialogue fine?” said Diana. “Gilbert Blythe was just splendid. Anne, I do think it’s awful mean the way you treat Gil. Wait till I tell you. When you ran off the platform after the fairy dialogue one of your roses fell out of your hair. I saw Gil pick it up and put it in his breast pocket. There now. You’re so romantic that I’m sure you ought to be pleased at that.”

“It’s nothing to me what that person does,” said Anne loftily. “I simply never waste a thought on him, Diana.”

That night Marilla and Matthew, who had been out to a concert for the first time in twenty years, sat for a while by the kitchen fire after Anne had gone to bed.

“Well now, I guess our Anne did as well as any of them,” said Matthew proudly.

“Yes, she did,” admitted Marilla. “She’s a bright child, Matthew. And she looked real nice too. I’ve been kind of opposed to this concert scheme, but I suppose there’s no real harm in it after all. Anyhow, I was proud of Anne tonight, although I’m not going to tell her so.”

“Well now, I was proud of her and I did tell her so ‘fore she went upstairs,” said Matthew. “We must see what we can do for her some of these days, Marilla. I guess she’ll need something more than Avonlea school by and by.”

“There’s time enough to think of that,” said Marilla. “She’s only thirteen in March. Though tonight it struck me she was growing quite a big girl. Mrs. Lynde made that dress a mite too long, and it makes Anne look so tall. She’s quick to learn and I guess the best thing we can do for her will be to send her to Queen’s after a spell. But nothing need be said about that for a year or two yet.”

“Well now, it’ll do no harm to be thinking it over off and on,” said Matthew. “Things like that are all the better for lots of thinking over.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Story Club Is Formed

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Junior Avonlea found it hard to settle down to humdrum existence again. To Anne in particular things seemed fearfully flat, stale, and unprofitable after the goblet of excitement she had been sipping for weeks. Could she go back to the former quiet pleasures of those faraway days before the concert? At first, as she told Diana, she did not really think she could.

“I’m positively certain, Diana, that life can never be quite the same again as it was in those olden days,” she said mournfully, as if referring to a period of at least fifty years back. “Perhaps after a while I’ll get used to it, but I’m afraid concerts spoil people for everyday life. I suppose that is why Marilla disapproves of them. Marilla is such a sensible woman. It must be a great deal better to be sensible; but still, I don’t believe I’d really want to be a sensible person, because they are so unromantic. Mrs. Lynde says there is no danger of my ever being one, but you can never tell. I feel just now that I may grow up to be sensible yet. But perhaps that is only because I’m tired. I simply couldn’t sleep last night for ever so long. I just lay awake and imagined the concert over and over again. That’s one splendid thing about such affairs — it’s so lovely to look back to them.”

Eventually, however, Avonlea school slipped back into its old groove and took up its old interests. To be sure, the concert left traces. Ruby Gillis and Emma White, who had quarreled over a point of precedence in their platform seats, no longer sat at the same desk, and a promising friendship of three years was broken up. Josie Pye and Julia Bell did not “speak” for three months, because Josie Pye had told Bessie Wright that Julia Bell’s bow when she got up to recite made her think of a chicken jerking its head, and Bessie told Julia. None of the Sloanes would have any dealings with the Bells, because the Bells had declared that the Sloanes had too much to do in the program, and the Sloanes had retorted that the Bells were not

capable of doing the little they had to do properly. Finally, Charlie Sloane fought Moody Spurgeon MacPherson, because Moody Spurgeon had said that Anne Shirley put on airs about her recitations, and Moody Spurgeon was “licked”; consequently Moody Spurgeon’s sister, Ella May, would not “speak” to Anne Shirley all the rest of the winter. With the exception of these trifling frictions, work in Miss Stacy’s little kingdom went on with regularity and smoothness.

The winter weeks slipped by. It was an unusually mild winter, with so little snow that Anne and Diana could go to school nearly every day by way of the Birch Path. On Anne’s birthday they were tripping lightly down it, keeping eyes and ears alert amid all their chatter, for Miss Stacy had told them that they must soon write a composition on “A Winter’s Walk in the Woods,” and it behooved them to be observant.

“Just think, Diana, I’m thirteen years old today,” remarked Anne in an awed voice. “I can scarcely realize that I’m in my teens. When I woke this morning it seemed to me that everything must be different. You’ve been thirteen for a month, so I suppose it doesn’t seem such a novelty to you as it does to me. It makes life seem so much more interesting. In two more years I’ll be really grown up. It’s a great comfort to think that I’ll be able to use big words then without being laughed at.”

“Ruby Gillis says she means to have a beau as soon as she’s fifteen,” said Diana.

“Ruby Gillis thinks of nothing but beaus,” said Anne disdainfully. “She’s actually delighted when anyone writes her name up in a take-notice for all she pretends to be so mad. But I’m afraid that is an uncharitable speech. Mrs. Allan says we should never make uncharitable speeches; but they do slip out so often before you think, don’t they? I simply can’t talk about Josie Pye without making an uncharitable speech, so I never mention her at all. You may have noticed that. I’m trying to be as much like Mrs. Allan as I possibly can, for I think she’s perfect. Mr. Allan thinks so too. Mrs. Lynde says he just worships the ground she treads on and she doesn’t really think it right for a minister to set his affections so much on a mortal being. But then, Diana, even ministers are human and have their besetting sins just like everybody else. I had such an interesting talk with Mrs. Allan

about besetting sins last Sunday afternoon. There are just a few things it's proper to talk about on Sundays and that is one of them. My besetting sin is imagining too much and forgetting my duties. I'm striving very hard to overcome it and now that I'm really thirteen perhaps I'll get on better."

"In four more years we'll be able to put our hair up," said Diana. "Alice Bell is only sixteen and she is wearing hers up, but I think that's ridiculous. I shall wait until I'm seventeen."

"If I had Alice Bell's crooked nose," said Anne decidedly, "I wouldn't — but there! I won't say what I was going to because it was extremely uncharitable. Besides, I was comparing it with my own nose and that's vanity. I'm afraid I think too much about my nose ever since I heard that compliment about it long ago. It really is a great comfort to me. Oh, Diana, look, there's a rabbit. That's something to remember for our woods composition. I really think the woods are just as lovely in winter as in summer. They're so white and still, as if they were asleep and dreaming pretty dreams."

"I won't mind writing that composition when its time comes," sighed Diana. "I can manage to write about the woods, but the one we're to hand in Monday is terrible. The idea of Miss Stacy telling us to write a story out of our own heads!"

"Why, it's as easy as wink," said Anne.

"It's easy for you because you have an imagination," retorted Diana, "but what would you do if you had been born without one? I suppose you have your composition all done?"

Anne nodded, trying hard not to look virtuously complacent and failing miserably.

"I wrote it last Monday evening. It's called 'The Jealous Rival; or In Death Not Divided.' I read it to Marilla and she said it was stuff and nonsense. Then I read it to Matthew and he said it was fine. That is the kind of critic I like. It's a sad, sweet story. I just cried like a child while I was writing it. It's about two beautiful maidens called Cordelia Montmorency and

Geraldine Seymour who lived in the same village and were devotedly attached to each other. Cordelia was a regal brunette with a coronet of midnight hair and dusky flashing eyes. Geraldine was a queenly blonde with hair like spun gold and velvety purple eyes.”

“I never saw anybody with purple eyes,” said Diana dubiously.

“Neither did I. I just imagined them. I wanted something out of the common. Geraldine had an alabaster brow too. I’ve found out what an alabaster brow is. That is one of the advantages of being thirteen. You know so much more than you did when you were only twelve.”

“Well, what became of Cordelia and Geraldine?” asked Diana, who was beginning to feel rather interested in their fate.

“They grew in beauty side by side until they were sixteen. Then Bertram DeVere came to their native village and fell in love with the fair Geraldine. He saved her life when her horse ran away with her in a carriage, and she fainted in his arms and he carried her home three miles; because, you understand, the carriage was all smashed up. I found it rather hard to imagine the proposal because I had no experience to go by. I asked Ruby Gillis if she knew anything about how men proposed because I thought she’d likely be an authority on the subject, having so many sisters married. Ruby told me she was hid in the hall pantry when Malcolm Andres proposed to her sister Susan. She said Malcolm told Susan that his dad had given him the farm in his own name and then said, ‘What do you say, darling pet, if we get hitched this fall?’ And Susan said, ‘Yes — no — I don’t know — let me see’ — and there they were, engaged as quick as that. But I didn’t think that sort of a proposal was a very romantic one, so in the end I had to imagine it out as well as I could. I made it very flowery and poetical and Bertram went on his knees, although Ruby Gillis says it isn’t done nowadays. Geraldine accepted him in a speech a page long. I can tell you I took a lot of trouble with that speech. I rewrote it five times and I look upon it as my masterpiece. Bertram gave her a diamond ring and a ruby necklace and told her they would go to Europe for a wedding tour, for he was immensely wealthy. But then, alas, shadows began to darken over their path. Cordelia was secretly in love with Bertram herself and when Geraldine told her about the engagement she was simply furious,

especially when she saw the necklace and the diamond ring. All her affection for Geraldine turned to bitter hate and she vowed that she should never marry Bertram. But she pretended to be Geraldine's friend the same as ever. One evening they were standing on the bridge over a rushing turbulent stream and Cordelia, thinking they were alone, pushed Geraldine over the brink with a wild, mocking, 'Ha, ha, ha.' But Bertram saw it all and he at once plunged into the current, exclaiming, 'I will save thee, my peerless Geraldine.' But alas, he had forgotten he couldn't swim, and they were both drowned, clasped in each other's arms. Their bodies were washed ashore soon afterwards. They were buried in the one grave and their funeral was most imposing, Diana. It's so much more romantic to end a story up with a funeral than a wedding. As for Cordelia, she went insane with remorse and was shut up in a lunatic asylum. I thought that was a poetical retribution for her crime."

"How perfectly lovely!" sighed Diana, who belonged to Matthew's school of critics. "I don't see how you can make up such thrilling things out of your own head, Anne. I wish my imagination was as good as yours."

"It would be if you'd only cultivate it," said Anne cheerfully. "I've just thought of a plan, Diana. Let you and me have a story club all our own and write stories for practice. I'll help you along until you can do them by yourself. You ought to cultivate your imagination, you know. Miss Stacy says so. Only we must take the right way. I told her about the Haunted Wood, but she said we went the wrong way about it in that."

This was how the story club came into existence. It was limited to Diana and Anne at first, but soon it was extended to include Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis and one or two others who felt that their imaginations needed cultivating. No boys were allowed in it — although Ruby Gillis opined that their admission would make it more exciting — and each member had to produce one story a week.

"It's extremely interesting," Anne told Marilla. "Each girl has to read her story out loud and then we talk it over. We are going to keep them all sacredly and have them to read to our descendants. We each write under a nom-de-plume. Mine is Rosamond Montmorency. All the girls do pretty well. Ruby Gillis is rather sentimental. She puts too much lovemaking into

her stories and you know too much is worse than too little. Jane never puts any because she says it makes her feel so silly when she had to read it out loud. Jane's stories are extremely sensible. Then Diana puts too many murders into hers. She says most of the time she doesn't know what to do with the people so she kills them off to get rid of them. I mostly always have to tell them what to write about, but that isn't hard for I've millions of ideas."

"I think this story-writing business is the foolishhest yet," scoffed Marilla. "You'll get a pack of nonsense into your heads and waste time that should be put on your lessons. Reading stories is bad enough but writing them is worse."

"But we're so careful to put a moral into them all, Marilla," explained Anne. "I insist upon that. All the good people are rewarded and all the bad ones are suitably punished. I'm sure that must have a wholesome effect. The moral is the great thing. Mr. Allan says so. I read one of my stories to him and Mrs. Allan and they both agreed that the moral was excellent. Only they laughed in the wrong places. I like it better when people cry. Jane and Ruby almost always cry when I come to the pathetic parts. Diana wrote her Aunt Josephine about our club and her Aunt Josephine wrote back that we were to send her some of our stories. So we copied out four of our very best and sent them. Miss Josephine Barry wrote back that she had never read anything so amusing in her life. That kind of puzzled us because the stories were all very pathetic and almost everybody died. But I'm glad Miss Barry liked them. It shows our club is doing some good in the world. Mrs. Allan says that ought to be our object in everything. I do really try to make it my object but I forget so often when I'm having fun. I hope I shall be a little like Mrs. Allan when I grow up. Do you think there is any prospect of it, Marilla?"

"I shouldn't say there was a great deal" was Marilla's encouraging answer. "I'm sure Mrs. Allan was never such a silly, forgetful little girl as you are."

"No; but she wasn't always so good as she is now either," said Anne seriously. "She told me so herself — that is, she said she was a dreadful mischief when she was a girl and was always getting into scrapes. I felt so

encouraged when I heard that. Is it very wicked of me, Marilla, to feel encouraged when I hear that other people have been bad and mischievous? Mrs. Lynde says it is. Mrs. Lynde says she always feels shocked when she hears of anyone ever having been naughty, no matter how small they were. Mrs. Lynde says she once heard a minister confess that when he was a boy he stole a strawberry tart out of his aunt's pantry and she never had any respect for that minister again. Now, I wouldn't have felt that way. I'd have thought that it was real noble of him to confess it, and I'd have thought what an encouraging thing it would be for small boys nowadays who do naughty things and are sorry for them to know that perhaps they may grow up to be ministers in spite of it. That's how I'd feel, Marilla."

"The way I feel at present, Anne," said Marilla, "is that it's high time you had those dishes washed. You've taken half an hour longer than you should with all your chattering. Learn to work first and talk afterwards."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Vanity and Vexation of Spirit

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Marilla, walking home one late April evening from an Aid meeting, realized that the winter was over and gone with the thrill of delight that spring never fails to bring to the oldest and saddest as well as to the youngest and merriest. Marilla was not given to subjective analysis of her thoughts and feelings. She probably imagined that she was thinking about the Aids and their missionary box and the new carpet for the vestry room, but under these reflections was a harmonious consciousness of red fields smoking into pale-purply mists in the declining sun, of long, sharp-pointed fir shadows falling over the meadow beyond the brook, of still, crimson-budded maples around a mirrorlike wood pool, of a wakening in the world and a stir of hidden pulses under the gray sod. The spring was abroad in the land and Marilla's sober, middle-aged step was lighter and swifter because of its deep, primal gladness.

Her eyes dwelt affectionately on Green Gables, peering through its network of trees and reflecting the sunlight back from its windows in several little coruscations of glory. Marilla, as she picked her steps along the damp lane, thought that it was really a satisfaction to know that she was going home to a briskly snapping wood fire and a table nicely spread for tea, instead of to the cold comfort of old Aid meeting evenings before Anne had come to Green Gables.

Consequently, when Marilla entered her kitchen and found the fire black out, with no sign of Anne anywhere, she felt justly disappointed and irritated. She had told Anne to be sure and have tea ready at five o'clock, but now she must hurry to take off her second-best dress and prepare the meal herself against Matthew's return from plowing.

“I’ll settle Miss Anne when she comes home,” said Marilla grimly, as she shaved up kindlings with a carving knife and with more vim than was strictly necessary. Matthew had come in and was waiting patiently for his tea in his corner. “She’s gadding off somewhere with Diana, writing stories or practicing dialogues or some such tomfoolery, and never thinking once about the time or her duties. She’s just got to be pulled up short and sudden on this sort of thing. I don’t care if Mrs. Allan does say she’s the brightest and sweetest child she ever knew. She may be bright and sweet enough, but her head is full of nonsense and there’s never any knowing what shape it’ll break out in next. Just as soon as she grows out of one freak she takes up with another. But there! Here I am saying the very thing I was so riled with Rachel Lynde for saying at the Aid today. I was real glad when Mrs. Allan spoke up for Anne, for if she hadn’t I know I’d have said something too sharp to Rachel before everybody. Anne’s got plenty of faults, goodness knows, and far be it from me to deny it. But I’m bringing her up and not Rachel Lynde, who’d pick faults in the Angel Gabriel himself if he lived in Avonlea. Just the same, Anne has no business to leave the house like this when I told her she was to stay home this afternoon and look after things. I must say, with all her faults, I never found her disobedient or untrustworthy before and I’m real sorry to find her so now.”

“Well now, I dunno,” said Matthew, who, being patient and wise and, above all, hungry, had deemed it best to let Marilla talk her wrath out unhindered, having learned by experience that she got through with whatever work was on hand much quicker if not delayed by untimely argument. “Perhaps you’re judging her too hasty, Marilla. Don’t call her untrustworthy until you’re sure she has disobeyed you. Mebbe it can all be explained — Anne’s a great hand at explaining.”

“She’s not here when I told her to stay,” retorted Marilla. “I reckon she’ll find it hard to explain THAT to my satisfaction. Of course I knew you’d take her part, Matthew. But I’m bringing her up, not you.”

It was dark when supper was ready, and still no sign of Anne, coming hurriedly over the log bridge or up Lover’s Lane, breathless and repentant with a sense of neglected duties. Marilla washed and put away the dishes

grimly. Then, wanting a candle to light her way down the cellar, she went up to the east gable for the one that generally stood on Anne's table. Lighting it, she turned around to see Anne herself lying on the bed, face downward among the pillows.

"Mercy on us," said astonished Marilla, "have you been asleep, Anne?"

"No," was the muffled reply.

"Are you sick then?" demanded Marilla anxiously, going over to the bed.

Anne cowered deeper into her pillows as if desirous of hiding herself forever from mortal eyes.

"No. But please, Marilla, go away and don't look at me. I'm in the depths of despair and I don't care who gets head in class or writes the best composition or sings in the Sunday-school choir any more. Little things like that are of no importance now because I don't suppose I'll ever be able to go anywhere again. My career is closed. Please, Marilla, go away and don't look at me."

"Did anyone ever hear the like?" the mystified Marilla wanted to know. "Anne Shirley, whatever is the matter with you? What have you done? Get right up this minute and tell me. This minute, I say. There now, what is it?"

Anne had slid to the floor in despairing obedience.

"Look at my hair, Marilla," she whispered.

Accordingly, Marilla lifted her candle and looked scrutinizingly at Anne's hair, flowing in heavy masses down her back. It certainly had a very strange appearance.

"Anne Shirley, what have you done to your hair? Why, it's GREEN!"

Green it might be called, if it were any earthly color — a queer, dull, bronzy green, with streaks here and there of the original red to heighten the ghastly effect. Never in all her life had Marilla seen anything so grotesque as Anne's hair at that moment.

“Yes, it’s green,” moaned Anne. “I thought nothing could be as bad as red hair. But now I know it’s ten times worse to have green hair. Oh, Marilla, you little know how utterly wretched I am.”

“I little know how you got into this fix, but I mean to find out,” said Marilla. “Come right down to the kitchen — it’s too cold up here — and tell me just what you’ve done. I’ve been expecting something queer for some time. You haven’t got into any scrape for over two months, and I was sure another one was due. Now, then, what did you do to your hair?”

“I dyed it.”

“Dyed it! Dyed your hair! Anne Shirley, didn’t you know it was a wicked thing to do?”

“Yes, I knew it was a little wicked,” admitted Anne. “But I thought it was worth while to be a little wicked to get rid of red hair. I counted the cost, Marilla. Besides, I meant to be extra good in other ways to make up for it.”

“Well,” said Marilla sarcastically, “if I’d decided it was worth while to dye my hair I’d have dyed it a decent color at least. I wouldn’t have dyed it green.”

“But I didn’t mean to dye it green, Marilla,” protested Anne dejectedly. “If I was wicked I meant to be wicked to some purpose. He said it would turn my hair a beautiful raven black — he positively assured me that it would. How could I doubt his word, Marilla? I know what it feels like to have your word doubted. And Mrs. Allan says we should never suspect anyone of not telling us the truth unless we have proof that they’re not. I have proof now — green hair is proof enough for anybody. But I hadn’t then and I believed every word he said IMPLICITLY.”

“Who said? Who are you talking about?”

“The peddler that was here this afternoon. I bought the dye from him.”

“Anne Shirley, how often have I told you never to let one of those Italians in the house! I don’t believe in encouraging them to come around at all.”

“Oh, I didn’t let him in the house. I remembered what you told me, and I went out, carefully shut the door, and looked at his things on the step. Besides, he wasn’t an Italian — he was a German Jew. He had a big box full of very interesting things and he told me he was working hard to make enough money to bring his wife and children out from Germany. He spoke so feelingly about them that it touched my heart. I wanted to buy something from him to help him in such a worthy object. Then all at once I saw the bottle of hair dye. The peddler said it was warranted to dye any hair a beautiful raven black and wouldn’t wash off. In a trice I saw myself with beautiful raven-black hair and the temptation was irresistible. But the price of the bottle was seventy-five cents and I had only fifty cents left out of my chicken money. I think the peddler had a very kind heart, for he said that, seeing it was me, he’d sell it for fifty cents and that was just giving it away. So I bought it, and as soon as he had gone I came up here and applied it with an old hairbrush as the directions said. I used up the whole bottle, and oh, Marilla, when I saw the dreadful color it turned my hair I repented of being wicked, I can tell you. And I’ve been repenting ever since.”

“Well, I hope you’ll repent to good purpose,” said Marilla severely, “and that you’ve got your eyes opened to where your vanity has led you, Anne. Goodness knows what’s to be done. I suppose the first thing is to give your hair a good washing and see if that will do any good.”

Accordingly, Anne washed her hair, scrubbing it vigorously with soap and water, but for all the difference it made she might as well have been scouring its original red. The peddler had certainly spoken the truth when he declared that the dye wouldn’t wash off, however his veracity might be impeached in other respects.

“Oh, Marilla, what shall I do?” questioned Anne in tears. “I can never live this down. People have pretty well forgotten my other mistakes — the liniment cake and setting Diana drunk and flying into a temper with Mrs. Lynde. But they’ll never forget this. They will think I am not respectable. Oh, Marilla, ‘what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to

deceive.' That is poetry, but it is true. And oh, how Josie Pye will laugh! Marilla, I CANNOT face Josie Pye. I am the unhappiest girl in Prince Edward Island."

Anne's unhappiness continued for a week. During that time she went nowhere and shampooed her hair every day. Diana alone of outsiders knew the fatal secret, but she promised solemnly never to tell, and it may be stated here and now that she kept her word. At the end of the week Marilla said decidedly:

"It's no use, Anne. That is fast dye if ever there was any. Your hair must be cut off; there is no other way. You can't go out with it looking like that."

Anne's lips quivered, but she realized the bitter truth of Marilla's remarks. With a dismal sigh she went for the scissors.

"Please cut it off at once, Marilla, and have it over. Oh, I feel that my heart is broken. This is such an unromantic affliction. The girls in books lose their hair in fevers or sell it to get money for some good deed, and I'm sure I wouldn't mind losing my hair in some such fashion half so much. But there is nothing comforting in having your hair cut off because you've dyed it a dreadful color, is there? I'm going to weep all the time you're cutting it off, if it won't interfere. It seems such a tragic thing."

Anne wept then, but later on, when she went upstairs and looked in the glass, she was calm with despair. Marilla had done her work thoroughly and it had been necessary to shingle the hair as closely as possible. The result was not becoming, to state the case as mildly as may be. Anne promptly turned her glass to the wall.

"I'll never, never look at myself again until my hair grows," she exclaimed passionately.

Then she suddenly righted the glass.

"Yes, I will, too. I'd do penance for being wicked that way. I'll look at myself every time I come to my room and see how ugly I am. And I won't try to imagine it away, either. I never thought I was vain about my hair, of

all things, but now I know I was, in spite of its being red, because it was so long and thick and curly. I expect something will happen to my nose next.”

Anne’s clipped head made a sensation in school on the following Monday, but to her relief nobody guessed the real reason for it, not even Josie Pye, who, however, did not fail to inform Anne that she looked like a perfect scarecrow.

“I didn’t say anything when Josie said that to me,” Anne confided that evening to Marilla, who was lying on the sofa after one of her headaches, “because I thought it was part of my punishment and I ought to bear it patiently. It’s hard to be told you look like a scarecrow and I wanted to say something back. But I didn’t. I just swept her one scornful look and then I forgave her. It makes you feel very virtuous when you forgive people, doesn’t it? I mean to devote all my energies to being good after this and I shall never try to be beautiful again. Of course it’s better to be good. I know it is, but it’s sometimes so hard to believe a thing even when you know it. I do really want to be good, Marilla, like you and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy, and grow up to be a credit to you. Diana says when my hair begins to grow to tie a black velvet ribbon around my head with a bow at one side. She says she thinks it will be very becoming. I will call it a snood — that sounds so romantic. But am I talking too much, Marilla? Does it hurt your head?”

“My head is better now. It was terrible bad this afternoon, though. These headaches of mine are getting worse and worse. I’ll have to see a doctor about them. As for your chatter, I don’t know that I mind it — I’ve got so used to it.”

Which was Marilla’s way of saying that she liked to hear it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

An Unfortunate Lily Maid

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“OF course you must be Elaine, Anne,” said Diana. “I could never have the courage to float down there.”

“Nor I,” said Ruby Gillis, with a shiver. “I don’t mind floating down when there’s two or three of us in the flat and we can sit up. It’s fun then. But to lie down and pretend I was dead — I just couldn’t. I’d die really of fright.”

“Of course it would be romantic,” conceded Jane Andrews, “but I know I couldn’t keep still. I’d be popping up every minute or so to see where I was and if I wasn’t drifting too far out. And you know, Anne, that would spoil the effect.”

“But it’s so ridiculous to have a redheaded Elaine,” mourned Anne. “I’m not afraid to float down and I’d love to be Elaine. But it’s ridiculous just the same. Ruby ought to be Elaine because she is so fair and has such lovely long golden hair — Elaine had ‘all her bright hair streaming down,’ you know. And Elaine was the lily maid. Now, a redhaired person cannot be a lily maid.”

“Your complexion is just as fair as Ruby’s,” said Diana earnestly, “and your hair is ever so much darker than it used to be before you cut it.”

“Oh, do you really think so?” exclaimed Anne, flushing sensitively with delight. “I’ve sometimes thought it was myself — but I never dared to ask anyone for fear she would tell me it wasn’t. Do you think it could be called auburn now, Diana?”

“Yes, and I think it is real pretty,” said Diana, looking admiringly at the short, silky curls that clustered over Anne’s head and were held in place by

a very jaunty black velvet ribbon and bow.

They were standing on the bank of the pond, below Orchard Slope, where a little headland fringed with birches ran out from the bank; at its tip was a small wooden platform built out into the water for the convenience of fishermen and duck hunters. Ruby and Jane were spending the midsummer afternoon with Diana, and Anne had come over to play with them.

Anne and Diana had spent most of their playtime that summer on and about the pond. Idlewild was a thing of the past, Mr. Bell having ruthlessly cut down the little circle of trees in his back pasture in the spring. Anne had sat among the stumps and wept, not without an eye to the romance of it; but she was speedily consoled, for, after all, as she and Diana said, big girls of thirteen, going on fourteen, were too old for such childish amusements as playhouses, and there were more fascinating sports to be found about the pond. It was splendid to fish for trout over the bridge and the two girls learned to row themselves about in the little flat-bottomed dory Mr. Barry kept for duck shooting.

It was Anne's idea that they dramatize Elaine. They had studied Tennyson's poem in school the preceding winter, the Superintendent of Education having prescribed it in the English course for the Prince Edward Island schools. They had analyzed and parsed it and torn it to pieces in general until it was a wonder there was any meaning at all left in it for them, but at least the fair lily maid and Lancelot and Guinevere and King Arthur had become very real people to them, and Anne was devoured by secret regret that she had not been born in Camelot. Those days, she said, were so much more romantic than the present.

Anne's plan was hailed with enthusiasm. The girls had discovered that if the flat were pushed off from the landing place it would drift down with the current under the bridge and finally strand itself on another headland lower down which ran out at a curve in the pond. They had often gone down like this and nothing could be more convenient for playing Elaine.

"Well, I'll be Elaine," said Anne, yielding reluctantly, for, although she would have been delighted to play the principal character, yet her artistic sense demanded fitness for it and this, she felt, her limitations made

impossible. “Ruby, you must be King Arthur and Jane will be Guinevere and Diana must be Lancelot. But first you must be the brothers and the father. We can’t have the old dumb servitor because there isn’t room for two in the flat when one is lying down. We must pall the barge all its length in blackest samite. That old black shawl of your mother’s will be just the thing, Diana.”

The black shawl having been procured, Anne spread it over the flat and then lay down on the bottom, with closed eyes and hands folded over her breast.

“Oh, she does look really dead,” whispered Ruby Gillis nervously, watching the still, white little face under the flickering shadows of the birches. “It makes me feel frightened, girls. Do you suppose it’s really right to act like this? Mrs. Lynde says that all play-acting is abominably wicked.”

“Ruby, you shouldn’t talk about Mrs. Lynde,” said Anne severely. “It spoils the effect because this is hundreds of years before Mrs. Lynde was born. Jane, you arrange this. It’s silly for Elaine to be talking when she’s dead.”

Jane rose to the occasion. Cloth of gold for coverlet there was none, but an old piano scarf of yellow Japanese crepe was an excellent substitute. A white lily was not obtainable just then, but the effect of a tall blue iris placed in one of Anne’s folded hands was all that could be desired.

“Now, she’s all ready,” said Jane. “We must kiss her quiet brows and, Diana, you say, ‘Sister, farewell forever,’ and Ruby, you say, ‘Farewell, sweet sister,’ both of you as sorrowfully as you possibly can. Anne, for goodness sake smile a little. You know Elaine ‘lay as though she smiled.’ That’s better. Now push the flat off.”

The flat was accordingly pushed off, scraping roughly over an old embedded stake in the process. Diana and Jane and Ruby only waited long enough to see it caught in the current and headed for the bridge before scampering up through the woods, across the road, and down to the lower

headland where, as Lancelot and Guinevere and the King, they were to be in readiness to receive the lily maid.

For a few minutes Anne, drifting slowly down, enjoyed the romance of her situation to the full. Then something happened not at all romantic. The flat began to leak. In a very few moments it was necessary for Elaine to scramble to her feet, pick up her cloth of gold coverlet and pall of blackest samite and gaze blankly at a big crack in the bottom of her barge through which the water was literally pouring. That sharp stake at the landing had torn off the strip of batting nailed on the flat. Anne did not know this, but it did not take her long to realize that she was in a dangerous plight. At this rate the flat would fill and sink long before it could drift to the lower headland. Where were the oars? Left behind at the landing!

Anne gave one gasping little scream which nobody ever heard; she was white to the lips, but she did not lose her selfpossession. There was one chance — just one.

“I was horribly frightened,” she told Mrs. Allan the next day, “and it seemed like years while the flat was drifting down to the bridge and the water rising in it every moment. I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly, but I didn’t shut my eyes to pray, for I knew the only way God could save me was to let the flat float close enough to one of the bridge piles for me to climb up on it. You know the piles are just old tree trunks and there are lots of knots and old branch stubs on them. It was proper to pray, but I had to do my part by watching out and right well I knew it. I just said, ‘Dear God, please take the flat close to a pile and I’ll do the rest,’ over and over again. Under such circumstances you don’t think much about making a flowery prayer. But mine was answered, for the flat bumped right into a pile for a minute and I flung the scarf and the shawl over my shoulder and scrambled up on a big providential stub. And there I was, Mrs. Allan, clinging to that slippery old pile with no way of getting up or down. It was a very unromantic position, but I didn’t think about that at the time. You don’t think much about romance when you have just escaped from a watery grave. I said a grateful prayer at once and then I gave all my attention to holding on tight, for I knew I should probably have to depend on human aid to get back to dry land.”

The flat drifted under the bridge and then promptly sank in midstream. Ruby, Jane, and Diana, already awaiting it on the lower headland, saw it disappear before their very eyes and had not a doubt but that Anne had gone down with it. For a moment they stood still, white as sheets, frozen with horror at the tragedy; then, shrieking at the tops of their voices, they started on a frantic run up through the woods, never pausing as they crossed the main road to glance the way of the bridge. Anne, clinging desperately to her precarious foothold, saw their flying forms and heard their shrieks. Help would soon come, but meanwhile her position was a very uncomfortable one.

The minutes passed by, each seeming an hour to the unfortunate lily maid. Why didn't somebody come? Where had the girls gone? Suppose they had fainted, one and all! Suppose nobody ever came! Suppose she grew so tired and cramped that she could hold on no longer! Anne looked at the wicked green depths below her, wavering with long, oily shadows, and shivered. Her imagination began to suggest all manner of gruesome possibilities to her.

Then, just as she thought she really could not endure the ache in her arms and wrists another moment, Gilbert Blythe came rowing under the bridge in Harmon Andrews's dory!

Gilbert glanced up and, much to his amazement, beheld a little white scornful face looking down upon him with big, frightened but also scornful gray eyes.

"Anne Shirley! How on earth did you get there?" he exclaimed.

Without waiting for an answer he pulled close to the pile and extended his hand. There was no help for it; Anne, clinging to Gilbert Blythe's hand, scrambled down into the dory, where she sat, drabbled and furious, in the stern with her arms full of dripping shawl and wet crepe. It was certainly extremely difficult to be dignified under the circumstances!

"What has happened, Anne?" asked Gilbert, taking up his oars. "We were playing Elaine" explained Anne frigidly, without even looking at her rescuer, "and I had to drift down to Camelot in the barge — I mean the

flat. The flat began to leak and I climbed out on the pile. The girls went for help. Will you be kind enough to row me to the landing?"

Gilbert obligingly rowed to the landing and Anne, disdaining assistance, sprang nimbly on shore.

"I'm very much obliged to you," she said haughtily as she turned away. But Gilbert had also sprung from the boat and now laid a detaining hand on her arm.

"Anne," he said hurriedly, "look here. Can't we be good friends? I'm awfully sorry I made fun of your hair that time. I didn't mean to vex you and I only meant it for a joke. Besides, it's so long ago. I think your hair is awfully pretty now — honest I do. Let's be friends."

For a moment Anne hesitated. She had an odd, newly awakened consciousness under all her outraged dignity that the half-shy, half-eager expression in Gilbert's hazel eyes was something that was very good to see. Her heart gave a quick, queer little beat. But the bitterness of her old grievance promptly stiffened up her wavering determination. That scene of two years before flashed back into her recollection as vividly as if it had taken place yesterday. Gilbert had called her "carrots" and had brought about her disgrace before the whole school. Her resentment, which to other and older people might be as laughable as its cause, was in no whit allayed and softened by time seemingly. She hated Gilbert Blythe! She would never forgive him!

"No," she said coldly, "I shall never be friends with you, Gilbert Blythe; and I don't want to be!"

"All right!" Gilbert sprang into his skiff with an angry color in his cheeks. "I'll never ask you to be friends again, Anne Shirley. And I don't care either!"

He pulled away with swift defiant strokes, and Anne went up the steep, ferny little path under the maples. She held her head very high, but she was conscious of an odd feeling of regret. She almost wished she had answered Gilbert differently. Of course, he had insulted her terribly, but

still — ! Altogether, Anne rather thought it would be a relief to sit down and have a good cry. She was really quite unstrung, for the reaction from her fright and cramped clinging was making itself felt.

Halfway up the path she met Jane and Diana rushing back to the pond in a state narrowly removed from positive frenzy. They had found nobody at Orchard Slope, both Mr. and Mrs. Barry being away. Here Ruby Gillis had succumbed to hysterics, and was left to recover from them as best she might, while Jane and Diana flew through the Haunted Wood and across the brook to Green Gables. There they had found nobody either, for Marilla had gone to Carmody and Matthew was making hay in the back field.

“Oh, Anne,” gasped Diana, fairly falling on the former’s neck and weeping with relief and delight, “oh, Anne — we thought — you were — drowned — and we felt like murderers — because we had made — you be — Elaine. And Ruby is in hysterics — oh, Anne, how did you escape?”

“I climbed up on one of the piles,” explained Anne wearily, “and Gilbert Blythe came along in Mr. Andrews’s dory and brought me to land.”

“Oh, Anne, how splendid of him! Why, it’s so romantic!” said Jane, finding breath enough for utterance at last. “Of course you’ll speak to him after this.”

“Of course I won’t,” flashed Anne, with a momentary return of her old spirit. “And I don’t want ever to hear the word ‘romantic’ again, Jane Andrews. I’m awfully sorry you were so frightened, girls. It is all my fault. I feel sure I was born under an unlucky star. Everything I do gets me or my dearest friends into a scrape. We’ve gone and lost your father’s flat, Diana, and I have a presentiment that we’ll not be allowed to row on the pond any more.”

Anne’s presentiment proved more trustworthy than presentiments are apt to do. Great was the consternation in the Barry and Cuthbert households when the events of the afternoon became known.

“Will you ever have any sense, Anne?” groaned Marilla.

“Oh, yes, I think I will, Marilla,” returned Anne optimistically. A good cry, indulged in the grateful solitude of the east gable, had soothed her nerves and restored her to her wonted cheerfulness. “I think my prospects of becoming sensible are brighter now than ever.”

“I don’t see how,” said Marilla.

“Well,” explained Anne, “I’ve learned a new and valuable lesson today. Ever since I came to Green Gables I’ve been making mistakes, and each mistake has helped to cure me of some great shortcoming. The affair of the amethyst brooch cured me of meddling with things that didn’t belong to me. The Haunted Wood mistake cured me of letting my imagination run away with me. The liniment cake mistake cured me of carelessness in cooking. Dyeing my hair cured me of vanity. I never think about my hair and nose now — at least, very seldom. And today’s mistake is going to cure me of being too romantic. I have come to the conclusion that it is no use trying to be romantic in Avonlea. It was probably easy enough in towered Camelot hundreds of years ago, but romance is not appreciated now. I feel quite sure that you will soon see a great improvement in me in this respect, Marilla.”

“I’m sure I hope so,” said Marilla skeptically.

But Matthew, who had been sitting mutely in his corner, laid a hand on Anne’s shoulder when Marilla had gone out.

“Don’t give up all your romance, Anne,” he whispered shyly, “a little of it is a good thing — not too much, of course — but keep a little of it, Anne, keep a little of it.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

An Epoch in Anne's Life

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Anne was bringing the cows home from the back pasture by way of Lover's Lane. It was a September evening and all the gaps and clearings in the woods were brimmed up with ruby sunset light. Here and there the lane was splashed with it, but for the most part it was already quite shadowy beneath the maples, and the spaces under the firs were filled with a clear violet dusk like airy wine. The winds were out in their tops, and there is no sweeter music on earth than that which the wind makes in the fir trees at evening.

The cows swung placidly down the lane, and Anne followed them dreamily, repeating aloud the battle canto from MARMION — which had also been part of their English course the preceding winter and which Miss Stacy had made them learn off by heart — and exulting in its rushing lines and the clash of spears in its imagery. When she came to the lines:

The stubborn spearsmen still made good

Their dark impenetrable wood,

she stopped in ecstasy to shut her eyes that she might the better fancy herself one of that heroic ring. When she opened them again it was to behold Diana coming through the gate that led into the Barry field and looking so important that Anne instantly divined there was news to be told. But betray too eager curiosity she would not.

“Isn't this evening just like a purple dream, Diana? It makes me so glad to be alive. In the mornings I always think the mornings are best; but when evening comes I think it's lovelier still.”

“It’s a very fine evening,” said Diana, “but oh, I have such news, Anne. Guess. You can have three guesses.”

“Charlotte Gillis is going to be married in the church after all and Mrs. Allan wants us to decorate it,” cried Anne.

“No. Charlotte’s beau won’t agree to that, because nobody ever has been married in the church yet, and he thinks it would seem too much like a funeral. It’s too mean, because it would be such fun. Guess again.”

“Jane’s mother is going to let her have a birthday party?”

Diana shook her head, her black eyes dancing with merriment.

“I can’t think what it can be,” said Anne in despair, “unless it’s that Moody Spurgeon MacPherson saw you home from prayer meeting last night. Did he?”

“I should think not,” exclaimed Diana indignantly. “I wouldn’t be likely to boast of it if he did, the horrid creature! I knew you couldn’t guess it. Mother had a letter from Aunt Josephine today, and Aunt Josephine wants you and me to go to town next Tuesday and stop with her for the Exhibition. There!”

“Oh, Diana,” whispered Anne, finding it necessary to lean up against a maple tree for support, “do you really mean it? But I’m afraid Marilla won’t let me go. She will say that she can’t encourage gadding about. That was what she said last week when Jane invited me to go with them in their double-seated buggy to the American concert at the White Sands Hotel. I wanted to go, but Marilla said I’d be better at home learning my lessons and so would Jane. I was bitterly disappointed, Diana. I felt so heartbroken that I wouldn’t say my prayers when I went to bed. But I repented of that and got up in the middle of the night and said them.”

“I’ll tell you,” said Diana, “we’ll get Mother to ask Marilla. She’ll be more likely to let you go then; and if she does we’ll have the time of our lives, Anne. I’ve never been to an Exhibition, and it’s so aggravating to

hear the other girls talking about their trips. Jane and Ruby have been twice, and they're going this year again."

"I'm not going to think about it at all until I know whether I can go or not," said Anne resolutely. "If I did and then was disappointed, it would be more than I could bear. But in case I do go I'm very glad my new coat will be ready by that time. Marilla didn't think I needed a new coat. She said my old one would do very well for another winter and that I ought to be satisfied with having a new dress. The dress is very pretty, Diana — navy blue and made so fashionably. Marilla always makes my dresses fashionably now, because she says she doesn't intend to have Matthew going to Mrs. Lynde to make them. I'm so glad. It is ever so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable. At least, it is easier for me. I suppose it doesn't make such a difference to naturally good people. But Matthew said I must have a new coat, so Marilla bought a lovely piece of blue broadcloth, and it's being made by a real dressmaker over at Carmody. It's to be done Saturday night, and I'm trying not to imagine myself walking up the church aisle on Sunday in my new suit and cap, because I'm afraid it isn't right to imagine such things. But it just slips into my mind in spite of me. My cap is so pretty. Matthew bought it for me the day we were over at Carmody. It is one of those little blue velvet ones that are all the rage, with gold cord and tassels. Your new hat is elegant, Diana, and so becoming. When I saw you come into church last Sunday my heart swelled with pride to think you were my dearest friend. Do you suppose it's wrong for us to think so much about our clothes? Marilla says it is very sinful. But it is such an interesting subject, isn't it?"

Marilla agreed to let Anne go to town, and it was arranged that Mr. Barry should take the girls in on the following Tuesday. As Charlottetown was thirty miles away and Mr. Barry wished to go and return the same day, it was necessary to make a very early start. But Anne counted it all joy, and was up before sunrise on Tuesday morning. A glance from her window assured her that the day would be fine, for the eastern sky behind the firs of the Haunted Wood was all silvery and cloudless. Through the gap in the trees a light was shining in the western gable of Orchard Slope, a token that Diana was also up.

Anne was dressed by the time Matthew had the fire on and had the breakfast ready when Marilla came down, but for her own part was much too excited to eat. After breakfast the jaunty new cap and jacket were donned, and Anne hastened over the brook and up through the firs to Orchard Slope. Mr. Barry and Diana were waiting for her, and they were soon on the road.

It was a long drive, but Anne and Diana enjoyed every minute of it. It was delightful to rattle along over the moist roads in the early red sunlight that was creeping across the shorn harvest fields. The air was fresh and crisp, and little smoke-blue mists curled through the valleys and floated off from the hills. Sometimes the road went through woods where maples were beginning to hang out scarlet banners; sometimes it crossed rivers on bridges that made Anne's flesh cringe with the old, half-delightful fear; sometimes it wound along a harbor shore and passed by a little cluster of weather-gray fishing huts; again it mounted to hills whence a far sweep of curving upland or misty-blue sky could be seen; but wherever it went there was much of interest to discuss. It was almost noon when they reached town and found their way to "Beechwood." It was quite a fine old mansion, set back from the street in a seclusion of green elms and branching beeches. Miss Barry met them at the door with a twinkle in her sharp black eyes.

"So you've come to see me at last, you Anne-girl," she said. "Mercy, child, how you have grown! You're taller than I am, I declare. And you're ever so much better looking than you used to be, too. But I dare say you know that without being told."

"Indeed I didn't," said Anne radiantly. "I know I'm not so freckled as I used to be, so I've much to be thankful for, but I really hadn't dared to hope there was any other improvement. I'm so glad you think there is, Miss Barry." Miss Barry's house was furnished with "great magnificence," as Anne told Marilla afterward. The two little country girls were rather abashed by the splendor of the parlor where Miss Barry left them when she went to see about dinner.

"Isn't it just like a palace?" whispered Diana. "I never was in Aunt Josephine's house before, and I'd no idea it was so grand. I just wish Julia

Bell could see this — she puts on such airs about her mother's parlor.”

“Velvet carpet,” sighed Anne luxuriously, “and silk curtains! I’ve dreamed of such things, Diana. But do you know I don’t believe I feel very comfortable with them after all. There are so many things in this room and all so splendid that there is no scope for imagination. That is one consolation when you are poor — there are so many more things you can imagine about.”

Their sojourn in town was something that Anne and Diana dated from for years. From first to last it was crowded with delights.

On Wednesday Miss Barry took them to the Exhibition grounds and kept them there all day.

“It was splendid,” Anne related to Marilla later on. “I never imagined anything so interesting. I don’t really know which department was the most interesting. I think I liked the horses and the flowers and the fancywork best. Josie Pye took first prize for knitted lace. I was real glad she did. And I was glad that I felt glad, for it shows I’m improving, don’t you think, Marilla, when I can rejoice in Josie’s success? Mr. Harmon Andrews took second prize for Gravenstein apples and Mr. Bell took first prize for a pig. Diana said she thought it was ridiculous for a Sunday-school superintendent to take a prize in pigs, but I don’t see why. Do you? She said she would always think of it after this when he was praying so solemnly. Clara Louise MacPherson took a prize for painting, and Mrs. Lynde got first prize for homemade butter and cheese. So Avonlea was pretty well represented, wasn’t it? Mrs. Lynde was there that day, and I never knew how much I really liked her until I saw her familiar face among all those strangers. There were thousands of people there, Marilla. It made me feel dreadfully insignificant. And Miss Barry took us up to the grandstand to see the horse races. Mrs. Lynde wouldn’t go; she said horse racing was an abomination and, she being a church member, thought it her bounden duty to set a good example by staying away. But there were so many there I don’t believe Mrs. Lynde’s absence would ever be noticed. I don’t think, though, that I ought to go very often to horse races, because they ARE awfully fascinating. Diana got so excited that she offered to bet me ten cents that the red horse would win. I didn’t believe he would, but I

refused to bet, because I wanted to tell Mrs. Allan all about everything, and I felt sure it wouldn't do to tell her that. It's always wrong to do anything you can't tell the minister's wife. It's as good as an extra conscience to have a minister's wife for your friend. And I was very glad I didn't bet, because the red horse DID win, and I would have lost ten cents. So you see that virtue was its own reward. We saw a man go up in a balloon. I'd love to go up in a balloon, Marilla; it would be simply thrilling; and we saw a man selling fortunes. You paid him ten cents and a little bird picked out your fortune for you. Miss Barry gave Diana and me ten cents each to have our fortunes told. Mine was that I would marry a dark-complected man who was very wealthy, and I would go across water to live. I looked carefully at all the dark men I saw after that, but I didn't care much for any of them, and anyhow I suppose it's too early to be looking out for him yet. Oh, it was a never-to-be-forgotten day, Marilla. I was so tired I couldn't sleep at night. Miss Barry put us in the spare room, according to promise. It was an elegant room, Marilla, but somehow sleeping in a spare room isn't what I used to think it was. That's the worst of growing up, and I'm beginning to realize it. The things you wanted so much when you were a child don't seem half so wonderful to you when you get them."

Thursday the girls had a drive in the park, and in the evening Miss Barry took them to a concert in the Academy of Music, where a noted prima donna was to sing. To Anne the evening was a glittering vision of delight.

"Oh, Marilla, it was beyond description. I was so excited I couldn't even talk, so you may know what it was like. I just sat in enraptured silence. Madame Selitsky was perfectly beautiful, and wore white satin and diamonds. But when she began to sing I never thought about anything else. Oh, I can't tell you how I felt. But it seemed to me that it could never be hard to be good any more. I felt like I do when I look up to the stars. Tears came into my eyes, but, oh, they were such happy tears. I was so sorry when it was all over, and I told Miss Barry I didn't see how I was ever to return to common life again. She said she thought if we went over to the restaurant across the street and had an ice cream it might help me. That sounded so prosaic; but to my surprise I found it true. The ice cream was delicious, Marilla, and it was so lovely and dissipated to be sitting there

eating it at eleven o'clock at night. Diana said she believed she was born for city life. Miss Barry asked me what my opinion was, but I said I would have to think it over very seriously before I could tell her what I really thought. So I thought it over after I went to bed. That is the best time to think things out. And I came to the conclusion, Marilla, that I wasn't born for city life and that I was glad of it. It's nice to be eating ice cream at brilliant restaurants at eleven o'clock at night once in a while; but as a regular thing I'd rather be in the east gable at eleven, sound asleep, but kind of knowing even in my sleep that the stars were shining outside and that the wind was blowing in the firs across the brook. I told Miss Barry so at breakfast the next morning and she laughed. Miss Barry generally laughed at anything I said, even when I said the most solemn things. I don't think I liked it, Marilla, because I wasn't trying to be funny. But she is a most hospitable lady and treated us royally."

Friday brought going-home time, and Mr. Barry drove in for the girls.

"Well, I hope you've enjoyed yourselves," said Miss Barry, as she bade them goodbye.

"Indeed we have," said Diana.

"And you, Anne-girl?"

"I've enjoyed every minute of the time," said Anne, throwing her arms impulsively about the old woman's neck and kissing her wrinkled cheek. Diana would never have dared to do such a thing and felt rather aghast at Anne's freedom. But Miss Barry was pleased, and she stood on her veranda and watched the buggy out of sight. Then she went back into her big house with a sigh. It seemed very lonely, lacking those fresh young lives. Miss Barry was a rather selfish old lady, if the truth must be told, and had never cared much for anybody but herself. She valued people only as they were of service to her or amused her. Anne had amused her, and consequently stood high in the old lady's good graces. But Miss Barry found herself thinking less about Anne's quaint speeches than of her fresh enthusiasms, her transparent emotions, her little winning ways, and the sweetness of her eyes and lips.

“I thought Marilla Cuthbert was an old fool when I heard she’d adopted a girl out of an orphan asylum,” she said to herself, “but I guess she didn’t make much of a mistake after all. If I’d a child like Anne in the house all the time I’d be a better and happier woman.”

Anne and Diana found the drive home as pleasant as the drive in — pleasanter, indeed, since there was the delightful consciousness of home waiting at the end of it. It was sunset when they passed through White Sands and turned into the shore road. Beyond, the Avonlea hills came out darkly against the saffron sky. Behind them the moon was rising out of the sea that grew all radiant and transfigured in her light. Every little cove along the curving road was a marvel of dancing ripples. The waves broke with a soft swish on the rocks below them, and the tang of the sea was in the strong, fresh air.

“Oh, but it’s good to be alive and to be going home,” breathed Anne.

When she crossed the log bridge over the brook the kitchen light of Green Gables winked her a friendly welcome back, and through the open door shone the hearth fire, sending out its warm red glow athwart the chilly autumn night. Anne ran blithely up the hill and into the kitchen, where a hot supper was waiting on the table.

“So you’ve got back?” said Marilla, folding up her knitting.

“Yes, and oh, it’s so good to be back,” said Anne joyously. “I could kiss everything, even to the clock. Marilla, a broiled chicken! You don’t mean to say you cooked that for me!”

“Yes, I did,” said Marilla. “I thought you’d be hungry after such a drive and need something real appetizing. Hurry and take off your things, and we’ll have supper as soon as Matthew comes in. I’m glad you’ve got back, I must say. It’s been fearful lonesome here without you, and I never put in four longer days.”

After supper Anne sat before the fire between Matthew and Marilla, and gave them a full account of her visit.

“I’ve had a splendid time,” she concluded happily, “and I feel that it marks an epoch in my life. But the best of it all was the coming home.”

CHAPTER XXX.

The Queens Class Is Organized

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Marilla laid her knitting on her lap and leaned back in her chair. Her eyes were tired, and she thought vaguely that she must see about having her glasses changed the next time she went to town, for her eyes had grown tired very often of late.

It was nearly dark, for the full November twilight had fallen around Green Gables, and the only light in the kitchen came from the dancing red flames in the stove.

Anne was curled up Turkfashion on the hearthrug, gazing into that joyous glow where the sunshine of a hundred summers was being distilled from the maple cordwood. She had been reading, but her book had slipped to the floor, and now she was dreaming, with a smile on her parted lips. Glittering castles in Spain were shaping themselves out of the mists and rainbows of her lively fancy; adventures wonderful and enthralling were happening to her in cloudland — adventures that always turned out triumphantly and never involved her in scrapes like those of actual life.

Marilla looked at her with a tenderness that would never have been suffered to reveal itself in any clearer light than that soft mingling of fireshine and shadow. The lesson of a love that should display itself easily in spoken word and open look was one Marilla could never learn. But she had learned to love this slim, grayeyed girl with an affection all the deeper and stronger from its very undemonstrativeness. Her love made her afraid of being unduly indulgent, indeed. She had an uneasy feeling that it was rather sinful to set one's heart so intensely on any human creature as she had set hers on Anne, and perhaps she performed a sort of unconscious penance for this by being stricter and more critical than if the girl had been less dear to her. Certainly Anne herself had no idea how Marilla

loved her. She sometimes thought wistfully that Marilla was very hard to please and distinctly lacking in sympathy and understanding. But she always checked the thought reproachfully, remembering what she owed to Marilla.

“Anne,” said Marilla abruptly, “Miss Stacy was here this afternoon when you were out with Diana.”

Anne came back from her other world with a start and a sigh.

“Was she? Oh, I’m so sorry I wasn’t in. Why didn’t you call me, Marilla? Diana and I were only over in the Haunted Wood. It’s lovely in the woods now. All the little wood things — the ferns and the satin leaves and the crackerberries — have gone to sleep, just as if somebody had tucked them away until spring under a blanket of leaves. I think it was a little gray fairy with a rainbow scarf that came tiptoeing along the last moonlight night and did it. Diana wouldn’t say much about that, though. Diana has never forgotten the scolding her mother gave her about imagining ghosts into the Haunted Wood. It had a very bad effect on Diana’s imagination. It blighted it. Mrs. Lynde says Myrtle Bell is a blighted being. I asked Ruby Gillis why Myrtle was blighted, and Ruby said she guessed it was because her young man had gone back on her. Ruby Gillis thinks of nothing but young men, and the older she gets the worse she is. Young men are all very well in their place, but it doesn’t do to drag them into everything, does it? Diana and I are thinking seriously of promising each other that we will never marry but be nice old maids and live together forever. Diana hasn’t quite made up her mind though, because she thinks perhaps it would be nobler to marry some wild, dashing, wicked young man and reform him. Diana and I talk a great deal about serious subjects now, you know. We feel that we are so much older than we used to be that it isn’t becoming to talk of childish matters. It’s such a solemn thing to be almost fourteen, Marilla. Miss Stacy took all us girls who are in our teens down to the brook last Wednesday, and talked to us about it. She said we couldn’t be too careful what habits we formed and what ideals we acquired in our teens, because by the time we were twenty our characters would be developed and the foundation laid for our whole future life. And she said if the foundation was shaky we could never build anything really worth

while on it. Diana and I talked the matter over coming home from school. We felt extremely solemn, Marilla. And we decided that we would try to be very careful indeed and form respectable habits and learn all we could and be as sensible as possible, so that by the time we were twenty our characters would be properly developed. It's perfectly appalling to think of being twenty, Marilla. It sounds so fearfully old and grown up. But why was Miss Stacy here this afternoon?"

"That is what I want to tell you, Anne, if you'll ever give me a chance to get a word in edgewise. She was talking about you."

"About me?" Anne looked rather scared. Then she flushed and exclaimed:

"Oh, I know what she was saying. I meant to tell you, Marilla, honestly I did, but I forgot. Miss Stacy caught me reading Ben Hur in school yesterday afternoon when I should have been studying my Canadian history. Jane Andrews lent it to me. I was reading it at dinner hour, and I had just got to the chariot race when school went in. I was simply wild to know how it turned out — although I felt sure Ben Hur must win, because it wouldn't be poetical justice if he didn't — so I spread the history open on my desk lid and then tucked Ben Hur between the desk and my knee. I just looked as if I were studying Canadian history, you know, while all the while I was reveling in Ben Hur. I was so interested in it that I never noticed Miss Stacy coming down the aisle until all at once I just looked up and there she was looking down at me, so reproachful-like. I can't tell you how ashamed I felt, Marilla, especially when I heard Josie Pye giggling. Miss Stacy took Ben Hur away, but she never said a word then. She kept me in at recess and talked to me. She said I had done very wrong in two respects. First, I was wasting the time I ought to have put on my studies; and secondly, I was deceiving my teacher in trying to make it appear I was reading a history when it was a storybook instead. I had never realized until that moment, Marilla, that what I was doing was deceitful. I was shocked. I cried bitterly, and asked Miss Stacy to forgive me and I'd never do such a thing again; and I offered to do penance by never so much as looking at Ben Hur for a whole week, not even to see how the chariot race turned out. But Miss Stacy said she wouldn't require that, and she forgave

me freely. So I think it wasn't very kind of her to come up here to you about it after all."

"Miss Stacy never mentioned such a thing to me, Anne, and it's only your guilty conscience that's the matter with you. You have no business to be taking storybooks to school. You read too many novels anyhow. When I was a girl I wasn't so much as allowed to look at a novel."

"Oh, how can you call Ben Hur a novel when it's really such a religious book?" protested Anne. "Of course it's a little too exciting to be proper reading for Sunday, and I only read it on weekdays. And I never read ANY book now unless either Miss Stacy or Mrs. Allan thinks it is a proper book for a girl thirteen and three-quarters to read. Miss Stacy made me promise that. She found me reading a book one day called, *The Lurid Mystery of the Haunted Hall*. It was one Ruby Gillis had lent me, and, oh, Marilla, it was so fascinating and creepy. It just curdled the blood in my veins. But Miss Stacy said it was a very silly, unwholesome book, and she asked me not to read any more of it or any like it. I didn't mind promising not to read any more like it, but it was AGONIZING to give back that book without knowing how it turned out. But my love for Miss Stacy stood the test and I did. It's really wonderful, Marilla, what you can do when you're truly anxious to please a certain person."

"Well, I guess I'll light the lamp and get to work," said Marilla. "I see plainly that you don't want to hear what Miss Stacy had to say. You're more interested in the sound of your own tongue than in anything else."

"Oh, indeed, Marilla, I do want to hear it," cried Anne contritely. "I won't say another word — not one. I know I talk too much, but I am really trying to overcome it, and although I say far too much, yet if you only knew how many things I want to say and don't, you'd give me some credit for it. Please tell me, Marilla."

"Well, Miss Stacy wants to organize a class among her advanced students who mean to study for the entrance examination into Queen's. She intends to give them extra lessons for an hour after school. And she came to ask Matthew and me if we would like to have you join it. What do you think

about it yourself, Anne? Would you like to go to Queen's and pass for a teacher?"

"Oh, Marilla!" Anne straightened to her knees and clasped her hands. "It's been the dream of my life — that is, for the last six months, ever since Ruby and Jane began to talk of studying for the Entrance. But I didn't say anything about it, because I supposed it would be perfectly useless. I'd love to be a teacher. But won't it be dreadfully expensive? Mr. Andrews says it cost him one hundred and fifty dollars to put Prissy through, and Prissy wasn't a dunce in geometry."

"I guess you needn't worry about that part of it. When Matthew and I took you to bring up we resolved we would do the best we could for you and give you a good education. I believe in a girl being fitted to earn her own living whether she ever has to or not. You'll always have a home at Green Gables as long as Matthew and I are here, but nobody knows what is going to happen in this uncertain world, and it's just as well to be prepared. So you can join the Queen's class if you like, Anne."

"Oh, Marilla, thank you." Anne flung her arms about Marilla's waist and looked up earnestly into her face. "I'm extremely grateful to you and Matthew. And I'll study as hard as I can and do my very best to be a credit to you. I warn you not to expect much in geometry, but I think I can hold my own in anything else if I work hard."

"I dare say you'll get along well enough. Miss Stacy says you are bright and diligent." Not for worlds would Marilla have told Anne just what Miss Stacy had said about her; that would have been to pamper vanity. "You needn't rush to any extreme of killing yourself over your books. There is no hurry. You won't be ready to try the Entrance for a year and a half yet. But it's well to begin in time and be thoroughly grounded, Miss Stacy says."

"I shall take more interest than ever in my studies now," said Anne blissfully, "because I have a purpose in life. Mr. Allan says everybody should have a purpose in life and pursue it faithfully. Only he says we must first make sure that it is a worthy purpose. I would call it a worthy

purpose to want to be a teacher like Miss Stacy, wouldn't you, Marilla? I think it's a very noble profession."

The Queen's class was organized in due time. Gilbert Blythe, Anne Shirley, Ruby Gillis, Jane Andrews, Josie Pye, Charlie Sloane, and Moody Spurgeon MacPherson joined it. Diana Barry did not, as her parents did not intend to send her to Queen's. This seemed nothing short of a calamity to Anne. Never, since the night on which Minnie May had had the croup, had she and Diana been separated in anything. On the evening when the Queen's class first remained in school for the extra lessons and Anne saw Diana go slowly out with the others, to walk home alone through the Birch Path and Violet Vale, it was all the former could do to keep her seat and refrain from rushing impulsively after her chum. A lump came into her throat, and she hastily retired behind the pages of her uplifted Latin grammar to hide the tears in her eyes. Not for worlds would Anne have had Gilbert Blythe or Josie Pye see those tears.

"But, oh, Marilla, I really felt that I had tasted the bitterness of death, as Mr. Allan said in his sermon last Sunday, when I saw Diana go out alone," she said mournfully that night. "I thought how splendid it would have been if Diana had only been going to study for the Entrance, too. But we can't have things perfect in this imperfect world, as Mrs. Lynde says. Mrs. Lynde isn't exactly a comforting person sometimes, but there's no doubt she says a great many very true things. And I think the Queen's class is going to be extremely interesting. Jane and Ruby are just going to study to be teachers. That is the height of their ambition. Ruby says she will only teach for two years after she gets through, and then she intends to be married. Jane says she will devote her whole life to teaching, and never, never marry, because you are paid a salary for teaching, but a husband won't pay you anything, and growls if you ask for a share in the egg and butter money. I expect Jane speaks from mournful experience, for Mrs. Lynde says that her father is a perfect old crank, and meaner than second skimmings. Josie Pye says she is just going to college for education's sake, because she won't have to earn her own living; she says of course it is different with orphans who are living on charity — THEY have to hustle. Moody Spurgeon is going to be a minister. Mrs. Lynde says he couldn't be anything else with a name like that to live up to. I hope it isn't

wicked of me, Marilla, but really the thought of Moody Spurgeon being a minister makes me laugh. He's such a funny-looking boy with that big fat face, and his little blue eyes, and his ears sticking out like flaps. But perhaps he will be more intellectual looking when he grows up. Charlie Sloane says he's going to go into politics and be a member of Parliament, but Mrs. Lynde says he'll never succeed at that, because the Sloanes are all honest people, and it's only rascals that get on in politics nowadays."

"What is Gilbert Blythe going to be?" queried Marilla, seeing that Anne was opening her Caesar.

"I don't happen to know what Gilbert Blythe's ambition in life is — if he has any," said Anne scornfully.

There was open rivalry between Gilbert and Anne now. Previously the rivalry had been rather onesided, but there was no longer any doubt that Gilbert was as determined to be first in class as Anne was. He was a foeman worthy of her steel. The other members of the class tacitly acknowledged their superiority, and never dreamed of trying to compete with them.

Since the day by the pond when she had refused to listen to his plea for forgiveness, Gilbert, save for the aforesaid determined rivalry, had evinced no recognition whatever of the existence of Anne Shirley. He talked and jested with the other girls, exchanged books and puzzles with them, discussed lessons and plans, sometimes walked home with one or the other of them from prayer meeting or Debating Club. But Anne Shirley he simply ignored, and Anne found out that it is not pleasant to be ignored. It was in vain that she told herself with a toss of her head that she did not care. Deep down in her wayward, feminine little heart she knew that she did care, and that if she had that chance of the Lake of Shining Waters again she would answer very differently. All at once, as it seemed, and to her secret dismay, she found that the old resentment she had cherished against him was gone — gone just when she most needed its sustaining power. It was in vain that she recalled every incident and emotion of that memorable occasion and tried to feel the old satisfying anger. That day by the pond had witnessed its last spasmodic flicker. Anne realized that she had forgiven and forgotten without knowing it. But it was too late.

And at least neither Gilbert nor anybody else, not even Diana, should ever suspect how sorry she was and how much she wished she hadn't been so proud and horrid! She determined to "shroud her feelings in deepest oblivion," and it may be stated here and now that she did it, so successfully that Gilbert, who possibly was not quite so indifferent as he seemed, could not console himself with any belief that Anne felt his retaliatory scorn. The only poor comfort he had was that she snubbed Charlie Sloane, unmercifully, continually, and undeservedly.

Otherwise the winter passed away in a round of pleasant duties and studies. For Anne the days slipped by like golden beads on the necklace of the year. She was happy, eager, interested; there were lessons to be learned and honor to be won; delightful books to read; new pieces to be practiced for the Sunday-school choir; pleasant Saturday afternoons at the manse with Mrs. Allan; and then, almost before Anne realized it, spring had come again to Green Gables and all the world was abloom once more.

Studies palled just a wee bit then; the Queen's class, left behind in school while the others scattered to green lanes and leafy wood cuts and meadow byways, looked wistfully out of the windows and discovered that Latin verbs and French exercises had somehow lost the tang and zest they had possessed in the crisp winter months. Even Anne and Gilbert lagged and grew indifferent. Teacher and taught were alike glad when the term was ended and the glad vacation days stretched rosily before them.

"But you've done good work this past year," Miss Stacy told them on the last evening, "and you deserve a good, jolly vacation. Have the best time you can in the out-of-door world and lay in a good stock of health and vitality and ambition to carry you through next year. It will be the tug of war, you know — the last year before the Entrance."

"Are you going to be back next year, Miss Stacy?" asked Josie Pye.

Josie Pye never scrupled to ask questions; in this instance the rest of the class felt grateful to her; none of them would have dared to ask it of Miss Stacy, but all wanted to, for there had been alarming rumors running at large through the school for some time that Miss Stacy was not coming back the next year — that she had been offered a position in the grade

school of her own home district and meant to accept. The Queen's class listened in breathless suspense for her answer.

"Yes, I think I will," said Miss Stacy. "I thought of taking another school, but I have decided to come back to Avonlea. To tell the truth, I've grown so interested in my pupils here that I found I couldn't leave them. So I'll stay and see you through."

"Hurrah!" said Moody Spurgeon. Moody Spurgeon had never been so carried away by his feelings before, and he blushed uncomfortably every time he thought about it for a week.

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Anne, with shining eyes. "Dear Stacy, it would be perfectly dreadful if you didn't come back. I don't believe I could have the heart to go on with my studies at all if another teacher came here."

When Anne got home that night she stacked all her textbooks away in an old trunk in the attic, locked it, and threw the key into the blanket box.

"I'm not even going to look at a schoolbook in vacation," she told Marilla. "I've studied as hard all the term as I possibly could and I've pored over that geometry until I know every proposition in the first book off by heart, even when the letters ARE changed. I just feel tired of everything sensible and I'm going to let my imagination run riot for the summer. Oh, you needn't be alarmed, Marilla. I'll only let it run riot within reasonable limits. But I want to have a real good jolly time this summer, for maybe it's the last summer I'll be a little girl. Mrs. Lynde says that if I keep stretching out next year as I've done this I'll have to put on longer skirts. She says I'm all running to legs and eyes. And when I put on longer skirts I shall feel that I have to live up to them and be very dignified. It won't even do to believe in fairies then, I'm afraid; so I'm going to believe in them with all my whole heart this summer. I think we're going to have a very gay vacation. Ruby Gillis is going to have a birthday party soon and there's the Sunday school picnic and the missionary concert next month. And Mr. Barry says that some evening he'll take Diana and me over to the White Sands Hotel and have dinner there. They have dinner there in the evening, you know. Jane Andrews was over once last summer and she says it was a dazzling sight to see the electric lights and the flowers and all the

lady guests in such beautiful dresses. Jane says it was her first glimpse into high life and she'll never forget it to her dying day."

Mrs. Lynde came up the next afternoon to find out why Marilla had not been at the Aid meeting on Thursday. When Marilla was not at Aid meeting people knew there was something wrong at Green Gables.

"Matthew had a bad spell with his heart Thursday," Marilla explained, "and I didn't feel like leaving him. Oh, yes, he's all right again now, but he takes them spells oftener than he used to and I'm anxious about him. The doctor says he must be careful to avoid excitement. That's easy enough, for Matthew doesn't go about looking for excitement by any means and never did, but he's not to do any very heavy work either and you might as well tell Matthew not to breathe as not to work. Come and lay off your things, Rachel. You'll stay to tea?"

"Well, seeing you're so pressing, perhaps I might as well, stay" said Mrs. Rachel, who had not the slightest intention of doing anything else.

Mrs. Rachel and Marilla sat comfortably in the parlor while Anne got the tea and made hot biscuits that were light and white enough to defy even Mrs. Rachel's criticism.

"I must say Anne has turned out a real smart girl," admitted Mrs. Rachel, as Marilla accompanied her to the end of the lane at sunset. "She must be a great help to you."

"She is," said Marilla, "and she's real steady and reliable now. I used to be afraid she'd never get over her featherbrained ways, but she has and I wouldn't be afraid to trust her in anything now."

"I never would have thought she'd have turned out so well that first day I was here three years ago," said Mrs. Rachel. "Lawful heart, shall I ever forget that tantrum of hers! When I went home that night I says to Thomas, says I, 'Mark my words, Thomas, Marilla Cuthbert'll live to rue the step she's took.' But I was mistaken and I'm real glad of it. I ain't one of those kind of people, Marilla, as can never be brought to own up that they've made a mistake. No, that never was my way, thank goodness. I did

make a mistake in judging Anne, but it weren't no wonder, for an odder, unexpecteder witch of a child there never was in this world, that's what. There was no ciphering her out by the rules that worked with other children. It's nothing short of wonderful how she's improved these three years, but especially in looks. She's a real pretty girl got to be, though I can't say I'm overly partial to that pale, big-eyed style myself. I like more snap and color, like Diana Barry has or Ruby Gillis. Ruby Gillis's looks are real showy. But somehow — I don't know how it is but when Anne and them are together, though she ain't half as handsome, she makes them look kind of common and overdone — something like them white June lilies she calls narcissus alongside of the big, red peonies, that's what."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Where the Brook and River Meet

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Anne had her “good” summer and enjoyed it wholeheartedly. She and Diana fairly lived outdoors, reveling in all the delights that Lover’s Lane and the Dryad’s Bubble and Willowmere and Victoria Island afforded. Marilla offered no objections to Anne’s gypsyings. The Spencervale doctor who had come the night Minnie May had the croup met Anne at the house of a patient one afternoon early in vacation, looked her over sharply, screwed up his mouth, shook his head, and sent a message to Marilla Cuthbert by another person. It was:

“Keep that redheaded girl of yours in the open air all summer and don’t let her read books until she gets more spring into her step.”

This message frightened Marilla wholesomely. She read Anne’s death warrant by consumption in it unless it was scrupulously obeyed. As a result, Anne had the golden summer of her life as far as freedom and frolic went. She walked, rowed, berried, and dreamed to her heart’s content; and when September came she was bright-eyed and alert, with a step that would have satisfied the Spencervale doctor and a heart full of ambition and zest once more.

“I feel just like studying with might and main,” she declared as she brought her books down from the attic. “Oh, you good old friends, I’m glad to see your honest faces once more — yes, even you, geometry. I’ve had a perfectly beautiful summer, Marilla, and now I’m rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, as Mr. Allan said last Sunday. Doesn’t Mr. Allan preach magnificent sermons? Mrs. Lynde says he is improving every day and the first thing we know some city church will gobble him up and then we’ll be left and have to turn to and break in another green preacher. But I don’t see the use of meeting trouble halfway, do you, Marilla? I think it

would be better just to enjoy Mr. Allan while we have him. If I were a man I think I'd be a minister. They can have such an influence for good, if their theology is sound; and it must be thrilling to preach splendid sermons and stir your hearers' hearts. Why can't women be ministers, Marilla? I asked Mrs. Lynde that and she was shocked and said it would be a scandalous thing. She said there might be female ministers in the States and she believed there was, but thank goodness we hadn't got to that stage in Canada yet and she hoped we never would. But I don't see why. I think women would make splendid ministers. When there is a social to be got up or a church tea or anything else to raise money the women have to turn to and do the work. I'm sure Mrs. Lynde can pray every bit as well as Superintendent Bell and I've no doubt she could preach too with a little practice."

"Yes, I believe she could," said Marilla dryly. "She does plenty of unofficial preaching as it is. Nobody has much of a chance to go wrong in Avonlea with Rachel to oversee them."

"Marilla," said Anne in a burst of confidence, "I want to tell you something and ask you what you think about it. It has worried me terribly — on Sunday afternoons, that is, when I think specially about such matters. I do really want to be good; and when I'm with you or Mrs. Allan or Miss Stacy I want it more than ever and I want to do just what would please you and what you would approve of. But mostly when I'm with Mrs. Lynde I feel desperately wicked and as if I wanted to go and do the very thing she tells me I oughtn't to do. I feel irresistibly tempted to do it. Now, what do you think is the reason I feel like that? Do you think it's because I'm really bad and unregenerate?"

Marilla looked dubious for a moment. Then she laughed.

"If you are I guess I am too, Anne, for Rachel often has that very effect on me. I sometimes think she'd have more of an influence for good, as you say yourself, if she didn't keep nagging people to do right. There should have been a special commandment against nagging. But there, I shouldn't talk so. Rachel is a good Christian woman and she means well. There isn't a kinder soul in Avonlea and she never shirks her share of work."

“I’m very glad you feel the same,” said Anne decidedly. “It’s so encouraging. I shan’t worry so much over that after this. But I dare say there’ll be other things to worry me. They keep coming up new all the time — things to perplex you, you know. You settle one question and there’s another right after. There are so many things to be thought over and decided when you’re beginning to grow up. It keeps me busy all the time thinking them over and deciding what is right. It’s a serious thing to grow up, isn’t it, Marilla? But when I have such good friends as you and Matthew and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy I ought to grow up successfully, and I’m sure it will be my own fault if I don’t. I feel it’s a great responsibility because I have only the one chance. If I don’t grow up right I can’t go back and begin over again. I’ve grown two inches this summer, Marilla. Mr. Gillis measured me at Ruby’s party. I’m so glad you made my new dresses longer. That dark-green one is so pretty and it was sweet of you to put on the flounce. Of course I know it wasn’t really necessary, but flounces are so stylish this fall and Josie Pye has flounces on all her dresses. I know I’ll be able to study better because of mine. I shall have such a comfortable feeling deep down in my mind about that flounce.”

“It’s worth something to have that,” admitted Marilla.

Miss Stacy came back to Avonlea school and found all her pupils eager for work once more. Especially did the Queen’s class gird up their loins for the fray, for at the end of the coming year, dimly shadowing their pathway already, loomed up that fateful thing known as “the Entrance,” at the thought of which one and all felt their hearts sink into their very shoes. Suppose they did not pass! That thought was doomed to haunt Anne through the waking hours of that winter, Sunday afternoons inclusive, to the almost entire exclusion of moral and theological problems. When Anne had bad dreams she found herself staring miserably at pass lists of the Entrance exams, where Gilbert Blythe’s name was blazoned at the top and in which hers did not appear at all.

But it was a jolly, busy, happy swift-flying winter. Schoolwork was as interesting, class rivalry as absorbing, as of yore. New worlds of thought, feeling, and ambition, fresh, fascinating fields of unexplored knowledge seemed to be opening out before Anne’s eager eyes.

“Hills peeped o’er hill and Alps on Alps arose.”

Much of all this was due to Miss Stacy’s tactful, careful, broadminded guidance. She led her class to think and explore and discover for themselves and encouraged straying from the old beaten paths to a degree that quite shocked Mrs. Lynde and the school trustees, who viewed all innovations on established methods rather dubiously.

Apart from her studies Anne expanded socially, for Marilla, mindful of the Spencervale doctor’s dictum, no longer vetoed occasional outings. The Debating Club flourished and gave several concerts; there were one or two parties almost verging on grownup affairs; there were sleigh drives and skating frolics galore.

Between times Anne grew, shooting up so rapidly that Marilla was astonished one day, when they were standing side by side, to find the girl was taller than herself.

“Why, Anne, how you’ve grown!” she said, almost unbelievably. A sigh followed on the words. Marilla felt a queer regret over Anne’s inches. The child she had learned to love had vanished somehow and here was this tall, serious-eyed girl of fifteen, with the thoughtful brows and the proudly poised little head, in her place. Marilla loved the girl as much as she had loved the child, but she was conscious of a queer sorrowful sense of loss. And that night, when Anne had gone to prayer meeting with Diana, Marilla sat alone in the wintry twilight and indulged in the weakness of a cry. Matthew, coming in with a lantern, caught her at it and gazed at her in such consternation that Marilla had to laugh through her tears.

“I was thinking about Anne,” she explained. “She’s got to be such a big girl — and she’ll probably be away from us next winter. I’ll miss her terrible.”

“She’ll be able to come home often,” comforted Matthew, to whom Anne was as yet and always would be the little, eager girl he had brought home from Bright River on that June evening four years before. “The branch railroad will be built to Carmody by that time.”

“It won’t be the same thing as having her here all the time,” sighed Marilla gloomily, determined to enjoy her luxury of grief uncomfited. “But there — men can’t understand these things!”

There were other changes in Anne no less real than the physical change. For one thing, she became much quieter. Perhaps she thought all the more and dreamed as much as ever, but she certainly talked less. Marilla noticed and commented on this also.

“You don’t chatter half as much as you used to, Anne, nor use half as many big words. What has come over you?”

Anne colored and laughed a little, as she dropped her book and looked dreamily out of the window, where big fat red buds were bursting out on the creeper in response to the lure of the spring sunshine.

“I don’t know — I don’t want to talk as much,” she said, denting her chin thoughtfully with her forefinger. “It’s nicer to think dear, pretty thoughts and keep them in one’s heart, like treasures. I don’t like to have them laughed at or wondered over. And somehow I don’t want to use big words any more. It’s almost a pity, isn’t it, now that I’m really growing big enough to say them if I did want to. It’s fun to be almost grown up in some ways, but it’s not the kind of fun I expected, Marilla. There’s so much to learn and do and think that there isn’t time for big words. Besides, Miss Stacy says the short ones are much stronger and better. She makes us write all our essays as simply as possible. It was hard at first. I was so used to crowding in all the fine big words I could think of — and I thought of any number of them. But I’ve got used to it now and I see it’s so much better.”

“What has become of your story club? I haven’t heard you speak of it for a long time.”

“The story club isn’t in existence any longer. We hadn’t time for it — and anyhow I think we had got tired of it. It was silly to be writing about love and murder and elopements and mysteries. Miss Stacy sometimes has us write a story for training in composition, but she won’t let us write anything but what might happen in Avonlea in our own lives, and she criticizes it very sharply and makes us criticize our own too. I never

thought my compositions had so many faults until I began to look for them myself. I felt so ashamed I wanted to give up altogether, but Miss Stacy said I could learn to write well if I only trained myself to be my own severest critic. And so I am trying to.”

“You’ve only two more months before the Entrance,” said Marilla. “Do you think you’ll be able to get through?”

Anne shivered.

“I don’t know. Sometimes I think I’ll be all right — and then I get horribly afraid. We’ve studied hard and Miss Stacy has drilled us thoroughly, but we mayn’t get through for all that. We’ve each got a stumbling block. Mine is geometry of course, and Jane’s is Latin, and Ruby and Charlie’s is algebra, and Josie’s is arithmetic. Moody Spurgeon says he feels it in his bones that he is going to fail in English history. Miss Stacy is going to give us examinations in June just as hard as we’ll have at the Entrance and mark us just as strictly, so we’ll have some idea. I wish it was all over, Marilla. It haunts me. Sometimes I wake up in the night and wonder what I’ll do if I don’t pass.”

“Why, go to school next year and try again,” said Marilla unconcernedly.

“Oh, I don’t believe I’d have the heart for it. It would be such a disgrace to fail, especially if Gil — if the others passed. And I get so nervous in an examination that I’m likely to make a mess of it. I wish I had nerves like Jane Andrews. Nothing rattles her.”

Anne sighed and, dragging her eyes from the witcheries of the spring world, the beckoning day of breeze and blue, and the green things upspringing in the garden, buried herself resolutely in her book. There would be other springs, but if she did not succeed in passing the Entrance, Anne felt convinced that she would never recover sufficiently to enjoy them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Pass List Is Out

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With the end of June came the close of the term and the close of Miss Stacy's rule in Avonlea school. Anne and Diana walked home that evening feeling very sober indeed. Red eyes and damp handkerchiefs bore convincing testimony to the fact that Miss Stacy's farewell words must have been quite as touching as Mr. Phillips's had been under similar circumstances three years before. Diana looked back at the schoolhouse from the foot of the spruce hill and sighed deeply.

"It does seem as if it was the end of everything, doesn't it?" she said dismally.

"You oughtn't to feel half as badly as I do," said Anne, hunting vainly for a dry spot on her handkerchief. "You'll be back again next winter, but I suppose I've left the dear old school forever — if I have good luck, that is."

"It won't be a bit the same. Miss Stacy won't be there, nor you nor Jane nor Ruby probably. I shall have to sit all alone, for I couldn't bear to have another deskmate after you. Oh, we have had jolly times, haven't we, Anne? It's dreadful to think they're all over."

Two big tears rolled down by Diana's nose.

"If you would stop crying I could," said Anne imploringly. "Just as soon as I put away my hanky I see you brimming up and that starts me off again. As Mrs. Lynde says, 'If you can't be cheerful, be as cheerful as you can.' After all, I dare say I'll be back next year. This is one of the times I KNOW I'm not going to pass. They're getting alarmingly frequent."

“Why, you came out splendidly in the exams Miss Stacy gave.”

“Yes, but those exams didn’t make me nervous. When I think of the real thing you can’t imagine what a horrid cold fluttery feeling comes round my heart. And then my number is thirteen and Josie Pye says it’s so unlucky. I am NOT superstitious and I know it can make no difference. But still I wish it wasn’t thirteen.”

“I do wish I was going in with you,” said Diana. “Wouldn’t we have a perfectly elegant time? But I suppose you’ll have to cram in the evenings.”

“No; Miss Stacy has made us promise not to open a book at all. She says it would only tire and confuse us and we are to go out walking and not think about the exams at all and go to bed early. It’s good advice, but I expect it will be hard to follow; good advice is apt to be, I think. Prissy Andrews told me that she sat up half the night every night of her Entrance week and crammed for dear life; and I had determined to sit up AT LEAST as long as she did. It was so kind of your Aunt Josephine to ask me to stay at Beechwood while I’m in town.”

“You’ll write to me while you’re in, won’t you?”

“I’ll write Tuesday night and tell you how the first day goes,” promised Anne.

“I’ll be haunting the post office Wednesday,” vowed Diana.

Anne went to town the following Monday and on Wednesday Diana haunted the post office, as agreed, and got her letter.

“Dearest Diana” [wrote Anne],

“Here it is Tuesday night and I’m writing this in the library at Beechwood. Last night I was horribly lonesome all alone in my room and wished so much you were with me. I couldn’t “cram” because I’d promised Miss Stacy not to, but it was as hard to keep from opening my history as it used to be to keep from reading a story before my lessons were learned.

“This morning Miss Stacy came for me and we went to the Academy, calling for Jane and Ruby and Josie on our way. Ruby asked me to feel her hands and they were as cold as ice. Josie said I looked as if I hadn’t slept a wink and she didn’t believe I was strong enough to stand the grind of the teacher’s course even if I did get through. There are times and seasons even yet when I don’t feel that I’ve made any great headway in learning to like Josie Pye!

“When we reached the Academy there were scores of students there from all over the Island. The first person we saw was Moody Spurgeon sitting on the steps and muttering away to himself. Jane asked him what on earth he was doing and he said he was repeating the multiplication table over and over to steady his nerves and for pity’s sake not to interrupt him, because if he stopped for a moment he got frightened and forgot everything he ever knew, but the multiplication table kept all his facts firmly in their proper place!

“When we were assigned to our rooms Miss Stacy had to leave us. Jane and I sat together and Jane was so composed that I envied her. No need of the multiplication table for good, steady, sensible Jane! I wondered if I looked as I felt and if they could hear my heart thumping clear across the room. Then a man came in and began distributing the English examination sheets. My hands grew cold then and my head fairly whirled around as I picked it up. Just one awful moment — Diana, I felt exactly as I did four years ago when I asked Marilla if I might stay at Green Gables — and then everything cleared up in my mind and my heart began beating again — I forgot to say that it had stopped altogether! — for I knew I could do something with THAT paper anyhow.

“At noon we went home for dinner and then back again for history in the afternoon. The history was a pretty hard paper and I got dreadfully mixed up in the dates. Still, I think I did fairly well today. But oh, Diana, tomorrow the geometry exam comes off and when I think of it it takes every bit of determination I possess to keep from opening my Euclid. If I thought the multiplication table would help me any I would recite it from now till tomorrow morning.

“I went down to see the other girls this evening. On my way I met Moody Spurgeon wandering distractedly around. He said he knew he had failed in history and he was born to be a disappointment to his parents and he was going home on the morning train; and it would be easier to be a carpenter than a minister, anyhow. I cheered him up and persuaded him to stay to the end because it would be unfair to Miss Stacy if he didn’t. Sometimes I have wished I was born a boy, but when I see Moody Spurgeon I’m always glad I’m a girl and not his sister.

“Ruby was in hysterics when I reached their boardinghouse; she had just discovered a fearful mistake she had made in her English paper. When she recovered we went uptown and had an ice cream. How we wished you had been with us.

“Oh, Diana, if only the geometry examination were over! But there, as Mrs. Lynde would say, the sun will go on rising and setting whether I fail in geometry or not. That is true but not especially comforting. I think I’d rather it didn’t go on if I failed!

“Yours devotedly,

“Anne”

The geometry examination and all the others were over in due time and Anne arrived home on Friday evening, rather tired but with an air of chastened triumph about her. Diana was over at Green Gables when she arrived and they met as if they had been parted for years.

“You old darling, it’s perfectly splendid to see you back again. It seems like an age since you went to town and oh, Anne, how did you get along?”

“Pretty well, I think, in everything but the geometry. I don’t know whether I passed in it or not and I have a creepy, crawly presentiment that I didn’t. Oh, how good it is to be back! Green Gables is the dearest, loveliest spot in the world.”

“How did the others do?”

“The girls say they know they didn’t pass, but I think they did pretty well. Josie says the geometry was so easy a child of ten could do it! Moody Spurgeon still thinks he failed in history and Charlie says he failed in algebra. But we don’t really know anything about it and won’t until the pass list is out. That won’t be for a fortnight. Fancy living a fortnight in such suspense! I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up until it is over.”

Diana knew it would be useless to ask how Gilbert Blythe had fared, so she merely said:

“Oh, you’ll pass all right. Don’t worry.”

“I’d rather not pass at all than not come out pretty well up on the list,” flashed Anne, by which she meant — and Diana knew she meant — that success would be incomplete and bitter if she did not come out ahead of Gilbert Blythe.

With this end in view Anne had strained every nerve during the examinations. So had Gilbert. They had met and passed each other on the street a dozen times without any sign of recognition and every time Anne had held her head a little higher and wished a little more earnestly that she had made friends with Gilbert when he asked her, and vowed a little more determinedly to surpass him in the examination. She knew that all Avonlea junior was wondering which would come out first; she even knew that Jimmy Glover and Ned Wright had a bet on the question and that Josie Pye had said there was no doubt in the world that Gilbert would be first; and she felt that her humiliation would be unbearable if she failed.

But she had another and nobler motive for wishing to do well. She wanted to “pass high” for the sake of Matthew and Marilla — especially Matthew. Matthew had declared to her his conviction that she “would beat the whole Island.” That, Anne felt, was something it would be foolish to hope for even in the wildest dreams. But she did hope fervently that she would be among the first ten at least, so that she might see Matthew’s kindly brown eyes gleam with pride in her achievement. That, she felt, would be a sweet reward indeed for all her hard work and patient grubbing among unimaginative equations and conjugations.

At the end of the fortnight Anne took to “haunting” the post office also, in the distracted company of Jane, Ruby, and Josie, opening the Charlottetown dailies with shaking hands and cold, sinkaway feelings as bad as any experienced during the Entrance week. Charlie and Gilbert were not above doing this too, but Moody Spurgeon stayed resolutely away.

“I haven’t got the grit to go there and look at a paper in cold blood,” he told Anne. “I’m just going to wait until somebody comes and tells me suddenly whether I’ve passed or not.”

When three weeks had gone by without the pass list appearing Anne began to feel that she really couldn’t stand the strain much longer. Her appetite failed and her interest in Avonlea doings languished. Mrs. Lynde wanted to know what else you could expect with a Tory superintendent of education at the head of affairs, and Matthew, noting Anne’s paleness and indifference and the lagging steps that bore her home from the post office every afternoon, began seriously to wonder if he hadn’t better vote Grit at the next election.

But one evening the news came. Anne was sitting at her open window, for the time forgetful of the woes of examinations and the cares of the world, as she drank in the beauty of the summer dusk, sweet-scented with flower breaths from the garden below and sibilant and rustling from the stir of poplars. The eastern sky above the firs was flushed faintly pink from the reflection of the west, and Anne was wondering dreamily if the spirit of color looked like that, when she saw Diana come flying down through the firs, over the log bridge, and up the slope, with a fluttering newspaper in her hand.

Anne sprang to her feet, knowing at once what that paper contained. The pass list was out! Her head whirled and her heart beat until it hurt her. She could not move a step. It seemed an hour to her before Diana came rushing along the hall and burst into the room without even knocking, so great was her excitement.

“Anne, you’ve passed,” she cried, “passed the VERY FIRST — you and Gilbert both — you’re ties — but your name is first. Oh, I’m so proud!”

Diana flung the paper on the table and herself on Anne's bed, utterly breathless and incapable of further speech. Anne lighted the lamp, oversetting the match safe and using up half a dozen matches before her shaking hands could accomplish the task. Then she snatched up the paper. Yes, she had passed — there was her name at the very top of a list of two hundred! That moment was worth living for.

"You did just splendidly, Anne," puffed Diana, recovering sufficiently to sit up and speak, for Anne, starry eyed and rapt, had not uttered a word. "Father brought the paper home from Bright River not ten minutes ago — it came out on the afternoon train, you know, and won't be here till tomorrow by mail — and when I saw the pass list I just rushed over like a wild thing. You've all passed, every one of you, Moody Spurgeon and all, although he's conditioned in history. Jane and Ruby did pretty well — they're halfway up — and so did Charlie. Josie just scraped through with three marks to spare, but you'll see she'll put on as many airs as if she'd led. Won't Miss Stacy be delighted? Oh, Anne, what does it feel like to see your name at the head of a pass list like that? If it were me I know I'd go crazy with joy. I am pretty near crazy as it is, but you're as calm and cool as a spring evening."

"I'm just dazzled inside," said Anne. "I want to say a hundred things, and I can't find words to say them in. I never dreamed of this — yes, I did too, just once! I let myself think ONCE, 'What if I should come out first?' quakingly, you know, for it seemed so vain and presumptuous to think I could lead the Island. Excuse me a minute, Diana. I must run right out to the field to tell Matthew. Then we'll go up the road and tell the good news to the others."

They hurried to the hayfield below the barn where Matthew was coiling hay, and, as luck would have it, Mrs. Lynde was talking to Marilla at the lane fence.

"Oh, Matthew," exclaimed Anne, "I've passed and I'm first — or one of the first! I'm not vain, but I'm thankful."

"Well now, I always said it," said Matthew, gazing at the pass list delightedly. "I knew you could beat them all easy."

“You’ve done pretty well, I must say, Anne,” said Marilla, trying to hide her extreme pride in Anne from Mrs. Rachel’s critical eye. But that good soul said heartily:

“I just guess she has done well, and far be it from me to be backward in saying it. You’re a credit to your friends, Anne, that’s what, and we’re all proud of you.”

That night Anne, who had wound up the delightful evening with a serious little talk with Mrs. Allan at the manse, knelt sweetly by her open window in a great sheen of moonshine and murmured a prayer of gratitude and aspiration that came straight from her heart. There was in it thankfulness for the past and reverent petition for the future; and when she slept on her white pillow her dreams were as fair and bright and beautiful as maidenhood might desire.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Hotel Concert

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“Put on your white organdy, by all means, Anne,” advised Diana decidedly.

They were together in the east gable chamber; outside it was only twilight — a lovely yellowish-green twilight with a clear-blue cloudless sky. A big round moon, slowly deepening from her pallid luster into burnished silver, hung over the Haunted Wood; the air was full of sweet summer sounds — sleepy birds twittering, freakish breezes, faraway voices and laughter. But in Anne’s room the blind was drawn and the lamp lighted, for an important toilet was being made.

The east gable was a very different place from what it had been on that night four years before, when Anne had felt its bareness penetrate to the marrow of her spirit with its inhospitable chill. Changes had crept in, Marilla conniving at them resignedly, until it was as sweet and dainty a nest as a young girl could desire.

The velvet carpet with the pink roses and the pink silk curtains of Anne’s early visions had certainly never materialized; but her dreams had kept pace with her growth, and it is not probable she lamented them. The floor was covered with a pretty matting, and the curtains that softened the high window and fluttered in the vagrant breezes were of pale-green art muslin. The walls, hung not with gold and silver brocade tapestry, but with a dainty apple-blossom paper, were adorned with a few good pictures given Anne by Mrs. Allan. Miss Stacy’s photograph occupied the place of honor, and Anne made a sentimental point of keeping fresh flowers on the bracket under it. Tonight a spike of white lilies faintly perfumed the room like the dream of a fragrance. There was no “mahogany furniture,” but there was a white-painted bookcase filled with books, a cushioned wicker rocker, a toilet table befrilled with white muslin, a quaint, gilt-framed mirror with

chubby pink Cupids and purple grapes painted over its arched top, that used to hang in the spare room, and a low white bed.

Anne was dressing for a concert at the White Sands Hotel. The guests had got it up in aid of the Charlottetown hospital, and had hunted out all the available amateur talent in the surrounding districts to help it along. Bertha Sampson and Pearl Clay of the White Sands Baptist choir had been asked to sing a duet; Milton Clark of Newbridge was to give a violin solo; Winnie Adella Blair of Carmody was to sing a Scotch ballad; and Laura Spencer of Spencervale and Anne Shirley of Avonlea were to recite.

As Anne would have said at one time, it was “an epoch in her life,” and she was deliciously athrill with the excitement of it. Matthew was in the seventh heaven of gratified pride over the honor conferred on his Anne and Marilla was not far behind, although she would have died rather than admit it, and said she didn’t think it was very proper for a lot of young folks to be gadding over to the hotel without any responsible person with them.

Anne and Diana were to drive over with Jane Andrews and her brother Billy in their double-seated buggy; and several other Avonlea girls and boys were going too. There was a party of visitors expected out from town, and after the concert a supper was to be given to the performers.

“Do you really think the organdy will be best?” queried Anne anxiously.

“I don’t think it’s as pretty as my blue-flowered muslin — and it certainly isn’t so fashionable.”

“But it suits you ever so much better,” said Diana. “It’s so soft and frilly and clinging. The muslin is stiff, and makes you look too dressed up. But the organdy seems as if it grew on you.”

Anne sighed and yielded. Diana was beginning to have a reputation for notable taste in dressing, and her advice on such subjects was much sought

after. She was looking very pretty herself on this particular night in a dress of the lovely wildrose pink, from which Anne was forever debarred; but she was not to take any part in the concert, so her appearance was of minor importance. All her pains were bestowed upon Anne, who, she vowed, must, for the credit of Avonlea, be dressed and combed and adorned to the Queen's taste.

"Pull out that frill a little more — so; here, let me tie your sash; now for your slippers. I'm going to braid your hair in two thick braids, and tie them halfway up with big white bows — no, don't pull out a single curl over your forehead — just have the soft part. There is no way you do your hair suits you so well, Anne, and Mrs. Allan says you look like a Madonna when you part it so. I shall fasten this little white house rose just behind your ear. There was just one on my bush, and I saved it for you."

"Shall I put my pearl beads on?" asked Anne. "Matthew brought me a string from town last week, and I know he'd like to see them on me."

Diana pursed up her lips, put her black head on one side critically, and finally pronounced in favor of the beads, which were thereupon tied around Anne's slim milk-white throat.

"There's something so stylish about you, Anne," said Diana, with unenvious admiration. "You hold your head with such an air. I suppose it's your figure. I am just a dumpling. I've always been afraid of it, and now I know it is so. Well, I suppose I shall just have to resign myself to it."

"But you have such dimples," said Anne, smiling affectionately into the pretty, vivacious face so near her own. "Lovely dimples, like little dents in cream. I have given up all hope of dimples. My dimple-dream will never come true; but so many of my dreams have that I mustn't complain. Am I all ready now?"

"All ready," assured Diana, as Marilla appeared in the doorway, a gaunt figure with grayer hair than of yore and no fewer angles, but with a much softer face. "Come right in and look at our elocutionist, Marilla. Doesn't she look lovely?"

Marilla emitted a sound between a sniff and a grunt.

“She looks neat and proper. I like that way of fixing her hair. But I expect she’ll ruin that dress driving over there in the dust and dew with it, and it looks most too thin for these damp nights. Organdy’s the most unserviceable stuff in the world anyhow, and I told Matthew so when he got it. But there is no use in saying anything to Matthew nowadays. Time was when he would take my advice, but now he just buys things for Anne regardless, and the clerks at Carmody know they can palm anything off on him. Just let them tell him a thing is pretty and fashionable, and Matthew plunks his money down for it. Mind you keep your skirt clear of the wheel, Anne, and put your warm jacket on.”

Then Marilla stalked downstairs, thinking proudly how sweet Anne looked, with that

“One moonbeam from the forehead to the crown”

and regretting that she could not go to the concert herself to hear her girl recite.

“I wonder if it IS too damp for my dress,” said Anne anxiously.

“Not a bit of it,” said Diana, pulling up the window blind. “It’s a perfect night, and there won’t be any dew. Look at the moonlight.”

“I’m so glad my window looks east into the sunrising,” said Anne, going over to Diana. “It’s so splendid to see the morning coming up over those long hills and glowing through those sharp fir tops. It’s new every morning, and I feel as if I washed my very soul in that bath of earliest sunshine. Oh, Diana, I love this little room so dearly. I don’t know how I’ll get along without it when I go to town next month.”

“Don’t speak of your going away tonight,” begged Diana. “I don’t want to think of it, it makes me so miserable, and I do want to have a good time this evening. What are you going to recite, Anne? And are you nervous?”

“Not a bit. I’ve recited so often in public I don’t mind at all now. I’ve decided to give ‘The Maiden’s Vow.’ It’s so pathetic. Laura Spencer is going to give a comic recitation, but I’d rather make people cry than laugh.”

“What will you recite if they encore you?”

“They won’t dream of encoring me,” scoffed Anne, who was not without her own secret hopes that they would, and already visioned herself telling Matthew all about it at the next morning’s breakfast table. “There are Billy and Jane now — I hear the wheels. Come on.”

Billy Andrews insisted that Anne should ride on the front seat with him, so she unwillingly climbed up. She would have much preferred to sit back with the girls, where she could have laughed and chattered to her heart’s content. There was not much of either laughter or chatter in Billy. He was a big, fat, stolid youth of twenty, with a round, expressionless face, and a painful lack of conversational gifts. But he admired Anne immensely, and was puffed up with pride over the prospect of driving to White Sands with that slim, upright figure beside him.

Anne, by dint of talking over her shoulder to the girls and occasionally passing a sop of civility to Billy — who grinned and chuckled and never could think of any reply until it was too late — contrived to enjoy the drive in spite of all. It was a night for enjoyment. The road was full of buggies, all bound for the hotel, and laughter, silver clear, echoed and reechoed along it. When they reached the hotel it was a blaze of light from top to bottom. They were met by the ladies of the concert committee, one of whom took Anne off to the performers’ dressing room which was filled with the members of a Charlottetown Symphony Club, among whom Anne felt suddenly shy and frightened and countrified. Her dress, which, in the east gable, had seemed so dainty and pretty, now seemed simple and plain — too simple and plain, she thought, among all the silks and laces that glistened and rustled around her. What were her pearl beads compared to the diamonds of the big, handsome lady near her? And how poor her one wee white rose must look beside all the hothouse flowers the others wore! Anne laid her hat and jacket away, and shrank miserably into a corner. She wished herself back in the white room at Green Gables.

It was still worse on the platform of the big concert hall of the hotel, where she presently found herself. The electric lights dazzled her eyes, the perfume and hum bewildered her. She wished she were sitting down in the audience with Diana and Jane, who seemed to be having a splendid time away at the back. She was wedged in between a stout lady in pink silk and a tall, scornful-looking girl in a white-lace dress. The stout lady occasionally turned her head squarely around and surveyed Anne through her eyeglasses until Anne, acutely sensitive of being so scrutinized, felt that she must scream aloud; and the white-lace girl kept talking audibly to her next neighbor about the “country bumpkins” and “rustic belles” in the audience, languidly anticipating “such fun” from the displays of local talent on the program. Anne believed that she would hate that white-lace girl to the end of life.

Unfortunately for Anne, a professional elocutionist was staying at the hotel and had consented to recite. She was a lithe, dark-eyed woman in a wonderful gown of shimmering gray stuff like woven moonbeams, with gems on her neck and in her dark hair. She had a marvelously flexible voice and wonderful power of expression; the audience went wild over her selection. Anne, forgetting all about herself and her troubles for the time, listened with rapt and shining eyes; but when the recitation ended she suddenly put her hands over her face. She could never get up and recite after that — never. Had she ever thought she could recite? Oh, if she were only back at Green Gables!

At this unpropitious moment her name was called. Somehow Anne — who did not notice the rather guilty little start of surprise the white-lace girl gave, and would not have understood the subtle compliment implied therein if she had — got on her feet, and moved dizzily out to the front. She was so pale that Diana and Jane, down in the audience, clasped each other’s hands in nervous sympathy.

Anne was the victim of an overwhelming attack of stage fright. Often as she had recited in public, she had never before faced such an audience as this, and the sight of it paralyzed her energies completely. Everything was so strange, so brilliant, so bewildering — the rows of ladies in evening dress, the critical faces, the whole atmosphere of wealth and culture about

her. Very different this from the plain benches at the Debating Club, filled with the homely, sympathetic faces of friends and neighbors. These people, she thought, would be merciless critics. Perhaps, like the white-lace girl, they anticipated amusement from her “rustic” efforts. She felt hopelessly, helplessly ashamed and miserable. Her knees trembled, her heart fluttered, a horrible faintness came over her; not a word could she utter, and the next moment she would have fled from the platform despite the humiliation which, she felt, must ever after be her portion if she did so.

But suddenly, as her dilated, frightened eyes gazed out over the audience, she saw Gilbert Blythe away at the back of the room, bending forward with a smile on his face — a smile which seemed to Anne at once triumphant and taunting. In reality it was nothing of the kind. Gilbert was merely smiling with appreciation of the whole affair in general and of the effect produced by Anne’s slender white form and spiritual face against a background of palms in particular. Josie Pye, whom he had driven over, sat beside him, and her face certainly was both triumphant and taunting. But Anne did not see Josie, and would not have cared if she had. She drew a long breath and flung her head up proudly, courage and determination tingling over her like an electric shock. She **WOULD NOT** fail before Gilbert Blythe — he should never be able to laugh at her, never, never! Her fright and nervousness vanished; and she began her recitation, her clear, sweet voice reaching to the farthest corner of the room without a tremor or a break. Selfpossession was fully restored to her, and in the reaction from that horrible moment of powerlessness she recited as she had never done before. When she finished there were bursts of honest applause. Anne, stepping back to her seat, blushing with shyness and delight, found her hand vigorously clasped and shaken by the stout lady in pink silk.

“My dear, you did splendidly,” she puffed. “I’ve been crying like a baby, actually I have. There, they’re encoring you — they’re bound to have you back!”

“Oh, I can’t go,” said Anne confusedly. “But yet — I must, or Matthew will be disappointed. He said they would encore me.”

“Then don’t disappoint Matthew,” said the pink lady, laughing.

Smiling, blushing, limpid eyed, Anne tripped back and gave a quaint, funny little selection that captivated her audience still further. The rest of the evening was quite a little triumph for her.

When the concert was over, the stout, pink lady — who was the wife of an American millionaire — took her under her wing, and introduced her to everybody; and everybody was very nice to her. The professional elocutionist, Mrs. Evans, came and chatted with her, telling her that she had a charming voice and “interpreted” her selections beautifully. Even the white-lace girl paid her a languid little compliment. They had supper in the big, beautifully decorated dining room; Diana and Jane were invited to partake of this, also, since they had come with Anne, but Billy was nowhere to be found, having decamped in mortal fear of some such invitation. He was in waiting for them, with the team, however, when it was all over, and the three girls came merrily out into the calm, white moonshine radiance. Anne breathed deeply, and looked into the clear sky beyond the dark boughs of the firs.

Oh, it was good to be out again in the purity and silence of the night! How great and still and wonderful everything was, with the murmur of the sea sounding through it and the darkling cliffs beyond like grim giants guarding enchanted coasts.

“Hasn’t it been a perfectly splendid time?” sighed Jane, as they drove away. “I just wish I was a rich American and could spend my summer at a hotel and wear jewels and low-necked dresses and have ice cream and chicken salad every blessed day. I’m sure it would be ever so much more fun than teaching school. Anne, your recitation was simply great, although I thought at first you were never going to begin. I think it was better than Mrs. Evans’s.”

“Oh, no, don’t say things like that, Jane,” said Anne quickly, “because it sounds silly. It couldn’t be better than Mrs. Evans’s, you know, for she is a professional, and I’m only a schoolgirl, with a little knack of reciting. I’m quite satisfied if the people just liked mine pretty well.”

“I’ve a compliment for you, Anne,” said Diana. “At least I think it must be a compliment because of the tone he said it in. Part of it was anyhow.

There was an American sitting behind Jane and me — such a romantic-looking man, with coal-black hair and eyes. Josie Pye says he is a distinguished artist, and that her mother's cousin in Boston is married to a man that used to go to school with him. Well, we heard him say — didn't we, Jane?—'Who is that girl on the platform with the splendid Titian hair? She has a face I should like to paint.' There now, Anne. But what does Titian hair mean?"

"Being interpreted it means plain red, I guess," laughed Anne. "Titian was a very famous artist who liked to paint redhaired women."

"DID you see all the diamonds those ladies wore?" sighed Jane. "They were simply dazzling. Wouldn't you just love to be rich, girls?"

"We ARE rich," said Anne staunchly. "Why, we have sixteen years to our credit, and we're happy as queens, and we've all got imaginations, more or less. Look at that sea, girls — all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen. We couldn't enjoy its loveliness any more if we had millions of dollars and ropes of diamonds. You wouldn't change into any of those women if you could. Would you want to be that white-lace girl and wear a sour look all your life, as if you'd been born turning up your nose at the world? Or the pink lady, kind and nice as she is, so stout and short that you'd really no figure at all? Or even Mrs. Evans, with that sad, sad look in her eyes? She must have been dreadfully unhappy sometime to have such a look. You KNOW you wouldn't, Jane Andrews!"

"I DON'T know — exactly," said Jane unconvinced. "I think diamonds would comfort a person for a good deal."

"Well, I don't want to be anyone but myself, even if I go uncomforted by diamonds all my life," declared Anne. "I'm quite content to be Anne of Green Gables, with my string of pearl beads. I know Matthew gave me as much love with them as ever went with Madame the Pink Lady's jewels."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Queen's Girl

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The next three weeks were busy ones at Green Gables, for Anne was getting ready to go to Queen's, and there was much sewing to be done, and many things to be talked over and arranged. Anne's outfit was ample and pretty, for Matthew saw to that, and Marilla for once made no objections whatever to anything he purchased or suggested. More — one evening she went up to the east gable with her arms full of a delicate pale green material.

“Anne, here's something for a nice light dress for you. I don't suppose you really need it; you've plenty of pretty waists; but I thought maybe you'd like something real dressy to wear if you were asked out anywhere of an evening in town, to a party or anything like that. I hear that Jane and Ruby and Josie have got 'evening dresses,' as they call them, and I don't mean you shall be behind them. I got Mrs. Allan to help me pick it in town last week, and we'll get Emily Gillis to make it for you. Emily has got taste, and her fits aren't to be equaled.”

“Oh, Marilla, it's just lovely,” said Anne. “Thank you so much. I don't believe you ought to be so kind to me — it's making it harder every day for me to go away.”

The green dress was made up with as many tucks and frills and shirrings as Emily's taste permitted. Anne put it on one evening for Matthew's and Marilla's benefit, and recited “The Maiden's Vow” for them in the kitchen. As Marilla watched the bright, animated face and graceful motions her thoughts went back to the evening Anne had arrived at Green Gables, and memory recalled a vivid picture of the odd, frightened child in her preposterous yellowish-brown wincey dress, the heartbreak looking out of

her tearful eyes. Something in the memory brought tears to Marilla's own eyes.

"I declare, my recitation has made you cry, Marilla," said Anne gaily stooping over Marilla's chair to drop a butterfly kiss on that lady's cheek. "Now, I call that a positive triumph."

"No, I wasn't crying over your piece," said Marilla, who would have scorned to be betrayed into such weakness by any poetry stuff. "I just couldn't help thinking of the little girl you used to be, Anne. And I was wishing you could have stayed a little girl, even with all your queer ways. You've grown up now and you're going away; and you look so tall and stylish and so — so — different altogether in that dress — as if you didn't belong in Avonlea at all — and I just got lonesome thinking it all over."

"Marilla!" Anne sat down on Marilla's gingham lap, took Marilla's lined face between her hands, and looked gravely and tenderly into Marilla's eyes. "I'm not a bit changed — not really. I'm only just pruned down and branched out. The real ME — back here — is just the same. It won't make a bit of difference where I go or how much I change outwardly; at heart I shall always be your little Anne, who will love you and Matthew and dear Green Gables more and better every day of her life."

Anne laid her fresh young cheek against Marilla's faded one, and reached out a hand to pat Matthew's shoulder. Marilla would have given much just then to have possessed Anne's power of putting her feelings into words; but nature and habit had willed it otherwise, and she could only put her arms close about her girl and hold her tenderly to her heart, wishing that she need never let her go.

Matthew, with a suspicious moisture in his eyes, got up and went out-of-doors. Under the stars of the blue summer night he walked agitatedly across the yard to the gate under the poplars.

"Well now, I guess she ain't been much spoiled," he muttered, proudly. "I guess my putting in my oar occasional never did much harm after all. She's smart and pretty, and loving, too, which is better than all the rest. She's been a blessing to us, and there never was a luckier mistake than

what Mrs. Spencer made — if it WAS luck. I don't believe it was any such thing. It was Providence, because the Almighty saw we needed her, I reckon."

The day finally came when Anne must go to town. She and Matthew drove in one fine September morning, after a tearful parting with Diana and an untearful practical one — on Marilla's side at least — with Marilla. But when Anne had gone Diana dried her tears and went to a beach picnic at White Sands with some of her Carmody cousins, where she contrived to enjoy herself tolerably well; while Marilla plunged fiercely into unnecessary work and kept at it all day long with the bitterest kind of heartache — the ache that burns and gnaws and cannot wash itself away in ready tears. But that night, when Marilla went to bed, acutely and miserably conscious that the little gable room at the end of the hall was untenanted by any vivid young life and unstirred by any soft breathing, she buried her face in her pillow, and wept for her girl in a passion of sobs that appalled her when she grew calm enough to reflect how very wicked it must be to take on so about a sinful fellow creature.

Anne and the rest of the Avonlea scholars reached town just in time to hurry off to the Academy. That first day passed pleasantly enough in a whirl of excitement, meeting all the new students, learning to know the professors by sight and being assorted and organized into classes. Anne intended taking up the Second Year work being advised to do so by Miss Stacy; Gilbert Blythe elected to do the same. This meant getting a First Class teacher's license in one year instead of two, if they were successful; but it also meant much more and harder work. Jane, Ruby, Josie, Charlie, and Moody Spurgeon, not being troubled with the stirrings of ambition, were content to take up the Second Class work. Anne was conscious of a pang of loneliness when she found herself in a room with fifty other students, not one of whom she knew, except the tall, brown-haired boy across the room; and knowing him in the fashion she did, did not help her much, as she reflected pessimistically. Yet she was undeniably glad that they were in the same class; the old rivalry could still be carried on, and Anne would hardly have known what to do if it had been lacking.

“I wouldn’t feel comfortable without it,” she thought. “Gilbert looks awfully determined. I suppose he’s making up his mind, here and now, to win the medal. What a splendid chin he has! I never noticed it before. I do wish Jane and Ruby had gone in for First Class, too. I suppose I won’t feel so much like a cat in a strange garret when I get acquainted, though. I wonder which of the girls here are going to be my friends. It’s really an interesting speculation. Of course I promised Diana that no Queen’s girl, no matter how much I liked her, should ever be as dear to me as she is; but I’ve lots of second-best affections to bestow. I like the look of that girl with the brown eyes and the crimson waist. She looks vivid and red-rosy; there’s that pale, fair one gazing out of the window. She has lovely hair, and looks as if she knew a thing or two about dreams. I’d like to know them both — know them well — well enough to walk with my arm about their waists, and call them nicknames. But just now I don’t know them and they don’t know me, and probably don’t want to know me particularly. Oh, it’s lonesome!”

It was lonelier still when Anne found herself alone in her hall bedroom that night at twilight. She was not to board with the other girls, who all had relatives in town to take pity on them. Miss Josephine Barry would have liked to board her, but Beechwood was so far from the Academy that it was out of the question; so Miss Barry hunted up a boardinghouse, assuring Matthew and Marilla that it was the very place for Anne.

“The lady who keeps it is a reduced gentlewoman,” explained Miss Barry. “Her husband was a British officer, and she is very careful what sort of boarders she takes. Anne will not meet with any objectionable persons under her roof. The table is good, and the house is near the Academy, in a quiet neighborhood.”

All this might be quite true, and indeed, proved to be so, but it did not materially help Anne in the first agony of homesickness that seized upon her. She looked dismally about her narrow little room, with its dull-papered, pictureless walls, its small iron bedstead and empty bookcase; and a horrible choke came into her throat as she thought of her own white room at Green Gables, where she would have the pleasant consciousness of a great green still outdoors, of sweet peas growing in the garden, and

moonlight falling on the orchard, of the brook below the slope and the spruce boughs tossing in the night wind beyond it, of a vast starry sky, and the light from Diana's window shining out through the gap in the trees. Here there was nothing of this; Anne knew that outside of her window was a hard street, with a network of telephone wires shutting out the sky, the tramp of alien feet, and a thousand lights gleaming on stranger faces. She knew that she was going to cry, and fought against it.

"I WON'T cry. It's silly — and weak — there's the third tear splashing down by my nose. There are more coming! I must think of something funny to stop them. But there's nothing funny except what is connected with Avonlea, and that only makes things worse — four — five — I'm going home next Friday, but that seems a hundred years away. Oh, Matthew is nearly home by now — and Marilla is at the gate, looking down the lane for him — six — seven — eight — oh, there's no use in counting them! They're coming in a flood presently. I can't cheer up — I don't WANT to cheer up. It's nicer to be miserable!"

The flood of tears would have come, no doubt, had not Josie Pye appeared at that moment. In the joy of seeing a familiar face Anne forgot that there had never been much love lost between her and Josie. As a part of Avonlea life even a Pye was welcome.

"I'm so glad you came up," Anne said sincerely.

"You've been crying," remarked Josie, with aggravating pity. "I suppose you're homesick — some people have so little self-control in that respect. I've no intention of being homesick, I can tell you. Town's too jolly after that poky old Avonlea. I wonder how I ever existed there so long. You shouldn't cry, Anne; it isn't becoming, for your nose and eyes get red, and then you seem ALL red. I'd a perfectly scrumptious time in the Academy today. Our French professor is simply a duck. His moustache would give you kerwallowps of the heart. Have you anything eatable around, Anne? I'm literally starving. Ah, I guessed likely Marilla'd load you up with cake. That's why I called round. Otherwise I'd have gone to the park to hear the band play with Frank Stockley. He boards same place as I do, and he's a sport. He noticed you in class today, and asked me who the

redheaded girl was. I told him you were an orphan that the Cuthberts had adopted, and nobody knew very much about what you'd been before that."

Anne was wondering if, after all, solitude and tears were not more satisfactory than Josie Pye's companionship when Jane and Ruby appeared, each with an inch of Queen's color ribbon — purple and scarlet — pinned proudly to her coat. As Josie was not "speaking" to Jane just then she had to subside into comparative harmlessness.

"Well," said Jane with a sigh, "I feel as if I'd lived many moons since the morning. I ought to be home studying my Virgil — that horrid old professor gave us twenty lines to start in on tomorrow. But I simply couldn't settle down to study tonight. Anne, methinks I see the traces of tears. If you've been crying DO own up. It will restore my self-respect, for I was shedding tears freely before Ruby came along. I don't mind being a goose so much if somebody else is goosey, too. Cake? You'll give me a teeny piece, won't you? Thank you. It has the real Avonlea flavor."

Ruby, perceiving the Queen's calendar lying on the table, wanted to know if Anne meant to try for the gold medal.

Anne blushed and admitted she was thinking of it.

"Oh, that reminds me," said Josie, "Queen's is to get one of the Avery scholarships after all. The word came today. Frank Stockley told me — his uncle is one of the board of governors, you know. It will be announced in the Academy tomorrow."

An Avery scholarship! Anne felt her heart beat more quickly, and the horizons of her ambition shifted and broadened as if by magic. Before Josie had told the news Anne's highest pinnacle of aspiration had been a teacher's provincial license, First Class, at the end of the year, and perhaps the medal! But now in one moment Anne saw herself winning the Avery scholarship, taking an Arts course at Redmond College, and graduating in a gown and mortar board, before the echo of Josie's words had died away. For the Avery scholarship was in English, and Anne felt that here her foot was on native heath.

A wealthy manufacturer of New Brunswick had died and left part of his fortune to endow a large number of scholarships to be distributed among the various high schools and academies of the Maritime Provinces, according to their respective standings. There had been much doubt whether one would be allotted to Queen's, but the matter was settled at last, and at the end of the year the graduate who made the highest mark in English and English Literature would win the scholarship — two hundred and fifty dollars a year for four years at Redmond College. No wonder that Anne went to bed that night with tingling cheeks!

“I'll win that scholarship if hard work can do it,” she resolved. “Wouldn't Matthew be proud if I got to be a B.A.? Oh, it's delightful to have ambitions. I'm so glad I have such a lot. And there never seems to be any end to them — that's the best of it. Just as soon as you attain to one ambition you see another one glittering higher up still. It does make life so interesting.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Winter at Queen's

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Anne's homesickness wore off, greatly helped in the wearing by her weekend visits home. As long as the open weather lasted the Avonlea students went out to Carmody on the new branch railway every Friday night. Diana and several other Avonlea young folks were generally on hand to meet them and they all walked over to Avonlea in a merry party. Anne thought those Friday evening gypsyings over the autumnal hills in the crisp golden air, with the homelights of Avonlea twinkling beyond, were the best and dearest hours in the whole week.

Gilbert Blythe nearly always walked with Ruby Gillis and carried her satchel for her. Ruby was a very handsome young lady, now thinking herself quite as grown up as she really was; she wore her skirts as long as her mother would let her and did her hair up in town, though she had to take it down when she went home. She had large, bright-blue eyes, a brilliant complexion, and a plump showy figure. She laughed a great deal, was cheerful and good-tempered, and enjoyed the pleasant things of life frankly.

"But I shouldn't think she was the sort of girl Gilbert would like," whispered Jane to Anne. Anne did not think so either, but she would not have said so for the Avery scholarship. She could not help thinking, too, that it would be very pleasant to have such a friend as Gilbert to jest and chatter with and exchange ideas about books and studies and ambitions. Gilbert had ambitions, she knew, and Ruby Gillis did not seem the sort of person with whom such could be profitably discussed.

There was no silly sentiment in Anne's ideas concerning Gilbert. Boys were to her, when she thought about them at all, merely possible good comrades. If she and Gilbert had been friends she would not have cared

how many other friends he had nor with whom he walked. She had a genius for friendship; girl friends she had in plenty; but she had a vague consciousness that masculine friendship might also be a good thing to round out one's conceptions of companionship and furnish broader standpoints of judgment and comparison. Not that Anne could have put her feelings on the matter into just such clear definition. But she thought that if Gilbert had ever walked home with her from the train, over the crisp fields and along the ferny byways, they might have had many and merry and interesting conversations about the new world that was opening around them and their hopes and ambitions therein. Gilbert was a clever young fellow, with his own thoughts about things and a determination to get the best out of life and put the best into it. Ruby Gillis told Jane Andrews that she didn't understand half the things Gilbert Blythe said; he talked just like Anne Shirley did when she had a thoughtful fit on and for her part she didn't think it any fun to be bothering about books and that sort of thing when you didn't have to. Frank Stockley had lots more dash and go, but then he wasn't half as goodlooking as Gilbert and she really couldn't decide which she liked best!

In the Academy Anne gradually drew a little circle of friends about her, thoughtful, imaginative, ambitious students like herself. With the "rose-red" girl, Stella Maynard, and the "dream girl," Priscilla Grant, she soon became intimate, finding the latter pale spiritual-looking maiden to be full to the brim of mischief and pranks and fun, while the vivid, black-eyed Stella had a heartful of wistful dreams and fancies, as aerial and rainbow-like as Anne's own.

After the Christmas holidays the Avonlea students gave up going home on Fridays and settled down to hard work. By this time all the Queen's scholars had gravitated into their own places in the ranks and the various classes had assumed distinct and settled shadings of individuality. Certain facts had become generally accepted. It was admitted that the medal contestants had practically narrowed down to three — Gilbert Blythe, Anne Shirley, and Lewis Wilson; the Avery scholarship was more doubtful, any one of a certain six being a possible winner. The bronze medal for mathematics was considered as good as won by a fat, funny little up-country boy with a bumpy forehead and a patched coat.

Ruby Gillis was the handsomest girl of the year at the Academy; in the Second Year classes Stella Maynard carried off the palm for beauty, with small but critical minority in favor of Anne Shirley. Ethel Marr was admitted by all competent judges to have the most stylish modes of hairdressing, and Jane Andrews — plain, plodding, conscientious Jane — carried off the honors in the domestic science course. Even Josie Pye attained a certain preeminence as the sharpest-tongued young lady in attendance at Queen's. So it may be fairly stated that Miss Stacy's old pupils held their own in the wider arena of the academical course.

Anne worked hard and steadily. Her rivalry with Gilbert was as intense as it had ever been in Avonlea school, although it was not known in the class at large, but somehow the bitterness had gone out of it. Anne no longer wished to win for the sake of defeating Gilbert; rather, for the proud consciousness of a well-won victory over a worthy foeman. It would be worth while to win, but she no longer thought life would be insupportable if she did not.

In spite of lessons the students found opportunities for pleasant times. Anne spent many of her spare hours at Beechwood and generally ate her Sunday dinners there and went to church with Miss Barry. The latter was, as she admitted, growing old, but her black eyes were not dim nor the vigor of her tongue in the least abated. But she never sharpened the latter on Anne, who continued to be a prime favorite with the critical old lady.

"That Anne-girl improves all the time," she said. "I get tired of other girls — there is such a provoking and eternal sameness about them. Anne has as many shades as a rainbow and every shade is the prettiest while it lasts. I don't know that she is as amusing as she was when she was a child, but she makes me love her and I like people who make me love them. It saves me so much trouble in making myself love them."

Then, almost before anybody realized it, spring had come; out in Avonlea the Mayflowers were peeping pinkly out on the sere barrens where snow-wreaths lingered; and the "mist of green" was on the woods and in the valleys. But in Charlottetown harassed Queen's students thought and talked only of examinations.

“It doesn’t seem possible that the term is nearly over,” said Anne. “Why, last fall it seemed so long to look forward to — a whole winter of studies and classes. And here we are, with the exams looming up next week. Girls, sometimes I feel as if those exams meant everything, but when I look at the big buds swelling on those chestnut trees and the misty blue air at the end of the streets they don’t seem half so important.”

Jane and Ruby and Josie, who had dropped in, did not take this view of it. To them the coming examinations were constantly very important indeed — far more important than chestnut buds or Maytime hazes. It was all very well for Anne, who was sure of passing at least, to have her moments of belittling them, but when your whole future depended on them — as the girls truly thought theirs did — you could not regard them philosophically.

“I’ve lost seven pounds in the last two weeks,” sighed Jane. “It’s no use to say don’t worry. I WILL worry. Worrying helps you some — it seems as if you were doing something when you’re worrying. It would be dreadful if I failed to get my license after going to Queen’s all winter and spending so much money.”

“I don’t care,” said Josie Pye. “If I don’t pass this year I’m coming back next. My father can afford to send me. Anne, Frank Stockley says that Professor Tremaine said Gilbert Blythe was sure to get the medal and that Emily Clay would likely win the Avery scholarship.”

“That may make me feel badly tomorrow, Josie,” laughed Anne, “but just now I honestly feel that as long as I know the violets are coming out all purple down in the hollow below Green Gables and that little ferns are poking their heads up in Lovers’ Lane, it’s not a great deal of difference whether I win the Avery or not. I’ve done my best and I begin to understand what is meant by the ‘joy of the strife.’ Next to trying and winning, the best thing is trying and failing. Girls, don’t talk about exams! Look at that arch of pale green sky over those houses and picture to yourself what it must look like over the purply-dark beechwoods back of Avonlea.”

“What are you going to wear for commencement, Jane?” asked Ruby practically.

Jane and Josie both answered at once and the chatter drifted into a side eddy of fashions. But Anne, with her elbows on the window sill, her soft cheek laid against her clasped hands, and her eyes filled with visions, looked out unheedingly across city roof and spire to that glorious dome of sunset sky and wove her dreams of a possible future from the golden tissue of youth's own optimism. All the Beyond was hers with its possibilities lurking rosily in the oncoming years — each year a rose of promise to be woven into an immortal chaplet.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Glory and the Dream

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On the morning when the final results of all the examinations were to be posted on the bulletin board at Queen's, Anne and Jane walked down the street together. Jane was smiling and happy; examinations were over and she was comfortably sure she had made a pass at least; further considerations troubled Jane not at all; she had no soaring ambitions and consequently was not affected with the unrest attendant thereon. For we pay a price for everything we get or take in this world; and although ambitions are well worth having, they are not to be cheaply won, but exact their dues of work and self-denial, anxiety and discouragement. Anne was pale and quiet; in ten more minutes she would know who had won the medal and who the Avery. Beyond those ten minutes there did not seem, just then, to be anything worth being called Time.

"Of course you'll win one of them anyhow," said Jane, who couldn't understand how the faculty could be so unfair as to order it otherwise.

"I have not hope of the Avery," said Anne. "Everybody says Emily Clay will win it. And I'm not going to march up to that bulletin board and look at it before everybody. I haven't the moral courage. I'm going straight to the girls' dressing room. You must read the announcements and then come and tell me, Jane. And I implore you in the name of our old friendship to do it as quickly as possible. If I have failed just say so, without trying to break it gently; and whatever you do DON'T sympathize with me. Promise me this, Jane."

Jane promised solemnly; but, as it happened, there was no necessity for such a promise. When they went up the entrance steps of Queen's they found the hall full of boys who were carrying Gilbert Blythe around on

their shoulders and yelling at the tops of their voices, “Hurrah for Blythe, Medalist!”

For a moment Anne felt one sickening pang of defeat and disappointment. So she had failed and Gilbert had won! Well, Matthew would be sorry — he had been so sure she would win.

And then!

Somebody called out:

“Three cheers for Miss Shirley, winner of the Avery!”

“Oh, Anne,” gasped Jane, as they fled to the girls’ dressing room amid hearty cheers. “Oh, Anne I’m so proud! Isn’t it splendid?”

And then the girls were around them and Anne was the center of a laughing, congratulating group. Her shoulders were thumped and her hands shaken vigorously. She was pushed and pulled and hugged and among it all she managed to whisper to Jane:

“Oh, won’t Matthew and Marilla be pleased! I must write the news home right away.”

Commencement was the next important happening. The exercises were held in the big assembly hall of the Academy. Addresses were given, essays read, songs sung, the public award of diplomas, prizes and medals made.

Matthew and Marilla were there, with eyes and ears for only one student on the platform — a tall girl in pale green, with faintly flushed cheeks and starry eyes, who read the best essay and was pointed out and whispered about as the Avery winner.

“Reckon you’re glad we kept her, Marilla?” whispered Matthew, speaking for the first time since he had entered the hall, when Anne had finished her essay.

“It’s not the first time I’ve been glad,” retorted Marilla. “You do like to rub things in, Matthew Cuthbert.”

Miss Barry, who was sitting behind them, leaned forward and poked Marilla in the back with her parasol.

“Aren’t you proud of that Anne-girl? I am,” she said.

Anne went home to Avonlea with Matthew and Marilla that evening. She had not been home since April and she felt that she could not wait another day. The apple blossoms were out and the world was fresh and young. Diana was at Green Gables to meet her. In her own white room, where Marilla had set a flowering house rose on the window sill, Anne looked about her and drew a long breath of happiness.

“Oh, Diana, it’s so good to be back again. It’s so good to see those pointed firs coming out against the pink sky — and that white orchard and the old Snow Queen. Isn’t the breath of the mint delicious? And that tea rose — why, it’s a song and a hope and a prayer all in one. And it’s GOOD to see you again, Diana!”

“I thought you liked that Stella Maynard better than me,” said Diana reproachfully. “Josie Pye told me you did. Josie said you were INFATUATED with her.”

Anne laughed and pelted Diana with the faded “June lilies” of her bouquet.

“Stella Maynard is the dearest girl in the world except one and you are that one, Diana,” she said. “I love you more than ever — and I’ve so many things to tell you. But just now I feel as if it were joy enough to sit here and look at you. I’m tired, I think — tired of being studious and ambitious. I mean to spend at least two hours tomorrow lying out in the orchard grass, thinking of absolutely nothing.”

“You’ve done splendidly, Anne. I suppose you won’t be teaching now that you’ve won the Avery?”

“No. I’m going to Redmond in September. Doesn’t it seem wonderful? I’ll have a brand new stock of ambition laid in by that time after three glorious, golden months of vacation. Jane and Ruby are going to teach. Isn’t it splendid to think we all got through even to Moody Spurgeon and Josie Pye?”

“The Newbridge trustees have offered Jane their school already,” said Diana. “Gilbert Blythe is going to teach, too. He has to. His father can’t afford to send him to college next year, after all, so he means to earn his own way through. I expect he’ll get the school here if Miss Ames decides to leave.”

Anne felt a queer little sensation of dismayed surprise. She had not known this; she had expected that Gilbert would be going to Redmond also. What would she do without their inspiring rivalry? Would not work, even at a coeducational college with a real degree in prospect, be rather flat without her friend the enemy?

The next morning at breakfast it suddenly struck Anne that Matthew was not looking well. Surely he was much grayer than he had been a year before.

“Marilla,” she said hesitatingly when he had gone out, “is Matthew quite well?”

“No, he isn’t,” said Marilla in a troubled tone. “He’s had some real bad spells with his heart this spring and he won’t spare himself a mite. I’ve been real worried about him, but he’s some better this while back and we’ve got a good hired man, so I’m hoping he’ll kind of rest and pick up. Maybe he will now you’re home. You always cheer him up.”

Anne leaned across the table and took Marilla’s face in her hands.

“You are not looking as well yourself as I’d like to see you, Marilla. You look tired. I’m afraid you’ve been working too hard. You must take a rest, now that I’m home. I’m just going to take this one day off to visit all the dear old spots and hunt up my old dreams, and then it will be your turn to be lazy while I do the work.”

Marilla smiled affectionately at her girl.

“It’s not the work — it’s my head. I’ve got a pain so often now — behind my eyes. Doctor Spencer’s been fussing with glasses, but they don’t do me any good. There is a distinguished oculist coming to the Island the last of June and the doctor says I must see him. I guess I’ll have to. I can’t read or sew with any comfort now. Well, Anne, you’ve done real well at Queen’s I must say. To take First Class License in one year and win the Avery scholarship — well, well, Mrs. Lynde says pride goes before a fall and she doesn’t believe in the higher education of women at all; she says it unfits them for woman’s true sphere. I don’t believe a word of it. Speaking of Rachel reminds me — did you hear anything about the Abbey Bank lately, Anne?”

“I heard it was shaky,” answered Anne. “Why?”

“That is what Rachel said. She was up here one day last week and said there was some talk about it. Matthew felt real worried. All we have saved is in that bank — every penny. I wanted Matthew to put it in the Savings Bank in the first place, but old Mr. Abbey was a great friend of father’s and he’d always banked with him. Matthew said any bank with him at the head of it was good enough for anybody.”

“I think he has only been its nominal head for many years,” said Anne. “He is a very old man; his nephews are really at the head of the institution.”

“Well, when Rachel told us that, I wanted Matthew to draw our money right out and he said he’d think of it. But Mr. Russell told him yesterday that the bank was all right.”

Anne had her good day in the companionship of the outdoor world. She never forgot that day; it was so bright and golden and fair, so free from shadow and so lavish of blossom. Anne spent some of its rich hours in the orchard; she went to the Dryad’s Bubble and Willowmere and Violet Vale; she called at the manse and had a satisfying talk with Mrs. Allan; and finally in the evening she went with Matthew for the cows, through Lovers’ Lane to the back pasture. The woods were all gloried through with

sunset and the warm splendor of it streamed down through the hill gaps in the west. Matthew walked slowly with bent head; Anne, tall and erect, suited her springing step to his.

“You’ve been working too hard today, Matthew,” she said reproachfully. “Why won’t you take things easier?”

“Well now, I can’t seem to,” said Matthew, as he opened the yard gate to let the cows through. “It’s only that I’m getting old, Anne, and keep forgetting it. Well, well, I’ve always worked pretty hard and I’d rather drop in harness.”

“If I had been the boy you sent for,” said Anne wistfully, “I’d be able to help you so much now and spare you in a hundred ways. I could find it in my heart to wish I had been, just for that.”

“Well now, I’d rather have you than a dozen boys, Anne,” said Matthew patting her hand. “Just mind you that — rather than a dozen boys. Well now, I guess it wasn’t a boy that took the Avery scholarship, was it? It was a girl — my girl — my girl that I’m proud of.”

He smiled his shy smile at her as he went into the yard. Anne took the memory of it with her when she went to her room that night and sat for a long while at her open window, thinking of the past and dreaming of the future. Outside the Snow Queen was mistily white in the moonshine; the frogs were singing in the marsh beyond Orchard Slope. Anne always remembered the silvery, peaceful beauty and fragrant calm of that night. It was the last night before sorrow touched her life; and no life is ever quite the same again when once that cold, sanctifying touch has been laid upon it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Reaper Whose Name Is Death

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“Matthew — Matthew — what is the matter? Matthew, are you sick?”

It was Marilla who spoke, alarm in every jerky word. Anne came through the hall, her hands full of white narcissus, — it was long before Anne could love the sight or odor of white narcissus again, — in time to hear her and to see Matthew standing in the porch doorway, a folded paper in his hand, and his face strangely drawn and gray. Anne dropped her flowers and sprang across the kitchen to him at the same moment as Marilla. They were both too late; before they could reach him Matthew had fallen across the threshold.

“He’s fainted,” gasped Marilla. “Anne, run for Martin — quick, quick! He’s at the barn.”

Martin, the hired man, who had just driven home from the post office, started at once for the doctor, calling at Orchard Slope on his way to send Mr. and Mrs. Barry over. Mrs. Lynde, who was there on an errand, came too. They found Anne and Marilla distractedly trying to restore Matthew to consciousness.

Mrs. Lynde pushed them gently aside, tried his pulse, and then laid her ear over his heart. She looked at their anxious faces sorrowfully and the tears came into her eyes.

“Oh, Marilla,” she said gravely. “I don’t think — we can do anything for him.”

“Mrs. Lynde, you don’t think — you can’t think Matthew is — is—” Anne could not say the dreadful word; she turned sick and pallid.

“Child, yes, I’m afraid of it. Look at his face. When you’ve seen that look as often as I have you’ll know what it means.”

Anne looked at the still face and there beheld the seal of the Great Presence.

When the doctor came he said that death had been instantaneous and probably painless, caused in all likelihood by some sudden shock. The secret of the shock was discovered to be in the paper Matthew had held and which Martin had brought from the office that morning. It contained an account of the failure of the Abbey Bank.

The news spread quickly through Avonlea, and all day friends and neighbors thronged Green Gables and came and went on errands of kindness for the dead and living. For the first time shy, quiet Matthew Cuthbert was a person of central importance; the white majesty of death had fallen on him and set him apart as one crowned.

When the calm night came softly down over Green Gables the old house was hushed and tranquil. In the parlor lay Matthew Cuthbert in his coffin, his long gray hair framing his placid face on which there was a little kindly smile as if he but slept, dreaming pleasant dreams. There were flowers about him — sweet old-fashioned flowers which his mother had planted in the homestead garden in her bridal days and for which Matthew had always had a secret, wordless love. Anne had gathered them and brought them to him, her anguished, tearless eyes burning in her white face. It was the last thing she could do for him.

The Barrys and Mrs. Lynde stayed with them that night. Diana, going to the east gable, where Anne was standing at her window, said gently:

“Anne dear, would you like to have me sleep with you tonight?”

“Thank you, Diana.” Anne looked earnestly into her friend’s face. “I think you won’t misunderstand me when I say I want to be alone. I’m not afraid. I haven’t been alone one minute since it happened — and I want to be. I want to be quite silent and quiet and try to realize it. I can’t realize it. Half the time it seems to me that Matthew can’t be dead; and the other half it

seems as if he must have been dead for a long time and I've had this horrible dull ache ever since."

Diana did not quite understand. Marilla's impassioned grief, breaking all the bounds of natural reserve and lifelong habit in its stormy rush, she could comprehend better than Anne's tearless agony. But she went away kindly, leaving Anne alone to keep her first vigil with sorrow.

Anne hoped that the tears would come in solitude. It seemed to her a terrible thing that she could not shed a tear for Matthew, whom she had loved so much and who had been so kind to her, Matthew who had walked with her last evening at sunset and was now lying in the dim room below with that awful peace on his brow. But no tears came at first, even when she knelt by her window in the darkness and prayed, looking up to the stars beyond the hills — no tears, only the same horrible dull ache of misery that kept on aching until she fell asleep, worn out with the day's pain and excitement.

In the night she awakened, with the stillness and the darkness about her, and the recollection of the day came over her like a wave of sorrow. She could see Matthew's face smiling at her as he had smiled when they parted at the gate that last evening — she could hear his voice saying, "My girl — my girl that I'm proud of." Then the tears came and Anne wept her heart out. Marilla heard her and crept in to comfort her.

"There — there — don't cry so, dearie. It can't bring him back. It — it — isn't right to cry so. I knew that today, but I couldn't help it then. He'd always been such a good, kind brother to me — but God knows best."

"Oh, just let me cry, Marilla," sobbed Anne. "The tears don't hurt me like that ache did. Stay here for a little while with me and keep your arm round me — so. I couldn't have Diana stay, she's good and kind and sweet — but it's not her sorrow — she's outside of it and she couldn't come close enough to my heart to help me. It's our sorrow — yours and mine. Oh, Marilla, what will we do without him?"

"We've got each other, Anne. I don't know what I'd do if you weren't here — if you'd never come. Oh, Anne, I know I've been kind of strict and

harsh with you maybe — but you mustn't think I didn't love you as well as Matthew did, for all that. I want to tell you now when I can. It's never been easy for me to say things out of my heart, but at times like this it's easier. I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood and you've been my joy and comfort ever since you came to Green Gables."

Two days afterwards they carried Matthew Cuthbert over his homestead threshold and away from the fields he had tilled and the orchards he had loved and the trees he had planted; and then Avonlea settled back to its usual placidity and even at Green Gables affairs slipped into their old groove and work was done and duties fulfilled with regularity as before, although always with the aching sense of "loss in all familiar things." Anne, new to grief, thought it almost sad that it could be so — that they COULD go on in the old way without Matthew. She felt something like shame and remorse when she discovered that the sunrises behind the firs and the pale pink buds opening in the garden gave her the old inrush of gladness when she saw them — that Diana's visits were pleasant to her and that Diana's merry words and ways moved her to laughter and smiles — that, in brief, the beautiful world of blossom and love and friendship had lost none of its power to please her fancy and thrill her heart, that life still called to her with many insistent voices.

"It seems like disloyalty to Matthew, somehow, to find pleasure in these things now that he has gone," she said wistfully to Mrs. Allan one evening when they were together in the manse garden. "I miss him so much — all the time — and yet, Mrs. Allan, the world and life seem very beautiful and interesting to me for all. Today Diana said something funny and I found myself laughing. I thought when it happened I could never laugh again. And it somehow seems as if I oughtn't to."

"When Matthew was here he liked to hear you laugh and he liked to know that you found pleasure in the pleasant things around you," said Mrs. Allan gently. "He is just away now; and he likes to know it just the same. I am sure we should not shut our hearts against the healing influences that nature offers us. But I can understand your feeling. I think we all experience the same thing. We resent the thought that anything can please us when someone we love is no longer here to share the pleasure with us,

and we almost feel as if we were unfaithful to our sorrow when we find our interest in life returning to us.”

“I was down to the graveyard to plant a rosebush on Matthew’s grave this afternoon,” said Anne dreamily. “I took a slip of the little white Scotch rosebush his mother brought out from Scotland long ago; Matthew always liked those roses the best — they were so small and sweet on their thorny stems. It made me feel glad that I could plant it by his grave — as if I were doing something that must please him in taking it there to be near him. I hope he has roses like them in heaven. Perhaps the souls of all those little white roses that he has loved so many summers were all there to meet him. I must go home now. Marilla is all alone and she gets lonely at twilight.”

“She will be lonelier still, I fear, when you go away again to college,” said Mrs. Allan.

Anne did not reply; she said good night and went slowly back to green Gables. Marilla was sitting on the front doorsteps and Anne sat down beside her. The door was open behind them, held back by a big pink conch shell with hints of sea sunsets in its smooth inner convolutions.

Anne gathered some sprays of pale-yellow honeysuckle and put them in her hair. She liked the delicious hint of fragrance, as some aerial benediction, above her every time she moved.

“Doctor Spencer was here while you were away,” Marilla said. “He says that the specialist will be in town tomorrow and he insists that I must go in and have my eyes examined. I suppose I’d better go and have it over. I’ll be more than thankful if the man can give me the right kind of glasses to suit my eyes. You won’t mind staying here alone while I’m away, will you? Martin will have to drive me in and there’s ironing and baking to do.”

“I shall be all right. Diana will come over for company for me. I shall attend to the ironing and baking beautifully — you needn’t fear that I’ll starch the handkerchiefs or flavor the cake with liniment.”

Marilla laughed.

“What a girl you were for making mistakes in them days, Anne. You were always getting into scrapes. I did use to think you were possessed. Do you mind the time you dyed your hair?”

“Yes, indeed. I shall never forget it,” smiled Anne, touching the heavy braid of hair that was wound about her shapely head. “I laugh a little now sometimes when I think what a worry my hair used to be to me — but I don’t laugh MUCH, because it was a very real trouble then. I did suffer terribly over my hair and my freckles. My freckles are really gone; and people are nice enough to tell me my hair is auburn now — all but Josie Pye. She informed me yesterday that she really thought it was redder than ever, or at least my black dress made it look redder, and she asked me if people who had red hair ever got used to having it. Marilla, I’ve almost decided to give up trying to like Josie Pye. I’ve made what I would once have called a heroic effort to like her, but Josie Pye won’t BE liked.”

“Josie is a Pye,” said Marilla sharply, “so she can’t help being disagreeable. I suppose people of that kind serve some useful purpose in society, but I must say I don’t know what it is any more than I know the use of thistles. Is Josie going to teach?”

“No, she is going back to Queen’s next year. So are Moody Spurgeon and Charlie Sloane. Jane and Ruby are going to teach and they have both got schools — Jane at Newbridge and Ruby at some place up west.”

“Gilbert Blythe is going to teach too, isn’t he?”

“Yes” — briefly.

“What a nicelooking fellow he is,” said Marilla absently. “I saw him in church last Sunday and he seemed so tall and manly. He looks a lot like his father did at the same age. John Blythe was a nice boy. We used to be real good friends, he and I. People called him my beau.”

Anne looked up with swift interest.

“Oh, Marilla — and what happened? — why didn’t you—”

“We had a quarrel. I wouldn’t forgive him when he asked me to. I meant to, after awhile — but I was sulky and angry and I wanted to punish him first. He never came back — the Blythes were all mighty independent. But I always felt — rather sorry. I’ve always kind of wished I’d forgiven him when I had the chance.”

“So you’ve had a bit of romance in your life, too,” said Anne softly.

“Yes, I suppose you might call it that. You wouldn’t think so to look at me, would you? But you never can tell about people from their outsides. Everybody has forgot about me and John. I’d forgotten myself. But it all came back to me when I saw Gilbert last Sunday.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Bend in the road

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Marilla went to town the next day and returned in the evening. Anne had gone over to Orchard Slope with Diana and came back to find Marilla in the kitchen, sitting by the table with her head leaning on her hand. Something in her dejected attitude struck a chill to Anne's heart. She had never seen Marilla sit limply inert like that.

"Are you very tired, Marilla?"

"Yes — no — I don't know," said Marilla wearily, looking up. "I suppose I am tired but I haven't thought about it. It's not that."

"Did you see the oculist? What did he say?" asked Anne anxiously.

"Yes, I saw him. He examined my eyes. He says that if I give up all reading and sewing entirely and any kind of work that strains the eyes, and if I'm careful not to cry, and if I wear the glasses he's given me he thinks my eyes may not get any worse and my headaches will be cured. But if I don't he says I'll certainly be stone-blind in six months. Blind! Anne, just think of it!"

For a minute Anne, after her first quick exclamation of dismay, was silent. It seemed to her that she could NOT speak. Then she said bravely, but with a catch in her voice:

"Marilla, DON'T think of it. You know he has given you hope. If you are careful you won't lose your sight altogether; and if his glasses cure your headaches it will be a great thing."

“I don’t call it much hope,” said Marilla bitterly. “What am I to live for if I can’t read or sew or do anything like that? I might as well be blind — or dead. And as for crying, I can’t help that when I get lonesome. But there, it’s no good talking about it. If you’ll get me a cup of tea I’ll be thankful. I’m about done out. Don’t say anything about this to any one for a spell yet, anyway. I can’t bear that folks should come here to question and sympathize and talk about it.”

When Marilla had eaten her lunch Anne persuaded her to go to bed. Then Anne went herself to the east gable and sat down by her window in the darkness alone with her tears and her heaviness of heart. How sadly things had changed since she had sat there the night after coming home! Then she had been full of hope and joy and the future had looked rosy with promise. Anne felt as if she had lived years since then, but before she went to bed there was a smile on her lips and peace in her heart. She had looked her duty courageously in the face and found it a friend — as duty ever is when we meet it frankly.

One afternoon a few days later Marilla came slowly in from the front yard where she had been talking to a caller — a man whom Anne knew by sight as Sadler from Carmody. Anne wondered what he could have been saying to bring that look to Marilla’s face.

“What did Mr. Sadler want, Marilla?”

Marilla sat down by the window and looked at Anne. There were tears in her eyes in defiance of the oculist’s prohibition and her voice broke as she said:

“He heard that I was going to sell Green Gables and he wants to buy it.”

“Buy it! Buy Green Gables?” Anne wondered if she had heard aright. “Oh, Marilla, you don’t mean to sell Green Gables!”

“Anne, I don’t know what else is to be done. I’ve thought it all over. If my eyes were strong I could stay here and make out to look after things and manage, with a good hired man. But as it is I can’t. I may lose my sight altogether; and anyway I’ll not be fit to run things. Oh, I never thought I’d

live to see the day when I'd have to sell my home. But things would only go behind worse and worse all the time, till nobody would want to buy it. Every cent of our money went in that bank; and there's some notes Matthew gave last fall to pay. Mrs. Lynde advises me to sell the farm and board somewhere — with her I suppose. It won't bring much — it's small and the buildings are old. But it'll be enough for me to live on I reckon. I'm thankful you're provided for with that scholarship, Anne. I'm sorry you won't have a home to come to in your vacations, that's all, but I suppose you'll manage somehow."

Marilla broke down and wept bitterly.

"You mustn't sell Green Gables," said Anne resolutely.

"Oh, Anne, I wish I didn't have to. But you can see for yourself. I can't stay here alone. I'd go crazy with trouble and loneliness. And my sight would go — I know it would."

"You won't have to stay here alone, Marilla. I'll be with you. I'm not going to Redmond."

"Not going to Redmond!" Marilla lifted her worn face from her hands and looked at Anne. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I'm not going to take the scholarship. I decided so the night after you came home from town. You surely don't think I could leave you alone in your trouble, Marilla, after all you've done for me. I've been thinking and planning. Let me tell you my plans. Mr. Barry wants to rent the farm for next year. So you won't have any bother over that. And I'm going to teach. I've applied for the school here — but I don't expect to get it for I understand the trustees have promised it to Gilbert Blythe. But I can have the Carmody school — Mr. Blair told me so last night at the store. Of course that won't be quite as nice or convenient as if I had the Avonlea school. But I can board home and drive myself over to Carmody and back, in the warm weather at least. And even in winter I can come home Fridays. We'll keep a horse for that. Oh, I have it all planned out, Marilla. And I'll read to you and keep you cheered up. You sha'n't be dull or lonesome. And we'll be real cozy and happy here together, you and I."

Marilla had listened like a woman in a dream.

“Oh, Anne, I could get on real well if you were here, I know. But I can’t let you sacrifice yourself so for me. It would be terrible.”

“Nonsense!” Anne laughed merrily. “There is no sacrifice. Nothing could be worse than giving up Green Gables — nothing could hurt me more. We must keep the dear old place. My mind is quite made up, Marilla. I’m NOT going to Redmond; and I AM going to stay here and teach. Don’t you worry about me a bit.”

“But your ambitions — and—”

“I’m just as ambitious as ever. Only, I’ve changed the object of my ambitions. I’m going to be a good teacher — and I’m going to save your eyesight. Besides, I mean to study at home here and take a little college course all by myself. Oh, I’ve dozens of plans, Marilla. I’ve been thinking them out for a week. I shall give life here my best, and I believe it will give its best to me in return. When I left Queen’s my future seemed to stretch out before me like a straight road. I thought I could see along it for many a milestone. Now there is a bend in it. I don’t know what lies around the bend, but I’m going to believe that the best does. It has a fascination of its own, that bend, Marilla. I wonder how the road beyond it goes — what there is of green glory and soft, checkered light and shadows — what new landscapes — what new beauties — what curves and hills and valleys further on.”

“I don’t feel as if I ought to let you give it up,” said Marilla, referring to the scholarship.

“But you can’t prevent me. I’m sixteen and a half, ‘obstinate as a mule,’ as Mrs. Lynde once told me,” laughed Anne. “Oh, Marilla, don’t you go pitying me. I don’t like to be pitied, and there is no need for it. I’m heart glad over the very thought of staying at dear Green Gables. Nobody could love it as you and I do — so we must keep it.”

“You blessed girl!” said Marilla, yielding. “I feel as if you’d given me new life. I guess I ought to stick out and make you go to college — but I know

I can't, so I ain't going to try. I'll make it up to you though, Anne."

When it became noised abroad in Avonlea that Anne Shirley had given up the idea of going to college and intended to stay home and teach there was a good deal of discussion over it. Most of the good folks, not knowing about Marilla's eyes, thought she was foolish. Mrs. Allan did not. She told Anne so in approving words that brought tears of pleasure to the girl's eyes. Neither did good Mrs. Lynde. She came up one evening and found Anne and Marilla sitting at the front door in the warm, scented summer dusk. They liked to sit there when the twilight came down and the white moths flew about in the garden and the odor of mint filled the dewy air.

Mrs. Rachel deposited her substantial person upon the stone bench by the door, behind which grew a row of tall pink and yellow hollyhocks, with a long breath of mingled weariness and relief.

"I declare I'm getting glad to sit down. I've been on my feet all day, and two hundred pounds is a good bit for two feet to carry round. It's a great blessing not to be fat, Marilla. I hope you appreciate it. Well, Anne, I hear you've given up your notion of going to college. I was real glad to hear it. You've got as much education now as a woman can be comfortable with. I don't believe in girls going to college with the men and cramming their heads full of Latin and Greek and all that nonsense."

"But I'm going to study Latin and Greek just the same, Mrs. Lynde," said Anne laughing. "I'm going to take my Arts course right here at Green Gables, and study everything that I would at college."

Mrs. Lynde lifted her hands in holy horror.

"Anne Shirley, you'll kill yourself."

"Not a bit of it. I shall thrive on it. Oh, I'm not going to overdo things. As 'Josiah Allen's wife,' says, I shall be 'mejum'. But I'll have lots of spare time in the long winter evenings, and I've no vocation for fancy work. I'm going to teach over at Carmody, you know."

“I don’t know it. I guess you’re going to teach right here in Avonlea. The trustees have decided to give you the school.”

“Mrs. Lynde!” cried Anne, springing to her feet in her surprise. “Why, I thought they had promised it to Gilbert Blythe!”

“So they did. But as soon as Gilbert heard that you had applied for it he went to them — they had a business meeting at the school last night, you know — and told them that he withdrew his application, and suggested that they accept yours. He said he was going to teach at White Sands. Of course he knew how much you wanted to stay with Marilla, and I must say I think it was real kind and thoughtful in him, that’s what. Real self-sacrificing, too, for he’ll have his board to pay at White Sands, and everybody knows he’s got to earn his own way through college. So the trustees decided to take you. I was tickled to death when Thomas came home and told me.”

“I don’t feel that I ought to take it,” murmured Anne. “I mean — I don’t think I ought to let Gilbert make such a sacrifice for — for me.”

“I guess you can’t prevent him now. He’s signed papers with the White Sands trustees. So it wouldn’t do him any good now if you were to refuse. Of course you’ll take the school. You’ll get along all right, now that there are no Pyes going. Josie was the last of them, and a good thing she was, that’s what. There’s been some Pye or other going to Avonlea school for the last twenty years, and I guess their mission in life was to keep school teachers reminded that earth isn’t their home. Bless my heart! What does all that winking and blinking at the Barry gable mean?”

“Diana is signaling for me to go over,” laughed Anne. “You know we keep up the old custom. Excuse me while I run over and see what she wants.”

Anne ran down the clover slope like a deer, and disappeared in the firry shadows of the Haunted Wood. Mrs. Lynde looked after her indulgently.

“There’s a good deal of the child about her yet in some ways.”

“There’s a good deal more of the woman about her in others,” retorted Marilla, with a momentary return of her old crispness.

But crispness was no longer Marilla’s distinguishing characteristic. As Mrs. Lynde told her Thomas that night.

“Marilla Cuthbert has got MELLOW. That’s what.”

Anne went to the little Avonlea graveyard the next evening to put fresh flowers on Matthew’s grave and water the Scotch rosebush. She lingered there until dusk, liking the peace and calm of the little place, with its poplars whose rustle was like low, friendly speech, and its whispering grasses growing at will among the graves. When she finally left it and walked down the long hill that sloped to the Lake of Shining Waters it was past sunset and all Avonlea lay before her in a dreamlike afterlight—“a haunt of ancient peace.” There was a freshness in the air as of a wind that had blown over honey-sweet fields of clover. Home lights twinkled out here and there among the homestead trees. Beyond lay the sea, misty and purple, with its haunting, unceasing murmur. The west was a glory of soft mingled hues, and the pond reflected them all in still softer shadings. The beauty of it all thrilled Anne’s heart, and she gratefully opened the gates of her soul to it.

“Dear old world,” she murmured, “you are very lovely, and I am glad to be alive in you.”

Halfway down the hill a tall lad came whistling out of a gate before the Blythe homestead. It was Gilbert, and the whistle died on his lips as he recognized Anne. He lifted his cap courteously, but he would have passed on in silence, if Anne had not stopped and held out her hand.

“Gilbert,” she said, with scarlet cheeks, “I want to thank you for giving up the school for me. It was very good of you — and I want you to know that I appreciate it.”

Gilbert took the offered hand eagerly.

“It wasn’t particularly good of me at all, Anne. I was pleased to be able to do you some small service. Are we going to be friends after this? Have you really forgiven me my old fault?”

Anne laughed and tried unsuccessfully to withdraw her hand.

“I forgave you that day by the pond landing, although I didn’t know it. What a stubborn little goose I was. I’ve been — I may as well make a complete confession — I’ve been sorry ever since.”

“We are going to be the best of friends,” said Gilbert, jubilantly. “We were born to be good friends, Anne. You’ve thwarted destiny enough. I know we can help each other in many ways. You are going to keep up your studies, aren’t you? So am I. Come, I’m going to walk home with you.”

Marilla looked curiously at Anne when the latter entered the kitchen.

“Who was that came up the lane with you, Anne?”

“Gilbert Blythe,” answered Anne, vexed to find herself blushing. “I met him on Barry’s hill.”

“I didn’t think you and Gilbert Blythe were such good friends that you’d stand for half an hour at the gate talking to him,” said Marilla with a dry smile.

“We haven’t been — we’ve been good enemies. But we have decided that it will be much more sensible to be good friends in the future. Were we really there half an hour? It seemed just a few minutes. But, you see, we have five years’ lost conversations to catch up with, Marilla.”

Anne sat long at her window that night companioned by a glad content. The wind purred softly in the cherry boughs, and the mint breaths came up to her. The stars twinkled over the pointed firs in the hollow and Diana’s light gleamed through the old gap.

Anne’s horizons had closed in since the night she had sat there after coming home from Queen’s; but if the path set before her feet was to be

narrow she knew that flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it. The joy of sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship were to be hers; nothing could rob her of her birthright of fancy or her ideal world of dreams. And there was always the bend in the road!

““God’s in his heaven, all’s right with the world,”” whispered Anne softly. softly.

THE END

ANNE OF AVONL EA (1909)

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I

An Irate Neighbor

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A tall, slim girl, “halfpast sixteen,” with serious gray eyes and hair which her friends called auburn, had sat down on the broad red sandstone doorstep of a Prince Edward Island farmhouse one ripe afternoon in August, firmly resolved to construe so many lines of Virgil.

But an August afternoon, with blue hazes scarfing the harvest slopes, little winds whispering elfishly in the poplars, and a dancing splendor of red poppies outflaming against the dark coppice of young firs in a corner of the cherry orchard, was fitter for dreams than dead languages. The Virgil soon slipped unheeded to the ground, and Anne, her chin propped on her clasped hands, and her eyes on the splendid mass of fluffy clouds that were heaping up just over Mr. J. A. Harrison’s house like a great white mountain, was far away in a delicious world where a certain schoolteacher was doing a wonderful work, shaping the destinies of future statesmen, and inspiring youthful minds and hearts with high and lofty ambitions.

To be sure, if you came down to harsh facts ... which, it must be confessed, Anne seldom did until she had to ... it did not seem likely that there was much promising material for celebrities in Avonlea school; but you could never tell what might happen if a teacher used her influence for good. Anne had certain rose-tinted ideals of what a teacher might accomplish if she only went the right way about it; and she was in the midst of a delightful scene, forty years hence, with a famous personage ... just exactly what he was to be famous for was left in convenient haziness, but Anne thought it would be rather nice to have him a college president or a Canadian premier ... bowing low over her wrinkled hand and assuring her that it was she who had first kindled his ambition, and that all his success in life was due to the lessons she had instilled so long ago in Avonlea school. This pleasant vision was shattered by a most unpleasant interruption.

A demure little Jersey cow came scuttling down the lane and five seconds later Mr. Harrison arrived ... if “arrived” be not too mild a term to describe the manner of his irruption into the yard.

He bounced over the fence without waiting to open the gate, and angrily confronted astonished Anne, who had risen to her feet and stood looking at him in some bewilderment. Mr. Harrison was their new righthand neighbor

and she had never met him before, although she had seen him once or twice.

In early April, before Anne had come home from Queen's, Mr. Robert Bell, whose farm adjoined the Cuthbert place on the west, had sold out and moved to Charlottetown. His farm had been bought by a certain Mr. J. A. Harrison, whose name, and the fact that he was a New Brunswick man, were all that was known about him. But before he had been a month in Avonlea he had won the reputation of being an odd person ... "a crank," Mrs. Rachel Lynde said. Mrs. Rachel was an outspoken lady, as those of you who may have already made her acquaintance will remember. Mr. Harrison was certainly different from other people ... and that is the essential characteristic of a crank, as everybody knows.

In the first place he kept house for himself and had publicly stated that he wanted no fools of women around his diggings. Feminine Avonlea took its revenge by the gruesome tales it related about his housekeeping and cooking. He had hired little John Henry Carter of White Sands and John Henry started the stories. For one thing, there was never any stated time for meals in the Harrison establishment. Mr. Harrison "got a bite" when he felt hungry, and if John Henry were around at the time, he came in for a share, but if he were not, he had to wait until Mr. Harrison's next hungry spell. John Henry mournfully averred that he would have starved to death if it wasn't that he got home on Sundays and got a good filling up, and that his mother always gave him a basket of "grub" to take back with him on Monday mornings.

As for washing dishes, Mr. Harrison never made any pretence of doing it unless a rainy Sunday came. Then he went to work and washed them all at once in the rainwater hogshead, and left them to drain dry.

Again, Mr. Harrison was "close." When he was asked to subscribe to the Rev. Mr. Allan's salary he said he'd wait and see how many dollars' worth of good he got out of his preaching first ... he didn't believe in buying a pig in a poke. And when Mrs. Lynde went to ask for a contribution to missions ... and incidentally to see the inside of the house ... he told her there were more heathens among the old woman gossips in Avonlea than anywhere else he knew of, and he'd cheerfully contribute to a mission for

Christianizing them if she'd undertake it. Mrs. Rachel got herself away and said it was a mercy poor Mrs. Robert Bell was safe in her grave, for it would have broken her heart to see the state of her house in which she used to take so much pride.

"Why, she scrubbed the kitchen floor every second day," Mrs. Lynde told Marilla Cuthbert indignantly, "and if you could see it now! I had to hold up my skirts as I walked across it."

Finally, Mr. Harrison kept a parrot called Ginger. Nobody in Avonlea had ever kept a parrot before; consequently that proceeding was considered barely respectable. And such a parrot! If you took John Henry Carter's word for it, never was such an unholy bird. It swore terribly. Mrs. Carter would have taken John Henry away at once if she had been sure she could get another place for him. Besides, Ginger had bitten a piece right out of the back of John Henry's neck one day when he had stooped down too near the cage. Mrs. Carter showed everybody the mark when the luckless John Henry went home on Sundays.

All these things flashed through Anne's mind as Mr. Harrison stood, quite speechless with wrath apparently, before her. In his most amiable mood Mr. Harrison could not have been considered a handsome man; he was short and fat and bald; and now, with his round face purple with rage and his prominent blue eyes almost sticking out of his head, Anne thought he was really the ugliest person she had ever seen.

All at once Mr. Harrison found his voice.

"I'm not going to put up with this," he spluttered, "not a day longer, do you hear, miss. Bless my soul, this is the third time, miss ... the third time! Patience has ceased to be a virtue, miss. I warned your aunt the last time not to let it occur again ... and she's let it ... she's done it ... what does she mean by it, that is what I want to know. That is what I'm here about, miss."

"Will you explain what the trouble is?" asked Anne, in her most dignified manner. She had been practicing it considerably of late to have it in good

working order when school began; but it had no apparent effect on the irate J. A. Harrison.

“Trouble, is it? Bless my soul, trouble enough, I should think. The trouble is, miss, that I found that Jersey cow of your aunt’s in my oats again, not half an hour ago. The third time, mark you. I found her in last Tuesday and I found her in yesterday. I came here and told your aunt not to let it occur again. She has let it occur again. Where’s your aunt, miss? I just want to see her for a minute and give her a piece of my mind ... a piece of J. A. Harrison’s mind, miss.”

“If you mean Miss Marilla Cuthbert, she is not my aunt, and she has gone down to East Grafton to see a distant relative of hers who is very ill,” said Anne, with due increase of dignity at every word. “I am very sorry that my cow should have broken into your oats ... she is my cow and not Miss Cuthbert’s ... Matthew gave her to me three years ago when she was a little calf and he bought her from Mr. Bell.”

“Sorry, miss! Sorry isn’t going to help matters any. You’d better go and look at the havoc that animal has made in my oats ... trampled them from center to circumference, miss.”

“I am very sorry,” repeated Anne firmly, “but perhaps if you kept your fences in better repair Dolly might not have broken in. It is your part of the line fence that separates your oatfield from our pasture and I noticed the other day that it was not in very good condition.”

“My fence is all right,” snapped Mr. Harrison, angrier than ever at this carrying of the war into the enemy’s country. “The jail fence couldn’t keep a demon of a cow like that out. And I can tell you, you redheaded snippet, that if the cow is yours, as you say, you’d be better employed in watching her out of other people’s grain than in sitting round reading yellow-covered novels,” ... with a scathing glance at the innocent tan-colored Virgil by Anne’s feet.

Something at that moment was red besides Anne’s hair ... which had always been a tender point with her.

“I’d rather have red hair than none at all, except a little fringe round my ears,” she flashed.

The shot told, for Mr. Harrison was really very sensitive about his bald head. His anger choked him up again and he could only glare speechlessly at Anne, who recovered her temper and followed up her advantage.

“I can make allowance for you, Mr. Harrison, because I have an imagination. I can easily imagine how very trying it must be to find a cow in your oats and I shall not cherish any hard feelings against you for the things you’ve said. I promise you that Dolly shall never break into your oats again. I give you my word of honor on THAT point.”

“Well, mind you she doesn’t,” muttered Mr. Harrison in a somewhat subdued tone; but he stamped off angrily enough and Anne heard him growling to himself until he was out of earshot.

Grievously disturbed in mind, Anne marched across the yard and shut the naughty Jersey up in the milking pen.

“She can’t possibly get out of that unless she tears the fence down,” she reflected. “She looks pretty quiet now. I daresay she has sickened herself on those oats. I wish I’d sold her to Mr. Shearer when he wanted her last week, but I thought it was just as well to wait until we had the auction of the stock and let them all go together. I believe it is true about Mr. Harrison being a crank. Certainly there’s nothing of the kindred spirit about HIM.”

Anne had always a weather eye open for kindred spirits.

Marilla Cuthbert was driving into the yard as Anne returned from the house, and the latter flew to get tea ready. They discussed the matter at the tea table.

“I’ll be glad when the auction is over,” said Marilla. “It is too much responsibility having so much stock about the place and nobody but that unreliable Martin to look after them. He has never come back yet and he promised that he would certainly be back last night if I’d give him the day

off to go to his aunt's funeral. I don't know how many aunts he has got, I am sure. That's the fourth that's died since he hired here a year ago. I'll be more than thankful when the crop is in and Mr. Barry takes over the farm. We'll have to keep Dolly shut up in the pen till Martin comes, for she must be put in the back pasture and the fences there have to be fixed. I declare, it is a world of trouble, as Rachel says. Here's poor Mary Keith dying and what is to become of those two children of hers is more than I know. She has a brother in British Columbia and she has written to him about them, but she hasn't heard from him yet."

"What are the children like? How old are they?"

"Six past ... they're twins."

"Oh, I've always been especially interested in twins ever since Mrs. Hammond had so many," said Anne eagerly. "Are they pretty?"

"Goodness, you couldn't tell ... they were too dirty. Davy had been out making mud pies and Dora went out to call him in. Davy pushed her headfirst into the biggest pie and then, because she cried, he got into it himself and wallowed in it to show her it was nothing to cry about. Mary said Dora was really a very good child but that Davy was full of mischief. He has never had any bringing up you might say. His father died when he was a baby and Mary has been sick almost ever since."

"I'm always sorry for children that have no bringing up," said Anne soberly. "You know I hadn't any till you took me in hand. I hope their uncle will look after them. Just what relation is Mrs. Keith to you?"

"Mary? None in the world. It was her husband ... he was our third cousin. There's Mrs. Lynde coming through the yard. I thought she'd be up to hear about Mary."

"Don't tell her about Mr. Harrison and the cow," implored Anne.

Marilla promised; but the promise was quite unnecessary, for Mrs. Lynde was no sooner fairly seated than she said,

“I saw Mr. Harrison chasing your Jersey out of his oats today when I was coming home from Carmody. I thought he looked pretty mad. Did he make much of a rumpus?”

Anne and Marilla furtively exchanged amused smiles. Few things in Avonlea ever escaped Mrs. Lynde. It was only that morning Anne had said,

“If you went to your own room at midnight, locked the door, pulled down the blind, and SNEEZED, Mrs. Lynde would ask you the next day how your cold was!”

“I believe he did,” admitted Marilla. “I was away. He gave Anne a piece of his mind.”

“I think he is a very disagreeable man,” said Anne, with a resentful toss of her ruddy head.

“You never said a truer word,” said Mrs. Rachel solemnly. “I knew there’d be trouble when Robert Bell sold his place to a New Brunswick man, that’s what. I don’t know what Avonlea is coming to, with so many strange people rushing into it. It’ll soon not be safe to go to sleep in our beds.”

“Why, what other strangers are coming in?” asked Marilla.

“Haven’t you heard? Well, there’s a family of Donnells, for one thing. They’ve rented Peter Sloane’s old house. Peter has hired the man to run his mill. They belong down east and nobody knows anything about them. Then that shiftless Timothy Cotton family are going to move up from White Sands and they’ll simply be a burden on the public. He is in consumption ... when he isn’t stealing ... and his wife is a slack-twisted creature that can’t turn her hand to a thing. She washes her dishes SITTING DOWN. Mrs. George Pye has taken her husband’s orphan nephew, Anthony Pye. He’ll be going to school to you, Anne, so you may expect trouble, that’s what. And you’ll have another strange pupil, too. Paul Irving is coming from the States to live with his grandmother. You remember his father, Marilla ... Stephen Irving, him that jilted Lavendar Lewis over at Grafton?”

“I don’t think he jilted her. There was a quarrel ... I suppose there was blame on both sides.”

“Well, anyway, he didn’t marry her, and she’s been as queer as possible ever since, they say ... living all by herself in that little stone house she calls Echo Lodge. Stephen went off to the States and went into business with his uncle and married a Yankee. He’s never been home since, though his mother has been up to see him once or twice. His wife died two years ago and he’s sending the boy home to his mother for a spell. He’s ten years old and I don’t know if he’ll be a very desirable pupil. You can never tell about those Yankees.”

Mrs Lynde looked upon all people who had the misfortune to be born or brought up elsewhere than in Prince Edward Island with a decided can-any-good-thing-come-out-of-Nazareth air. They MIGHT be good people, of course; but you were on the safe side in doubting it. She had a special prejudice against “Yankees.” Her husband had been cheated out of ten dollars by an employer for whom he had once worked in Boston and neither angels nor principalities nor powers could have convinced Mrs. Rachel that the whole United States was not responsible for it.

“Avonlea school won’t be the worse for a little new blood,” said Marilla drily, “and if this boy is anything like his father he’ll be all right. Steve Irving was the nicest boy that was ever raised in these parts, though some people did call him proud. I should think Mrs. Irving would be very glad to have the child. She has been very lonesome since her husband died.”

“Oh, the boy may be well enough, but he’ll be different from Avonlea children,” said Mrs. Rachel, as if that clinched the matter. Mrs. Rachel’s opinions concerning any person, place, or thing, were always warranted to wear. “What’s this I hear about your going to start up a Village Improvement Society, Anne?”

“I was just talking it over with some of the girls and boys at the last Debating Club,” said Anne, flushing. “They thought it would be rather nice ... and so do Mr. and Mrs. Allan. Lots of villages have them now.”

“Well, you’ll get into no end of hot water if you do. Better leave it alone, Anne, that’s what. People don’t like being improved.”

“Oh, we are not going to try to improve the PEOPLE. It is Avonlea itself. There are lots of things which might be done to make it prettier. For instance, if we could coax Mr. Levi Boulter to pull down that dreadful old house on his upper farm wouldn’t that be an improvement?”

“It certainly would,” admitted Mrs. Rachel. “That old ruin has been an eyesore to the settlement for years. But if you Improvers can coax Levi Boulter to do anything for the public that he isn’t to be paid for doing, may I be there to see and hear the process, that’s what. I don’t want to discourage you, Anne, for there may be something in your idea, though I suppose you did get it out of some rubbishy Yankee magazine; but you’ll have your hands full with your school and I advise you as a friend not to bother with your improvements, that’s what. But there, I know you’ll go ahead with it if you’ve set your mind on it. You were always one to carry a thing through somehow.”

Something about the firm outlines of Anne’s lips told that Mrs. Rachel was not far astray in this estimate. Anne’s heart was bent on forming the Improvement Society. Gilbert Blythe, who was to teach in White Sands but would always be home from Friday night to Monday morning, was enthusiastic about it; and most of the other folks were willing to go in for anything that meant occasional meetings and consequently some “fun.” As for what the “improvements” were to be, nobody had any very clear idea except Anne and Gilbert. They had talked them over and planned them out until an ideal Avonlea existed in their minds, if nowhere else.

Mrs. Rachel had still another item of news.

“They’ve given the Carmody school to a Priscilla Grant. Didn’t you go to Queen’s with a girl of that name, Anne?”

“Yes, indeed. Priscilla to teach at Carmody! How perfectly lovely!” exclaimed Anne, her gray eyes lighting up until they looked like evening stars, causing Mrs. Lynde to wonder anew if she would ever get it settled to her satisfaction whether Anne Shirley were really a pretty girl or not.

II

Selling in Haste and Repenting at Leisure

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Anne drove over to Carmody on a shopping expedition the next afternoon and took Diana Barry with her. Diana was, of course, a pledged member of the Improvement Society, and the two girls talked about little else all the way to Carmody and back.

“The very first thing we ought to do when we get started is to have that hall painted,” said Diana, as they drove past the Avonlea hall, a rather shabby building set down in a wooded hollow, with spruce trees hooding it about on all sides. “It’s a disgraceful looking place and we must attend to it even before we try to get Mr. Levi Boulder to pull his house down. Father says we’ll never succeed in DOING that. Levi Boulter is too mean to spend the time it would take.”

“Perhaps he’ll let the boys take it down if they promise to haul the boards and split them up for him for kindling wood,” said Anne hopefully. “We must do our best and be content to go slowly at first. We can’t expect to improve everything all at once. We’ll have to educate public sentiment first, of course.”

Diana wasn’t exactly sure what educating public sentiment meant; but it sounded fine and she felt rather proud that she was going to belong to a society with such an aim in view.

“I thought of something last night that we could do, Anne. You know that three-cornered piece of ground where the roads from Carmody and Newbridge and White Sands meet? It’s all grown over with young spruce; but wouldn’t it be nice to have them all cleared out, and just leave the two or three birch trees that are on it?”

“Splendid,” agreed Anne gaily. “And have a rustic seat put under the birches. And when spring comes we’ll have a flower-bed made in the middle of it and plant geraniums.”

“Yes; only we’ll have to devise some way of getting old Mrs. Hiram Sloane to keep her cow off the road, or she’ll eat our geraniums up,” laughed Diana. “I begin to see what you mean by educating public sentiment, Anne. There’s the old Boulter house now. Did you ever see such a rookery? And perched right close to the road too. An old house with its windows gone always makes me think of something dead with its eyes picked out.”

“I think an old, deserted house is such a sad sight,” said Anne dreamily. “It always seems to me to be thinking about its past and mourning for its old-time joys. Marilla says that a large family was raised in that old house long ago, and that it was a real pretty place, with a lovely garden and roses climbing all over it. It was full of little children and laughter and songs; and now it is empty, and nothing ever wanders through it but the wind. How lonely and sorrowful it must feel! Perhaps they all come back on moonlit nights ... the ghosts of the little children of long ago and the roses and the songs ... and for a little while the old house can dream it is young and joyous again.”

Diana shook her head.

“I never imagine things like that about places now, Anne. Don’t you remember how cross mother and Marilla were when we imagined ghosts into the Haunted Wood? To this day I can’t go through that bush comfortably after dark; and if I began imagining such things about the old Boulter house I’d be frightened to pass it too. Besides, those children aren’t dead. They’re all grown up and doing well ... and one of them is a butcher. And flowers and songs couldn’t have ghosts anyhow.”

Anne smothered a little sigh. She loved Diana dearly and they had always been good comrades. But she had long ago learned that when she wandered into the realm of fancy she must go alone. The way to it was by an enchanted path where not even her dearest might follow her.

A thunder-shower came up while the girls were at Carmody; it did not last long, however, and the drive home, through lanes where the raindrops sparkled on the boughs and little leafy valleys where the drenched ferns gave out spicy odors, was delightful. But just as they turned into the

Cuthbert lane Anne saw something that spoiled the beauty of the landscape for her.

Before them on the right extended Mr. Harrison's broad, gray-green field of late oats, wet and luxuriant; and there, standing squarely in the middle of it, up to her sleek sides in the lush growth, and blinking at them calmly over the intervening tassels, was a Jersey cow!

Anne dropped the reins and stood up with a tightening of the lips that boded no good to the predatory quadruped. Not a word said she, but she climbed nimbly down over the wheels, and whisked across the fence before Diana understood what had happened.

"Anne, come back," shrieked the latter, as soon as she found her voice. "You'll ruin your dress in that wet grain ... ruin it. She doesn't hear me! Well, she'll never get that cow out by herself. I must go and help her, of course."

Anne was charging through the grain like a mad thing. Diana hopped briskly down, tied the horse securely to a post, turned the skirt of her pretty gingham dress over her shoulders, mounted the fence, and started in pursuit of her frantic friend. She could run faster than Anne, who was hampered by her clinging and drenched skirt, and soon overtook her. Behind them they left a trail that would break Mr. Harrison's heart when he should see it.

"Anne, for mercy's sake, stop," panted poor Diana. "I'm right out of breath and you are wet to the skin."

"I must ... get ... that cow ... out ... before ... Mr. Harrison ... sees her," gasped Anne. "I don't ... care ... if I'm ... drowned ... if we ... can ... only ... do that."

But the Jersey cow appeared to see no good reason for being hustled out of her luscious browsing ground. No sooner had the two breathless girls got near her than she turned and bolted squarely for the opposite corner of the field.

“Head her off,” screamed Anne. “Run, Diana, run.”

Diana did run. Anne tried to, and the wicked Jersey went around the field as if she were possessed. Privately, Diana thought she was. It was fully ten minutes before they headed her off and drove her through the corner gap into the Cuthbert lane.

There is no denying that Anne was in anything but an angelic temper at that precise moment. Nor did it soothe her in the least to behold a buggy halted just outside the lane, wherein sat Mr. Shearer of Carmody and his son, both of whom wore a broad smile.

“I guess you’d better have sold me that cow when I wanted to buy her last week, Anne,” chuckled Mr. Shearer.

“I’ll sell her to you now, if you want her,” said her flushed and disheveled owner. “You may have her this very minute.”

“Done. I’ll give you twenty for her as I offered before, and Jim here can drive her right over to Carmody. She’ll go to town with the rest of the shipment this evening. Mr. Reed of Brighton wants a Jersey cow.”

Five minutes later Jim Shearer and the Jersey cow were marching up the road, and impulsive Anne was driving along the Green Gables lane with her twenty dollars.

“What will Marilla say?” asked Diana.

“Oh, she won’t care. Dolly was my own cow and it isn’t likely she’d bring more than twenty dollars at the auction. But oh dear, if Mr. Harrison sees that grain he will know she has been in again, and after my giving him my word of honor that I’d never let it happen! Well, it has taught me a lesson not to give my word of honor about cows. A cow that could jump over or break through our milk-pen fence couldn’t be trusted anywhere.”

Marilla had gone down to Mrs. Lynde’s, and when she returned knew all about Dolly’s sale and transfer, for Mrs. Lynde had seen most of the transaction from her window and guessed the rest.

“I suppose it’s just as well she’s gone, though you DO do things in a dreadful headlong fashion, Anne. I don’t see how she got out of the pen, though. She must have broken some of the boards off.”

“I didn’t think of looking,” said Anne, “but I’ll go and see now. Martin has never come back yet. Perhaps some more of his aunts have died. I think it’s something like Mr. Peter Sloane and the octogenarians. The other evening Mrs. Sloane was reading a newspaper and she said to Mr. Sloane, ‘I see here that another octogenarian has just died. What is an octogenarian, Peter?’ And Mr. Sloane said he didn’t know, but they must be very sickly creatures, for you never heard tell of them but they were dying. That’s the way with Martin’s aunts.”

“Martin’s just like all the rest of those French,” said Marilla in disgust. “You can’t depend on them for a day.” Marilla was looking over Anne’s Carmody purchases when she heard a shrill shriek in the barnyard. A minute later Anne dashed into the kitchen, wringing her hands.

“Anne Shirley, what’s the matter now?”

“Oh, Marilla, whatever shall I do? This is terrible. And it’s all my fault. Oh, will I EVER learn to stop and reflect a little before doing reckless things? Mrs. Lynde always told me I would do something dreadful some day, and now I’ve done it!”

“Anne, you are the most exasperating girl! WHAT is it you’ve done?”

“Sold Mr. Harrison’s Jersey cow ... the one he bought from Mr. Bell ... to Mr. Shearer! Dolly is out in the milking pen this very minute.”

“Anne Shirley, are you dreaming?”

“I only wish I were. There’s no dream about it, though it’s very like a nightmare. And Mr. Harrison’s cow is in Charlottetown by this time. Oh, Marilla, I thought I’d finished getting into scrapes, and here I am in the very worst one I ever was in in my life. What can I do?”

“Do? There’s nothing to do, child, except go and see Mr. Harrison about it. We can offer him our Jersey in exchange if he doesn’t want to take the money. She is just as good as his.”

“I’m sure he’ll be awfully cross and disagreeable about it, though,” moaned Anne.

“I daresay he will. He seems to be an irritable sort of a man. I’ll go and explain to him if you like.”

“No, indeed, I’m not as mean as that,” exclaimed Anne. “This is all my fault and I’m certainly not going to let you take my punishment. I’ll go myself and I’ll go at once. The sooner it’s over the better, for it will be terribly humiliating.”

Poor Anne got her hat and her twenty dollars and was passing out when she happened to glance through the open pantry door. On the table reposed a nut cake which she had baked that morning ... a particularly toothsome concoction iced with pink icing and adorned with walnuts. Anne had intended it for Friday evening, when the youth of Avonlea were to meet at Green Gables to organize the Improvement Society. But what were they compared to the justly offended Mr. Harrison? Anne thought that cake ought to soften the heart of any man, especially one who had to do his own cooking, and she promptly popped it into a box. She would take it to Mr. Harrison as a peace offering.

“That is, if he gives me a chance to say anything at all,” she thought ruefully, as she climbed the lane fence and started on a short cut across the fields, golden in the light of the dreamy August evening. “I know now just how people feel who are being led to execution.”

II I

Mr. Harrison at Home

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Mr. Harrison's house was an old-fashioned, low-eaved, whitewashed structure, set against a thick spruce grove.

Mr. Harrison himself was sitting on his vineshaded veranda, in his shirt sleeves, enjoying his evening pipe. When he realized who was coming up the path he sprang suddenly to his feet, bolted into the house, and shut the door. This was merely the uncomfortable result of his surprise, mingled with a good deal of shame over his outburst of temper the day before. But it nearly swept the remnant of her courage from Anne's heart.

"If he's so cross now what will he be when he hears what I've done," she reflected miserably, as she rapped at the door.

But Mr. Harrison opened it, smiling sheepishly, and invited her to enter in a tone quite mild and friendly, if somewhat nervous. He had laid aside his pipe and donned his coat; he offered Anne a very dusty chair very politely, and her reception would have passed off pleasantly enough if it had not been for the telltale of a parrot who was peering through the bars of his cage with wicked golden eyes. No sooner had Anne seated herself than Ginger exclaimed,

"Bless my soul, what's that redheaded snippet coming here for?"

It would be hard to say whose face was the redder, Mr. Harrison's or Anne's.

"Don't you mind that parrot," said Mr. Harrison, casting a furious glance at Ginger. "He's ... he's always talking nonsense. I got him from my brother who was a sailor. Sailors don't always use the choicest language, and parrots are very imitative birds."

"So I should think," said poor Anne, the remembrance of her errand quelling her resentment. She couldn't afford to snub Mr. Harrison under the circumstances, that was certain. When you had just sold a man's Jersey cow offhand, without his knowledge or consent you must not mind if his parrot repeated uncomplimentary things. Nevertheless, the "redheaded snippet" was not quite so meek as she might otherwise have been.

“I’ve come to confess something to you, Mr. Harrison,” she said resolutely. “It’s ... it’s about ... that Jersey cow.”

“Bless my soul,” exclaimed Mr. Harrison nervously, “has she gone and broken into my oats again? Well, never mind ... never mind if she has. It’s no difference ... none at all, I ... I was too hasty yesterday, that’s a fact. Never mind if she has.”

“Oh, if it were only that,” sighed Anne. “But it’s ten times worse. I don’t ...”

“Bless my soul, do you mean to say she’s got into my wheat?”

“No ... no ... not the wheat. But ...”

“Then it’s the cabbages! She’s broken into my cabbages that I was raising for Exhibition, hey?”

“It’s NOT the cabbages, Mr. Harrison. I’ll tell you everything ... that is what I came for — but please don’t interrupt me. It makes me so nervous. Just let me tell my story and don’t say anything till I get through — and then no doubt you’ll say plenty,” Anne concluded, but in thought only.

“I won’t say another word,” said Mr. Harrison, and he didn’t. But Ginger was not bound by any contract of silence and kept ejaculating, “Redheaded snippet” at intervals until Anne felt quite wild.

“I shut my Jersey cow up in our pen yesterday. This morning I went to Carmody and when I came back I saw a Jersey cow in your oats. Diana and I chased her out and you can’t imagine what a hard time we had. I was so dreadfully wet and tired and vexed — and Mr. Shearer came by that very minute and offered to buy the cow. I sold her to him on the spot for twenty dollars. It was wrong of me. I should have waited and consulted Marilla, of course. But I’m dreadfully given to doing things without thinking — everybody who knows me will tell you that. Mr. Shearer took the cow right away to ship her on the afternoon train.”

“Redheaded snippet,” quoted Ginger in a tone of profound contempt.

At this point Mr. Harrison arose and, with an expression that would have struck terror into any bird but a parrot, carried Ginger's cage into an adjoining room and shut the door. Ginger shrieked, swore, and otherwise conducted himself in keeping with his reputation, but finding himself left alone, relapsed into sulky silence.

"Excuse me and go on," said Mr. Harrison, sitting down again. "My brother the sailor never taught that bird any manners."

"I went home and after tea I went out to the milking pen. Mr. Harrison," ... Anne leaned forward, clasping her hands with her old childish gesture, while her big gray eyes gazed imploringly into Mr. Harrison's embarrassed face ... "I found my cow still shut up in the pen. It was YOUR cow I had sold to Mr. Shearer."

"Bless my soul," exclaimed Mr. Harrison, in blank amazement at this unlooked-for conclusion. "What a VERY extraordinary thing!"

"Oh, it isn't in the least extraordinary that I should be getting myself and other people into scrapes," said Anne mournfully. "I'm noted for that. You might suppose I'd have grown out of it by this time ... I'll be seventeen next March ... but it seems that I haven't. Mr. Harrison, is it too much to hope that you'll forgive me? I'm afraid it's too late to get your cow back, but here is the money for her ... or you can have mine in exchange if you'd rather. She's a very good cow. And I can't express how sorry I am for it all."

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Harrison briskly, "don't say another word about it, miss. It's of no consequence ... no consequence whatever. Accidents will happen. I'm too hasty myself sometimes, miss ... far too hasty. But I can't help speaking out just what I think and folks must take me as they find me. If that cow had been in my cabbages now ... but never mind, she wasn't, so it's all right. I think I'd rather have your cow in exchange, since you want to be rid of her."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Harrison. I'm so glad you are not vexed. I was afraid you would be."

“And I suppose you were scared to death to come here and tell me, after the fuss I made yesterday, hey? But you mustn’t mind me, I’m a terrible outspoken old fellow, that’s all ... awful apt to tell the truth, no matter if it is a bit plain.”

“So is Mrs. Lynde,” said Anne, before she could prevent herself.

“Who? Mrs. Lynde? Don’t you tell me I’m like that old gossip,” said Mr. Harrison irritably. “I’m not ... not a bit. What have you got in that box?”

“A cake,” said Anne archly. In her relief at Mr. Harrison’s unexpected amiability her spirits soared upward feather-light. “I brought it over for you ... I thought perhaps you didn’t have cake very often.”

“I don’t, that’s a fact, and I’m mighty fond of it, too. I’m much obliged to you. It looks good on top. I hope it’s good all the way through.”

“It is,” said Anne, gaily confident. “I have made cakes in my time that were NOT, as Mrs. Allan could tell you, but this one is all right. I made it for the Improvement Society, but I can make another for them.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what, miss, you must help me eat it. I’ll put the kettle on and we’ll have a cup of tea. How will that do?”

“Will you let me make the tea?” said Anne dubiously.

Mr. Harrison chuckled.

“I see you haven’t much confidence in my ability to make tea. You’re wrong ... I can brew up as good a jorum of tea as you ever drank. But go ahead yourself. Fortunately it rained last Sunday, so there’s plenty of clean dishes.”

Anne hopped briskly up and went to work. She washed the teapot in several waters before she put the tea to steep. Then she swept the stove and set the table, bringing the dishes out of the pantry. The state of that pantry horrified Anne, but she wisely said nothing. Mr. Harrison told her where to find the bread and butter and a can of peaches. Anne adorned the table

with a bouquet from the garden and shut her eyes to the stains on the tablecloth. Soon the tea was ready and Anne found herself sitting opposite Mr. Harrison at his own table, pouring his tea for him, and chatting freely to him about her school and friends and plans. She could hardly believe the evidence of her senses.

Mr. Harrison had brought Ginger back, averring that the poor bird would be lonesome; and Anne, feeling that she could forgive everybody and everything, offered him a walnut. But Ginger's feelings had been grievously hurt and he rejected all overtures of friendship. He sat moodily on his perch and ruffled his feathers up until he looked like a mere ball of green and gold.

"Why do you call him Ginger?" asked Anne, who liked appropriate names and thought Ginger accorded not at all with such gorgeous plumage.

"My brother the sailor named him. Maybe it had some reference to his temper. I think a lot of that bird though ... you'd be surprised if you knew how much. He has his faults of course. That bird has cost me a good deal one way and another. Some people object to his swearing habits but he can't be broken of them. I've tried ... other people have tried. Some folks have prejudices against parrots. Silly, ain't it? I like them myself. Ginger's a lot of company to me. Nothing would induce me to give that bird up ... nothing in the world, miss."

Mr. Harrison flung the last sentence at Anne as explosively as if he suspected her of some latent design of persuading him to give Ginger up. Anne, however, was beginning to like the queer, fussy, fidgety little man, and before the meal was over they were quite good friends. Mr. Harrison found out about the Improvement Society and was disposed to approve of it.

"That's right. Go ahead. There's lots of room for improvement in this settlement ... and in the people too."

"Oh, I don't know," flashed Anne. To herself, or to her particular cronies, she might admit that there were some small imperfections, easily removable, in Avonlea and its inhabitants. But to hear a practical outsider

like Mr. Harrison saying it was an entirely different thing. “I think Avonlea is a lovely place; and the people in it are very nice, too.”

“I guess you’ve got a spice of temper,” commented Mr. Harrison, surveying the flushed cheeks and indignant eyes opposite him. “It goes with hair like yours, I reckon. Avonlea is a pretty decent place or I wouldn’t have located here; but I suppose even you will admit that it has SOME faults?”

“I like it all the better for them,” said loyal Anne. “I don’t like places or people either that haven’t any faults. I think a truly perfect person would be very uninteresting. Mrs. Milton White says she never met a perfect person, but she’s heard enough about one ... her husband’s first wife. Don’t you think it must be very uncomfortable to be married to a man whose first wife was perfect?”

“It would be more uncomfortable to be married to the perfect wife,” declared Mr. Harrison, with a sudden and inexplicable warmth.

When tea was over Anne insisted on washing the dishes, although Mr. Harrison assured her that there were enough in the house to do for weeks yet. She would dearly have loved to sweep the floor also, but no broom was visible and she did not like to ask where it was for fear there wasn’t one at all.

“You might run across and talk to me once in a while,” suggested Mr. Harrison when she was leaving. “‘Tisn’t far and folks ought to be neighborly. I’m kind of interested in that society of yours. Seems to me there’ll be some fun in it. Who are you going to tackle first?”

“We are not going to meddle with PEOPLE ... it is only PLACES we mean to improve,” said Anne, in a dignified tone. She rather suspected that Mr. Harrison was making fun of the project.

When she had gone Mr. Harrison watched her from the window ... a lithe, girlish shape, tripping lightheartedly across the fields in the sunset afterglow.

“I’m a crusty, lonesome, crabbed old chap,” he said aloud, “but there’s something about that little girl makes me feel young again ... and it’s such a pleasant sensation I’d like to have it repeated once in a while.”

“Redheaded snippet,” croaked Ginger mockingly.

Mr. Harrison shook his fist at the parrot.

“You ornery bird,” he muttered, “I almost wish I’d wrung your neck when my brother the sailor brought you home. Will you never be done getting me into trouble?”

Anne ran home blithely and recounted her adventures to Marilla, who had been not a little alarmed by her long absence and was on the point of starting out to look for her.

“It’s a pretty good world, after all, isn’t it, Marilla?” concluded Anne happily. “Mrs. Lynde was complaining the other day that it wasn’t much of a world. She said whenever you looked forward to anything pleasant you were sure to be more or less disappointed ... perhaps that is true. But there is a good side to it too. The bad things don’t always come up to your expectations either ... they nearly always turn out ever so much better than you think. I looked forward to a dreadfully unpleasant experience when I went over to Mr. Harrison’s tonight; and instead he was quite kind and I had almost a nice time. I think we’re going to be real good friends if we make plenty of allowances for each other, and everything has turned out for the best. But all the same, Marilla, I shall certainly never again sell a cow before making sure to whom she belongs. And I do NOT like parrots!”

IV

Different Opinions

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One evening at sunset, Jane Andrews, Gilbert Blythe, and Anne Shirley were lingering by a fence in the shadow of gently swaying spruce boughs, where a wood cut known as the Birch Path joined the main road. Jane had been up to spend the afternoon with Anne, who walked part of the way home with her; at the fence they met Gilbert, and all three were now talking about the fateful morrow; for that morrow was the first of September and the schools would open. Jane would go to Newbridge and Gilbert to White Sands.

“You both have the advantage of me,” sighed Anne. “You’re going to teach children who don’t know you, but I have to teach my own old schoolmates, and Mrs. Lynde says she’s afraid they won’t respect me as they would a stranger unless I’m very cross from the first. But I don’t believe a teacher should be cross. Oh, it seems to me such a responsibility!”

“I guess we’ll get on all right,” said Jane comfortably. Jane was not troubled by any aspirations to be an influence for good. She meant to earn her salary fairly, please the trustees, and get her name on the School Inspector’s roll of honor. Further ambitions Jane had none. “The main thing will be to keep order and a teacher has to be a little cross to do that. If my pupils won’t do as I tell them I shall punish them.”

“How?”

“Give them a good whipping, of course.”

“Oh, Jane, you wouldn’t,” cried Anne, shocked. “Jane, you COULDN’T!”

“Indeed, I could and would, if they deserved it,” said Jane decidedly.

“I could NEVER whip a child,” said Anne with equal decision. “I don’t believe in it AT ALL. Miss Stacy never whipped any of us and she had perfect order; and Mr. Phillips was always whipping and he had no order at all. No, if I can’t get along without whipping I shall not try to teach school. There are better ways of managing. I shall try to win my pupils’ affections and then they will WANT to do what I tell them.”

“But suppose they don’t?” said practical Jane.

“I wouldn’t whip them anyhow. I’m sure it wouldn’t do any good. Oh, don’t whip your pupils, Jane dear, no matter what they do.”

“What do you think about it, Gilbert?” demanded Jane. “Don’t you think there are some children who really need a whipping now and then?”

“Don’t you think it’s a cruel, barbarous thing to whip a child ... ANY child?” exclaimed Anne, her face flushing with earnestness.

“Well,” said Gilbert slowly, torn between his real convictions and his wish to measure up to Anne’s ideal, “there’s something to be said on both sides. I don’t believe in whipping children MUCH. I think, as you say, Anne, that there are better ways of managing as a rule, and that corporal punishment should be a last resort. But on the other hand, as Jane says, I believe there is an occasional child who can’t be influenced in any other way and who, in short, needs a whipping and would be improved by it. Corporal punishment as a last resort is to be my rule.”

Gilbert, having tried to please both sides, succeeded, as is usual and eminently right, in pleasing neither. Jane tossed her head.

“I’ll whip my pupils when they’re naughty. It’s the shortest and easiest way of convincing them.”

Anne gave Gilbert a disappointed glance.

“I shall never whip a child,” she repeated firmly. “I feel sure it isn’t either right or necessary.”

“Suppose a boy sauced you back when you told him to do something?” said Jane.

“I’d keep him in after school and talk kindly and firmly to him,” said Anne. “There is some good in every person if you can find it. It is a teacher’s duty to find and develop it. That is what our School Management professor at Queen’s told us, you know. Do you suppose you could find any good in a child by whipping him? It’s far more important to influence the

children aright than it is even to teach them the three R's, Professor Rennie says."

"But the Inspector examines them in the three R's, mind you, and he won't give you a good report if they don't come up to his standard," protested Jane.

"I'd rather have my pupils love me and look back to me in after years as a real helper than be on the roll of honor," asserted Anne decidedly.

"Wouldn't you punish children at all, when they misbehaved?" asked Gilbert.

"Oh, yes, I suppose I shall have to, although I know I'll hate to do it. But you can keep them in at recess or stand them on the floor or give them lines to write."

"I suppose you won't punish the girls by making them sit with the boys?" said Jane slyly.

Gilbert and Anne looked at each other and smiled rather foolishly. Once upon a time, Anne had been made to sit with Gilbert for punishment and sad and bitter had been the consequences thereof.

"Well, time will tell which is the best way," said Jane philosophically as they parted.

Anne went back to Green Gables by way of Birch Path, shadowy, rustling, fern-scented, through Violet Vale and past Willowmere, where dark and light kissed each other under the firs, and down through Lover's Lane ... spots she and Diana had so named long ago. She walked slowly, enjoying the sweetness of wood and field and the starry summer twilight, and thinking soberly about the new duties she was to take up on the morrow. When she reached the yard at Green Gables Mrs. Lynde's loud, decided tones floated out through the open kitchen window.

"Mrs. Lynde has come up to give me good advice about tomorrow," thought Anne with a grimace, "but I don't believe I'll go in. Her advice is

much like pepper, I think ... excellent in small quantities but rather scorching in her doses. I'll run over and have a chat with Mr. Harrison instead."

This was not the first time Anne had run over and chatted with Mr. Harrison since the notable affair of the Jersey cow. She had been there several evenings and Mr. Harrison and she were very good friends, although there were times and seasons when Anne found the outspokenness on which he prided himself rather trying. Ginger still continued to regard her with suspicion, and never failed to greet her sarcastically as "redheaded snippit." Mr. Harrison had tried vainly to break him of the habit by jumping excitedly up whenever he saw Anne coming and exclaiming,

"Bless my soul, here's that pretty little girl again," or something equally flattering. But Ginger saw through the scheme and scorned it. Anne was never to know how many compliments Mr. Harrison paid her behind her back. He certainly never paid her any to her face.

"Well, I suppose you've been back in the woods laying in a supply of switches for tomorrow?" was his greeting as Anne came up the veranda steps.

"No, indeed," said Anne indignantly. She was an excellent target for teasing because she always took things so seriously. "I shall never have a switch in my school, Mr. Harrison. Of course, I shall have to have a pointer, but I shall use it for pointing ONLY."

"So you mean to strap them instead? Well, I don't know but you're right. A switch stings more at the time but the strap smarts longer, that's a fact."

"I shall not use anything of the sort. I'm not going to whip my pupils."

"Bless my soul," exclaimed Mr. Harrison in genuine astonishment, "how do you lay out to keep order then?"

"I shall govern by affection, Mr. Harrison."

“It won’t do,” said Mr. Harrison, “won’t do at all, Anne. ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child.’ When I went to school the master whipped me regular every day because he said if I wasn’t in mischief just then I was plotting it.”

“Methods have changed since your schooldays, Mr. Harrison.”

“But human nature hasn’t. Mark my words, you’ll never manage the young fry unless you keep a rod in pickle for them. The thing is impossible.”

“Well, I’m going to try my way first,” said Anne, who had a fairly strong will of her own and was apt to cling very tenaciously to her theories.

“You’re pretty stubborn, I reckon,” was Mr. Harrison’s way of putting it. “Well, well, we’ll see. Someday when you get riled up ... and people with hair like yours are desperate apt to get riled ... you’ll forget all your pretty little notions and give some of them a whaling. You’re too young to be teaching anyhow ... far too young and childish.”

Altogether, Anne went to bed that night in a rather pessimistic mood. She slept poorly and was so pale and tragic at breakfast next morning that Marilla was alarmed and insisted on making her take a cup of scorching ginger tea. Anne sipped it patiently, although she could not imagine what good ginger tea would do. Had it been some magic brew, potent to confer age and experience, Anne would have swallowed a quart of it without flinching.

“Marilla, what if I fail!”

“You’ll hardly fail completely in one day and there’s plenty more days coming,” said Marilla. “The trouble with you, Anne, is that you’ll expect to teach those children everything and reform all their faults right off, and if you can’t you’ll think you’ve failed.”

V

A Full-fledged Schoolma'am

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When Anne reached the school that morning ... for the first time in her life she had traversed the Birch Path deaf and blind to its beauties ... all was quiet and still. The preceding teacher had trained the children to be in their places at her arrival, and when Anne entered the schoolroom she was confronted by prim rows of “shining morning faces” and bright, inquisitive eyes. She hung up her hat and faced her pupils, hoping that she did not look as frightened and foolish as she felt and that they would not perceive how she was trembling.

She had sat up until nearly twelve the preceding night composing a speech she meant to make to her pupils upon opening the school. She had revised and improved it painstakingly, and then she had learned it off by heart. It was a very good speech and had some very fine ideas in it, especially about mutual help and earnest striving after knowledge. The only trouble was that she could not now remember a word of it.

After what seemed to her a year ... about ten seconds in reality ... she said faintly, “Take your Testaments, please,” and sank breathlessly into her chair under cover of the rustle and clatter of desk lids that followed. While the children read their verses Anne marshalled her shaky wits into order and looked over the array of little pilgrims to the Grownup Land.

Most of them were, of course, quite well known to her. Her own classmates had passed out in the preceding year but the rest had all gone to school with her, excepting the primer class and ten newcomers to Avonlea. Anne secretly felt more interest in these ten than in those whose possibilities were already fairly well mapped out to her. To be sure, they might be just as commonplace as the rest; but on the other hand there MIGHT be a genius among them. It was a thrilling idea.

Sitting by himself at a corner desk was Anthony Pye. He had a dark, sullen little face, and was staring at Anne with a hostile expression in his black eyes. Anne instantly made up her mind that she would win that boy's affection and discomfit the Pyes utterly.

In the other corner another strange boy was sitting with Arty Sloane... a jolly looking little chap, with a snub nose, freckled face, and big, light blue eyes, fringed with whitish lashes ... probably the DonNELL boy; and if resemblance went for anything, his sister was sitting across the aisle with Mary Bell. Anne wondered what sort of mother the child had, to send her to school dressed as she was. She wore a faded pink silk dress, trimmed with a great deal of cotton lace, soiled white kid slippers, and silk stockings. Her sandy hair was tortured into innumerable kinky and unnatural curls, surmounted by a flamboyant bow of pink ribbon bigger than her head. Judging from her expression she was very well satisfied with herself.

A pale little thing, with smooth ripples of fine, silky, fawn-colored hair flowing over her shoulders, must, Anne thought, be Annetta Bell, whose parents had formerly lived in the Newbridge school district, but, by reason of hauling their house fifty yards north of its old site were now in Avonlea. Three pallid little girls crowded into one seat were certainly Cottons; and there was no doubt that the small beauty with the long brown curls and hazel eyes, who was casting coquettish looks at Jack Gills over the edge of her Testament, was Prillie Rogerson, whose father had recently married a second wife and brought Prillie home from her grandmother's in Grafton. A tall, awkward girl in a back seat, who seemed to have too many feet and hands, Anne could not place at all, but later on discovered that her name was Barbara Shaw and that she had come to live with an Avonlea aunt. She was also to find that if Barbara ever managed to walk down the aisle without falling over her own or somebody else's feet the Avonlea scholars wrote the unusual fact up on the porch wall to commemorate it.

But when Anne's eyes met those of the boy at the front desk facing her own, a queer little thrill went over her, as if she had found her genius. She knew this must be Paul Irving and that Mrs. Rachel Lynde had been right for once when she prophesied that he would be unlike the Avonlea

children. More than that, Anne realized that he was unlike other children anywhere, and that there was a soul subtly akin to her own gazing at her out of the very dark blue eyes that were watching her so intently.

She knew Paul was ten but he looked no more than eight. He had the most beautiful little face she had ever seen in a child ... features of exquisite delicacy and refinement, framed in a halo of chestnut curls. His mouth was delicious, being full without pouting, the crimson lips just softly touching and curving into finely finished little corners that narrowly escaped being dimpled. He had a sober, grave, meditative expression, as if his spirit was much older than his body; but when Anne smiled softly at him it vanished in a sudden answering smile, which seemed an illumination of his whole being, as if some lamp had suddenly kindled into flame inside of him, irradiating him from top to toe. Best of all, it was involuntary, born of no external effort or motive, but simply the outflashing of a hidden personality, rare and fine and sweet. With a quick interchange of smiles Anne and Paul were fast friends forever before a word had passed between them.

The day went by like a dream. Anne could never clearly recall it afterwards. It almost seemed as if it were not she who was teaching but somebody else. She heard classes and worked sums and set copies mechanically. The children behaved quite well; only two cases of discipline occurred. Morley Andrews was caught driving a pair of trained crickets in the aisle. Anne stood Morley on the platform for an hour and ... which Morley felt much more keenly ... confiscated his crickets. She put them in a box and on the way from school set them free in Violet Vale; but Morley believed, then and ever afterwards, that she took them home and kept them for her own amusement.

The other culprit was Anthony Pye, who poured the last drops of water from his slate bottle down the back of Aurelia Clay's neck. Anne kept Anthony in at recess and talked to him about what was expected of gentlemen, admonishing him that they never poured water down ladies' necks. She wanted all her boys to be gentlemen, she said. Her little lecture was quite kind and touching; but unfortunately Anthony remained absolutely untouched. He listened to her in silence, with the same sullen

expression, and whistled scornfully as he went out. Anne sighed; and then cheered herself up by remembering that winning a Pye's affections, like the building of Rome, wasn't the work of a day. In fact, it was doubtful whether some of the Pyes had any affections to win; but Anne hoped better things of Anthony, who looked as if he might be a rather nice boy if one ever got behind his sullenness.

When school was dismissed and the children had gone Anne dropped wearily into her chair. Her head ached and she felt woefully discouraged. There was no real reason for discouragement, since nothing very dreadful had occurred; but Anne was very tired and inclined to believe that she would never learn to like teaching. And how terrible it would be to be doing something you didn't like every day for ... well, say forty years. Anne was of two minds whether to have her cry out then and there, or wait till she was safely in her own white room at home. Before she could decide there was a click of heels and a silken swish on the porch floor, and Anne found herself confronted by a lady whose appearance made her recall a recent criticism of Mr. Harrison's on an overdressed female he had seen in a Charlottetown store. "She looked like a head-on collision between a fashion plate and a nightmare."

The newcomer was gorgeously arrayed in a pale blue summer silk, puffed, frilled, and shirred wherever puff, frill, or shirring could possibly be placed. Her head was surmounted by a huge white chiffon hat, bedecked with three long but rather stringy ostrich feathers. A veil of pink chiffon, lavishly sprinkled with huge black dots, hung like a flounce from the hat brim to her shoulders and floated off in two airy streamers behind her. She wore all the jewelry that could be crowded on one small woman, and a very strong odor of perfume attended her.

"I am Mrs. DonNELL ... Mrs. H. B. DonNELL," announced this vision, "and I have come in to see you about something Clarice Almira told me when she came home to dinner today. It annoyed me EXCESSIVELY."

"I'm sorry," faltered Anne, vainly trying to recollect any incident of the morning connected with the Donnell children.

“Clarice Almira told me that you pronounced our name DONnell. Now, Miss Shirley, the correct pronunciation of our name is DonNELL ... accent on the last syllable. I hope you’ll remember this in future.”

“I’ll try to,” gasped Anne, choking back a wild desire to laugh. “I know by experience that it’s very unpleasant to have one’s name SPELLED wrong and I suppose it must be even worse to have it pronounced wrong.”

“Certainly it is. And Clarice Almira also informed me that you call my son Jacob.”

“He told me his name was Jacob,” protested Anne.

“I might well have expected that,” said Mrs. H. B. Donnell, in a tone which implied that gratitude in children was not to be looked for in this degenerate age. “That boy has such plebeian tastes, Miss Shirley. When he was born I wanted to call him St. Clair ... it sounds SO aristocratic, doesn’t it? But his father insisted he should be called Jacob after his uncle. I yielded, because Uncle Jacob was a rich old bachelor. And what do you think, Miss Shirley? When our innocent boy was five years old Uncle Jacob actually went and got married and now he has three boys of his own. Did you ever hear of such ingratitude? The moment the invitation to the wedding ... for he had the impertinence to send us an invitation, Miss Shirley ... came to the house I said, ‘No more Jacobs for me, thank you.’ From that day I called my son St. Clair and St. Clair I am determined he shall be called. His father obstinately continues to call him Jacob, and the boy himself has a perfectly unaccountable preference for the vulgar name. But St. Clair he is and St. Clair he shall remain. You will kindly remember this, Miss Shirley, will you not? THANK you. I told Clarice Almira that I was sure it was only a misunderstanding and that a word would set it right. Donnell... accent on the last syllable ... and St. Clair ... on no account Jacob. You’ll remember? THANK you.”

When Mrs. H. B. DonNELL had skimmed away Anne locked the school door and went home. At the foot of the hill she found Paul Irving by the Birch Path. He held out to her a cluster of the dainty little wild orchids which Avonlea children called “rice lillies.”

“Please, teacher, I found these in Mr. Wright’s field,” he said shyly, “and I came back to give them to you because I thought you were the kind of lady that would like them, and because ...” he lifted his big beautiful eyes ... “I like you, teacher.”

“You darling,” said Anne, taking the fragrant spikes. As if Paul’s words had been a spell of magic, discouragement and weariness passed from her spirit, and hope upwelled in her heart like a dancing fountain. She went through the Birch Path light-footedly, attended by the sweetness of her orchids as by a benediction.

“Well, how did you get along?” Marilla wanted to know.

“Ask me that a month later and I may be able to tell you. I can’t now ... I don’t know myself ... I’m too near it. My thoughts feel as if they had been all stirred up until they were thick and muddy. The only thing I feel really sure of having accomplished today is that I taught Cliffie Wright that A is A. He never knew it before. Isn’t it something to have started a soul along a path that may end in Shakespeare and Paradise Lost?”

Mrs. Lynde came up later on with more encouragement. That good lady had waylaid the schoolchildren at her gate and demanded of them how they liked their new teacher.

“And every one of them said they liked you splendid, Anne, except Anthony Pye. I must admit he didn’t. He said you ‘weren’t any good, just like all girl teachers.’ There’s the Pye leaven for you. But never mind.”

“I’m not going to mind,” said Anne quietly, “and I’m going to make Anthony Pye like me yet. Patience and kindness will surely win him.”

“Well, you can never tell about a Pye,” said Mrs. Rachel cautiously. “They go by contraries, like dreams, often as not. As for that DonNELL woman, she’ll get no DonNELLing from me, I can assure you. The name is DONnell and always has been. The woman is crazy, that’s what. She has a pug dog she calls Queenie and it has its meals at the table along with the family, eating off a china plate. I’d be afraid of a judgment if I was her.

Thomas says Donnell himself is a sensible, hardworking man, but he hadn't much gumption when he picked out a wife, that's what."

VI

All Sorts and Conditions of Men ... and women

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A September day on Prince Edward Island hills; a crisp wind blowing up over the sand dunes from the sea; a long red road, winding through fields and woods, now looping itself about a corner of thick set spruces, now threading a plantation of young maples with great feathery sheets of ferns beneath them, now dipping down into a hollow where a brook flashed out of the woods and into them again, now basking in open sunshine between ribbons of goldenrod and smoke-blue asters; air athrill with the pipings of myriads of crickets, those glad little pensioners of the summer hills; a plump brown pony ambling along the road; two girls behind him, full to the lips with the simple, priceless joy of youth and life.

"Oh, this is a day left over from Eden, isn't it, Diana?" ... and Anne sighed for sheer happiness. "The air has magic in it. Look at the purple in the cup of the harvest valley, Diana. And oh, do smell the dying fir! It's coming up from that little sunny hollow where Mr. Eben Wright has been cutting fence poles. Bliss is it on such a day to be alive; but to smell dying fir is very heaven. That's two thirds Wordsworth and one third Anne Shirley. It doesn't seem possible that there should be dying fir in heaven, does it? And yet it doesn't seem to me that heaven would be quite perfect if you couldn't get a whiff of dead fir as you went through its woods. Perhaps we'll have the odor there without the death. Yes, I think that will be the way. That delicious aroma must be the souls of the firs ... and of course it will be just souls in heaven."

"Trees haven't souls," said practical Diana, "but the smell of dead fir is certainly lovely. I'm going to make a cushion and fill it with fir needles. You'd better make one too, Anne."

“I think I shall ... and use it for my naps. I’d be certain to dream I was a dryad or a woodnymph then. But just this minute I’m well content to be Anne Shirley, Avonlea schoolma’am, driving over a road like this on such a sweet, friendly day.”

“It’s a lovely day but we have anything but a lovely task before us,” sighed Diana. “Why on earth did you offer to canvass this road, Anne? Almost all the cranks in Avonlea live along it, and we’ll probably be treated as if we were begging for ourselves. It’s the very worst road of all.”

“That is why I chose it. Of course Gilbert and Fred would have taken this road if we had asked them. But you see, Diana, I feel myself responsible for the A.V.I.S., since I was the first to suggest it, and it seems to me that I ought to do the most disagreeable things. I’m sorry on your account; but you needn’t say a word at the cranky places. I’ll do all the talking ... Mrs. Lynde would say I was well able to. Mrs. Lynde doesn’t know whether to approve of our enterprise or not. She inclines to, when she remembers that Mr. and Mrs. Allan are in favor of it; but the fact that village improvement societies first originated in the States is a count against it. So she is halting between two opinions and only success will justify us in Mrs. Lynde’s eyes. Priscilla is going to write a paper for our next Improvement meeting, and I expect it will be good, for her aunt is such a clever writer and no doubt it runs in the family. I shall never forget the thrill it gave me when I found out that Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan was Priscilla’s aunt. It seemed so wonderful that I was a friend of the girl whose aunt wrote ‘Edgewood Days’ and ‘The Rosebud Garden.’”

“Where does Mrs. Morgan live?”

“In Toronto. And Priscilla says she is coming to the Island for a visit next summer, and if it is possible Priscilla is going to arrange to have us meet her. That seems almost too good to be true — but it’s something pleasant to imagine after you go to bed.”

The Avonlea Village Improvement Society was an organized fact. Gilbert Blythe was president, Fred Wright vice-president, Anne Shirley secretary, and Diana Barry treasurer. The “Improvers,” as they were promptly christened, were to meet once a fortnight at the homes of the members. It

was admitted that they could not expect to affect many improvements so late in the season; but they meant to plan the next summer's campaign, collect and discuss ideas, write and read papers, and, as Anne said, educate the public sentiment generally.

There was some disapproval, of course, and ... which the Improvers felt much more keenly ... a good deal of ridicule. Mr. Elisha Wright was reported to have said that a more appropriate name for the organization would be Courting Club. Mrs. Hiram Sloane declared she had heard the Improvers meant to plough up all the roadsides and set them out with geraniums. Mr. Levi Boulter warned his neighbors that the Improvers would insist that everybody pull down his house and rebuild it after plans approved by the society. Mr. James Spencer sent them word that he wished they would kindly shovel down the church hill. Eben Wright told Anne that he wished the Improvers could induce old Josiah Sloane to keep his whiskers trimmed. Mr. Lawrence Bell said he would whitewash his barns if nothing else would please them but he would NOT hang lace curtains in the cowstable windows. Mr. Major Spencer asked Clifton Sloane, an Improver who drove the milk to the Carmody cheese factory, if it was true that everybody would have to have his milk-stand hand-painted next summer and keep an embroidered centerpiece on it.

In spite of ... or perhaps, human nature being what it is, because of ... this, the Society went gamely to work at the only improvement they could hope to bring about that fall. At the second meeting, in the Barry parlor, Oliver Sloane moved that they start a subscription to reshingle and paint the hall; Julia Bell seconded it, with an uneasy feeling that she was doing something not exactly ladylike. Gilbert put the motion, it was carried unanimously, and Anne gravely recorded it in her minutes. The next thing was to appoint a committee, and Gertie Pye, determined not to let Julia Bell carry off all the laurels, boldly moved that Miss Jane Andrews be chairman of said committee. This motion being also duly seconded and carried, Jane returned the compliment by appointing Gertie on the committee, along with Gilbert, Anne, Diana, and Fred Wright. The committee chose their routes in private conclave. Anne and Diana were told off for the Newbridge road, Gilbert and Fred for the White Sands road, and Jane and Gertie for the Carmody road.

“Because,” explained Gilbert to Anne, as they walked home together through the Haunted Wood, “the Pyes all live along that road and they won’t give a cent unless one of themselves canvasses them.”

The next Saturday Anne and Diana started out. They drove to the end of the road and canvassed homeward, calling first on the “Andrew girls.”

“If Catherine is alone we may get something,” said Diana, “but if Eliza is there we won’t.”

Eliza was there ... very much so ... and looked even grimmer than usual. Miss Eliza was one of those people who give you the impression that life is indeed a vale of tears, and that a smile, never to speak of a laugh, is a waste of nervous energy truly reprehensible. The Andrew girls had been “girls” for fifty odd years and seemed likely to remain girls to the end of their earthly pilgrimage. Catherine, it was said, had not entirely given up hope, but Eliza, who was born a pessimist, had never had any. They lived in a little brown house built in a sunny corner scooped out of Mark Andrew’s beech woods. Eliza complained that it was terrible hot in summer, but Catherine was wont to say it was lovely and warm in winter.

Eliza was sewing patchwork, not because it was needed but simply as a protest against the frivolous lace Catherine was crocheting. Eliza listened with a frown and Catherine with a smile, as the girls explained their errand. To be sure, whenever Catherine caught Eliza’s eye she discarded the smile in guilty confusion; but it crept back the next moment.

“If I had money to waste,” said Eliza grimly, “I’d burn it up and have the fun of seeing a blaze maybe; but I wouldn’t give it to that hall, not a cent. It’s no benefit to the settlement ... just a place for young folks to meet and carry on when they’s better be home in their beds.”

“Oh, Eliza, young folks must have some amusement,” protested Catherine.

“I don’t see the necessity. We didn’t gad about to halls and places when we were young, Catherine Andrews. This world is getting worse every day.”

“I think it’s getting better,” said Catherine firmly.

“YOU think!” Miss Eliza’s voice expressed the utmost contempt. “It doesn’t signify what you THINK, Catherine Andrews. Facts is facts.”

“Well, I always like to look on the bright side, Eliza.”

“There isn’t any bright side.”

“Oh, indeed there is,” cried Anne, who couldn’t endure such heresy in silence. “Why, there are ever so many bright sides, Miss Andrews. It’s really a beautiful world.”

“You won’t have such a high opinion of it when you’ve lived as long in it as I have,” retorted Miss Eliza sourly, “and you won’t be so enthusiastic about improving it either. How is your mother, Diana? Dear me, but she has failed of late. She looks terrible run down. And how long is it before Marilla expects to be stone blind, Anne?”

“The doctor thinks her eyes will not get any worse if she is very careful,” faltered Anne.

Eliza shook her head.

“Doctors always talk like that just to keep people cheered up. I wouldn’t have much hope if I was her. It’s best to be prepared for the worst.”

“But oughtn’t we be prepared for the best too?” pleaded Anne. “It’s just as likely to happen as the worst.”

“Not in my experience, and I’ve fifty-seven years to set against your sixteen,” retorted Eliza. “Going, are you? Well, I hope this new society of yours will be able to keep Avonlea from running any further down hill but I haven’t much hope of it.”

Anne and Diana got themselves thankfully out, and drove away as fast as the fat pony could go. As they rounded the curve below the beech wood a plump figure came speeding over Mr. Andrews’ pasture, waving to them excitedly. It was Catherine Andrews and she was so out of breath that she could hardly speak, but she thrust a couple of quarters into Anne’s hand.

“That’s my contribution to painting the hall,” she gasped. “I’d like to give you a dollar but I don’t dare take more from my egg money for Eliza would find it out if I did. I’m real interested in your society and I believe you’re going to do a lot of good. I’m an optimist. I HAVE to be, living with Eliza. I must hurry back before she misses me ... she thinks I’m feeding the hens. I hope you’ll have good luck canvassing, and don’t be cast down over what Eliza said. The world IS getting better ... it certainly is.”

The next house was Daniel Blair’s.

“Now, it all depends on whether his wife is home or not,” said Diana, as they jolted along a deep-rutted lane. “If she is we won’t get a cent. Everybody says Dan Blair doesn’t dare have his hair cut without asking her permission; and it’s certain she’s very close, to state it moderately. She says she has to be just before she’s generous. But Mrs. Lynde says she’s so much ‘before’ that generosity never catches up with her at all.”

Anne related their experience at the Blair place to Marilla that evening.

“We tied the horse and then rapped at the kitchen door. Nobody came but the door was open and we could hear somebody in the pantry, going on dreadfully. We couldn’t make out the words but Diana says she knows they were swearing by the sound of them. I can’t believe that of Mr. Blair, for he is always so quiet and meek; but at least he had great provocation, for Marilla, when that poor man came to the door, red as a beet, with perspiration streaming down his face, he had on one of his wife’s big gingham aprons. ‘I can’t get this durned thing off,’ he said, ‘for the strings are tied in a hard knot and I can’t bust ‘em, so you’ll have to excuse me, ladies.’ We begged him not to mention it and went in and sat down. Mr. Blair sat down too; he twisted the apron around to his back and rolled it up, but he did look so ashamed and worried that I felt sorry for him, and Diana said she feared we had called at an inconvenient time. ‘Oh, not at all,’ said Mr. Blair, trying to smile ... you know he is always very polite ... ‘I’m a little busy ... getting ready to bake a cake as it were. My wife got a telegram today that her sister from Montreal is coming tonight and she’s gone to the train to meet her and left orders for me to make a cake for tea. She writ out the recipe and told me what to do but I’ve clean forgot

half the directions already. And it says, ‘flavor according to taste.’ What does that mean? How can you tell? And what if my taste doesn’t happen to be other people’s taste? Would a tablespoon of vanilla be enough for a small layer cake?”

“I felt sorrier than ever for the poor man. He didn’t seem to be in his proper sphere at all. I had heard of henpecked husbands and now I felt that I saw one. It was on my lips to say, ‘Mr. Blair, if you’ll give us a subscription for the hall I’ll mix up your cake for you.’ But I suddenly thought it wouldn’t be neighborly to drive too sharp a bargain with a fellow creature in distress. So I offered to mix the cake for him without any conditions at all. He just jumped at my offer. He said he’d been used to making his own bread before he was married but he feared cake was beyond him, and yet he hated to disappoint his wife. He got me another apron, and Diana beat the eggs and I mixed the cake. Mr. Blair ran about and got us the materials. He had forgotten all about his apron and when he ran it streamed out behind him and Diana said she thought she would die to see it. He said he could bake the cake all right ... he was used to that ... and then he asked for our list and he put down four dollars. So you see we were rewarded. But even if he hadn’t given a cent I’d always feel that we had done a truly Christian act in helping him.”

Theodore White’s was the next stopping place. Neither Anne nor Diana had ever been there before, and they had only a very slight acquaintance with Mrs. Theodore, who was not given to hospitality. Should they go to the back or front door? While they held a whispered consultation Mrs. Theodore appeared at the front door with an armful of newspapers. Deliberately she laid them down one by one on the porch floor and the porch steps, and then down the path to the very feet of her mystified callers.

“Will you please wipe your feet carefully on the grass and then walk on these papers?” she said anxiously. “I’ve just swept the house all over and I can’t have any more dust tracked in. The path’s been real muddy since the rain yesterday.”

“Don’t you dare laugh,” warned Anne in a whisper, as they marched along the newspapers. “And I implore you, Diana, not to look at me, no matter

what she says, or I shall not be able to keep a sober face.”

The papers extended across the hall and into a prim, fleckless parlor. Anne and Diana sat down gingerly on the nearest chairs and explained their errand. Mrs. White heard them politely, interrupting only twice, once to chase out an adventurous fly, and once to pick up a tiny wisp of grass that had fallen on the carpet from Anne’s dress. Anne felt wretchedly guilty; but Mrs. White subscribed two dollars and paid the money down ... “to prevent us from having to go back for it,” Diana said when they got away. Mrs. White had the newspapers gathered up before they had their horse untied and as they drove out of the yard they saw her busily wielding a broom in the hall.

“I’ve always heard that Mrs. Theodore White was the neatest woman alive and I’ll believe it after this,” said Diana, giving way to her suppressed laughter as soon as it was safe.

“I am glad she has no children,” said Anne solemnly. “It would be dreadful beyond words for them if she had.”

At the Spencers’ Mrs. Isabella Spencer made them miserable by saying something ill-natured about everyone in Avonlea. Mr. Thomas Boulter refused to give anything because the hall, when it had been built, twenty years before, hadn’t been built on the site he recommended. Mrs. Esther Bell, who was the picture of health, took half an hour to detail all her aches and pains, and sadly put down fifty cents because she wouldn’t be there that time next year to do it ... no, she would be in her grave.

Their worst reception, however, was at Simon Fletcher’s. When they drove into the yard they saw two faces peering at them through the porch window. But although they rapped and waited patiently and persistently nobody came to the door. Two decidedly ruffled and indignant girls drove away from Simon Fletcher’s. Even Anne admitted that she was beginning to feel discouraged. But the tide turned after that. Several Sloane homesteads came next, where they got liberal subscriptions, and from that to the end they fared well, with only an occasional snub. Their last place of call was at Robert Dickson’s by the pond bridge. They stayed to tea here,

although they were nearly home, rather than risk offending Mrs. Dickson, who had the reputation of being a very “touchy” woman.

While they were there old Mrs. James White called in.

“I’ve just been down to Lorenzo’s,” she announced. “He’s the proudest man in Avonlea this minute. What do you think? There’s a brand new boy there ... and after seven girls that’s quite an event, I can tell you.” Anne pricked up her ears, and when they drove away she said.

“I’m going straight to Lorenzo White’s.”

“But he lives on the White Sands road and it’s quite a distance out of our way,” protested Diana. “Gilbert and Fred will canvass him.”

“They are not going around until next Saturday and it will be too late by then,” said Anne firmly. “The novelty will be worn off. Lorenzo White is dreadfully mean but he will subscribe to ANYTHING just now. We mustn’t let such a golden opportunity slip, Diana.” The result justified Anne’s foresight. Mr. White met them in the yard, beaming like the sun upon an Easter day. When Anne asked for a subscription he agreed enthusiastically.

“Certain, certain. Just put me down for a dollar more than the highest subscription you’ve got.”

“That will be five dollars ... Mr. Daniel Blair put down four,” said Anne, half afraid. But Lorenzo did not flinch.

“Five it is ... and here’s the money on the spot. Now, I want you to come into the house. There’s something in there worth seeing ... something very few people have seen as yet. Just come in and pass YOUR opinion.”

“What will we say if the baby isn’t pretty?” whispered Diana in trepidation as they followed the excited Lorenzo into the house.

“Oh, there will certainly be something else nice to say about it,” said Anne easily. “There always is about a baby.”

The baby WAS pretty, however, and Mr. White felt that he got his five dollars' worth of the girls' honest delight over the plump little newcomer. But that was the first, last, and only time that Lorenzo White ever subscribed to anything.

Anne, tired as she was, made one more effort for the public weal that night, slipping over the fields to interview Mr. Harrison, who was as usual smoking his pipe on the veranda with Ginger beside him. Strickly speaking he was on the Carmody road; but Jane and Gertie, who were not acquainted with him save by doubtful report, had nervously begged Anne to canvass him.

Mr. Harrison, however, flatly refused to subscribe a cent, and all Anne's wiles were in vain.

"But I thought you approved of our society, Mr. Harrison," she mourned.

"So I do ... so I do ... but my approval doesn't go as deep as my pocket, Anne."

"A few more experiences such as I have had today would make me as much of a pessimist as Miss Eliza Andrews," Anne told her reflection in the east gable mirror at bedtime.

VI I

The Pointing of Duty

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Anne leaned back in her chair one mild October evening and sighed. She was sitting at a table covered with text books and exercises, but the closely written sheets of paper before her had no apparent connection with studies or school work.

“What is the matter?” asked Gilbert, who had arrived at the open kitchen door just in time to hear the sigh.

Anne colored, and thrust her writing out of sight under some school compositions.

“Nothing very dreadful. I was just trying to write out some of my thoughts, as Professor Hamilton advised me, but I couldn’t get them to please me. They seem so still and foolish directly they’re written down on white paper with black ink. Fancies are like shadows ... you can’t cage them, they’re such wayward, dancing things. But perhaps I’ll learn the secret some day if I keep on trying. I haven’t a great many spare moments, you know. By the time I finish correcting school exercises and compositions, I don’t always feel like writing any of my own.”

“You are getting on splendidly in school, Anne. All the children like you,” said Gilbert, sitting down on the stone step.

“No, not all. Anthony Pye doesn’t and WON’T like me. What is worse, he doesn’t respect me ... no, he doesn’t. He simply holds me in contempt and I don’t mind confessing to you that it worries me miserably. It isn’t that he is so very bad ... he is only rather mischievous, but no worse than some of the others. He seldom disobeys me; but he obeys with a scornful air of toleration as if it wasn’t worthwhile disputing the point or he would ... and it has a bad effect on the others. I’ve tried every way to win him but I’m beginning to fear I never shall. I want to, for he’s rather a cute little lad, if he IS a Pye, and I could like him if he’d let me.”

“Probably it’s merely the effect of what he hears at home.”

“Not altogether. Anthony is an independent little chap and makes up his own mind about things. He has always gone to men before and he says girl teachers are no good. Well, we’ll see what patience and kindness will do. I like overcoming difficulties and teaching is really very interesting work. Paul Irving makes up for all that is lacking in the others. That child is a perfect darling, Gilbert, and a genius into the bargain. I’m persuaded the world will hear of him some day,” concluded Anne in a tone of conviction.

“I like teaching, too,” said Gilbert. “It’s good training, for one thing. Why, Anne, I’ve learned more in the weeks I’ve been teaching the young ideas of White Sands than I learned in all the years I went to school myself. We all seem to be getting on pretty well. The Newbridge people like Jane, I hear; and I think White Sands is tolerably satisfied with your humble servant ... all except Mr. Andrew Spencer. I met Mrs. Peter Blewett on my way home last night and she told me she thought it her duty to inform me that Mr. Spencer didn’t approve of my methods.”

“Have you ever noticed,” asked Anne reflectively, “that when people say it is their duty to tell you a certain thing you may prepare for something disagreeable? Why is it that they never seem to think it a duty to tell you the pleasant things they hear about you? Mrs. H. B. DonNELL called at the school again yesterday and told me she thought it HER duty to inform me that Mrs. Harmon Andrew didn’t approve of my reading fairy tales to the children, and that Mr. Rogerson thought Prillie wasn’t coming on fast enough in arithmetic. If Prillie would spend less time making eyes at the boys over her slate she might do better. I feel quite sure that Jack Gillis works her class sums for her, though I’ve never been able to catch him red-handed.”

“Have you succeeded in reconciling Mrs. DonNELL’s hopeful son to his saintly name?”

“Yes,” laughed Anne, “but it was really a difficult task. At first, when I called him ‘St. Clair’ he would not take the least notice until I’d spoken two or three times; and then, when the other boys nudged him, he would look up with such an aggrieved air, as if I’d called him John or Charlie and

he couldn't be expected to know I meant him. So I kept him in after school one night and talked kindly to him. I told him his mother wished me to call him St. Clair and I couldn't go against her wishes. He saw it when it was all explained out ... he's really a very reasonable little fellow ... and he said I could call him St. Clair but that he'd 'lick the stuffing' out of any of the boys that tried it. Of course, I had to rebuke him again for using such shocking language. Since then I call him St. Clair and the boys call him Jake and all goes smoothly. He informs me that he means to be a carpenter, but Mrs. DonNELL says I am to make a college professor out of him."

The mention of college gave a new direction to Gilbert's thoughts, and they talked for a time of their plans and wishes ... gravely, earnestly, hopefully, as youth loves to talk, while the future is yet an untrodden path full of wonderful possibilities.

Gilbert had finally made up his mind that he was going to be a doctor.

"It's a splendid profession," he said enthusiastically. "A fellow has to fight something all through life ... didn't somebody once define man as a fighting animal? ... and I want to fight disease and pain and ignorance ... which are all members one of another. I want to do my share of honest, real work in the world, Anne ... add a little to the sum of human knowledge that all the good men have been accumulating since it began. The folks who lived before me have done so much for me that I want to show my gratitude by doing something for the folks who will live after me. It seems to me that is the only way a fellow can get square with his obligations to the race."

"I'd like to add some beauty to life," said Anne dreamily. "I don't exactly want to make people KNOW more ... though I know that IS the noblest ambition ... but I'd love to make them have a pleasanter time because of me ... to have some little joy or happy thought that would never have existed if I hadn't been born."

"I think you're fulfilling that ambition every day," said Gilbert admiringly.

And he was right. Anne was one of the children of light by birthright. After she had passed through a life with a smile or a word thrown across it like a gleam of sunshine the owner of that life saw it, for the time being at least, as hopeful and lovely and of good report.

Finally Gilbert rose regretfully.

“Well, I must run up to MacPhersons’. Moody Spurgeon came home from Queen’s today for Sunday and he was to bring me out a book Professor Boyd is lending me.”

“And I must get Marilla’s tea. She went to see Mrs. Keith this evening and she will soon be back.”

Anne had tea ready when Marilla came home; the fire was crackling cheerily, a vase of frost-bleached ferns and ruby-red maple leaves adorned the table, and delectable odors of ham and toast pervaded the air. But Marilla sank into her chair with a deep sigh.

“Are your eyes troubling you? Does your head ache?” queried Anne anxiously.

“No. I’m only tired ... and worried. It’s about Mary and those children ... Mary is worse ... she can’t last much longer. And as for the twins, I don’t know what is to become of them.”

“Hasn’t their uncle been heard from?”

“Yes, Mary had a letter from him. He’s working in a lumber camp and ‘shacking it,’ whatever that means. Anyway, he says he can’t possibly take the children till the spring. He expects to be married then and will have a home to take them to; but he says she must get some of the neighbors to keep them for the winter. She says she can’t bear to ask any of them. Mary never got on any too well with the East Grafton people and that’s a fact. And the long and short of it is, Anne, that I’m sure Mary wants me to take those children ... she didn’t say so but she LOOKED it.”

“Oh!” Anne clasped her hands, all athrill with excitement. “And of course you will, Marilla, won’t you?”

“I haven’t made up my mind,” said Marilla rather tartly. “I don’t rush into things in your headlong way, Anne. Third cousinship is a pretty slim claim. And it will be a fearful responsibility to have two children of six years to look after ... twins, at that.”

Marilla had an idea that twins were just twice as bad as single children.

“Twins are very interesting ... at least one pair of them,” said Anne. “It’s only when there are two or three pairs that it gets monotonous. And I think it would be real nice for you to have something to amuse you when I’m away in school.”

“I don’t reckon there’d be much amusement in it ... more worry and bother than anything else, I should say. It wouldn’t be so risky if they were even as old as you were when I took you. I wouldn’t mind Dora so much ... she seems good and quiet. But that Davy is a limb.”

Anne was fond of children and her heart yearned over the Keith twins. The remembrance of her own neglected childhood was very vivid with her still. She knew that Marilla’s only vulnerable point was her stern devotion to what she believed to be her duty, and Anne skillfully marshalled her arguments along this line.

“If Davy is naughty it’s all the more reason why he should have good training, isn’t it, Marilla? If we don’t take them we don’t know who will, nor what kind of influences may surround them. Suppose Mrs. Keith’s next door neighbors, the Sprots, were to take them. Mrs. Lynde says Henry Sprott is the most profane man that ever lived and you can’t believe a word his children say. Wouldn’t it be dreadful to have the twins learn anything like that? Or suppose they went to the Wiggins’. Mrs. Lynde says that Mr. Wiggins sells everything off the place that can be sold and brings his family up on skim milk. You wouldn’t like your relations to be starved, even if they were only third cousins, would you? It seems to me, Marilla, that it is our duty to take them.”

“I suppose it is,” assented Marilla gloomily. “I daresay I’ll tell Mary I’ll take them. You needn’t look so delighted, Anne. It will mean a good deal of extra work for you. I can’t sew a stitch on account of my eyes, so you’ll have to see to the making and mending of their clothes. And you don’t like sewing.”

“I hate it,” said Anne calmly, “but if you are willing to take those children from a sense of duty surely I can do their sewing from a sense of duty. It does people good to have to do things they don’t like ... in moderation.”

VII I

Marilla Adopts Twins

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Mrs. Rachel Lynde was sitting at her kitchen window, knitting a quilt, just as she had been sitting one evening several years previously when Matthew Cuthbert had driven down over the hill with what Mrs. Rachel called “his imported orphan.” But that had been in springtime; and this was late autumn, and all the woods were leafless and the fields sere and brown. The sun was just setting with a great deal of purple and golden pomp behind the dark woods west of Avonlea when a buggy drawn by a comfortable brown nag came down the hill. Mrs. Rachel peered at it eagerly.

“There’s Marilla getting home from the funeral,” she said to her husband, who was lying on the kitchen lounge. Thomas Lynde lay more on the lounge nowadays than he had been used to do, but Mrs. Rachel, who was so sharp at noticing anything beyond her own household, had not as yet noticed this. “And she’s got the twins with her, ... yes, there’s Davy leaning over the dashboard grabbing at the pony’s tail and Marilla jerking him back. Dora’s sitting up on the seat as prim as you please. She always looks as if she’d just been starched and ironed. Well, poor Marilla is going to have her hands full this winter and no mistake. Still, I don’t see that she could do anything less than take them, under the circumstances, and she’ll

have Anne to help her. Anne's tickled to death over the whole business, and she has a real knacky way with children, I must say. Dear me, it doesn't seem a day since poor Matthew brought Anne herself home and everybody laughed at the idea of Marilla bringing up a child. And now she has adopted twins. You're never safe from being surprised till you're dead."

The fat pony jogged over the bridge in Lynde's Hollow and along the Green Gables lane. Marilla's face was rather grim. It was ten miles from East Grafton and Davy Keith seemed to be possessed with a passion for perpetual motion. It was beyond Marilla's power to make him sit still and she had been in an agony the whole way lest he fall over the back of the wagon and break his neck, or tumble over the dashboard under the pony's heels. In despair she finally threatened to whip him soundly when she got him home. Whereupon Davy climbed into her lap, regardless of the reins, flung his chubby arms about her neck and gave her a bear-like hug.

"I don't believe you mean it," he said, smacking her wrinkled cheek affectionately. "You don't LOOK like a lady who'd whip a little boy just 'cause he couldn't keep still. Didn't you find it awful hard to keep still when you was only 's old as me?"

"No, I always kept still when I was told," said Marilla, trying to speak sternly, albeit she felt her heart waxing soft within her under Davy's impulsive caresses.

"Well, I s'pose that was 'cause you was a girl," said Davy, squirming back to his place after another hug. "You WAS a girl once, I s'pose, though it's awful funny to think of it. Dora can sit still ... but there ain't much fun in it I don't think. Seems to me it must be slow to be a girl. Here, Dora, let me liven you up a bit."

Davy's method of "livening up" was to grasp Dora's curls in his fingers and give them a tug. Dora shrieked and then cried.

"How can you be such a naughty boy and your poor mother just laid in her grave this very day?" demanded Marilla despairingly.

“But she was glad to die,” said Davy confidentially. “I know, ‘cause she told me so. She was awful tired of being sick. We’d a long talk the night before she died. She told me you was going to take me and Dora for the winter and I was to be a good boy. I’m going to be good, but can’t you be good running round just as well as sitting still? And she said I was always to be kind to Dora and stand up for her, and I’m going to.”

“Do you call pulling her hair being kind to her?”

“Well, I ain’t going to let anybody else pull it,” said Davy, doubling up his fists and frowning. “They’d just better try it. I didn’t hurt her much ... she just cried ‘cause she’s a girl. I’m glad I’m a boy but I’m sorry I’m a twin. When Jimmy Sprott’s sister conterdicks him he just says, ‘I’m oldern you, so of course I know better,’ and that settles HER. But I can’t tell Dora that, and she just goes on thinking diffrent from me. You might let me drive the gee-gee for a spell, since I’m a man.”

Altogether, Marilla was a thankful woman when she drove into her own yard, where the wind of the autumn night was dancing with the brown leaves. Anne was at the gate to meet them and lift the twins out. Dora submitted calmly to be kissed, but Davy responded to Anne’s welcome with one of his hearty hugs and the cheerful announcement, “I’m Mr. Davy Keith.”

At the supper table Dora behaved like a little lady, but Davy’s manners left much to be desired.

“I’m so hungry I ain’t got time to eat p’litely,” he said when Marilla reproved him. “Dora ain’t half as hungry as I am. Look at all the ex’cise I took on the road here. That cake’s awful nice and plummy. We haven’t had any cake at home for ever’n ever so long, ‘cause mother was too sick to make it and Mrs. Sprott said it was as much as she could do to bake our bread for us. And Mrs. Wiggins never puts any plums in HER cakes. Catch her! Can I have another piece?”

Marilla would have refused but Anne cut a generous second slice. However, she reminded Davy that he ought to say “Thank you” for it.

Davy merely grinned at her and took a huge bite. When he had finished the slice he said,

“If you’ll give me ANOTHER piece I’ll say thank you for IT.”

“No, you have had plenty of cake,” said Marilla in a tone which Anne knew and Davy was to learn to be final.

Davy winked at Anne, and then, leaning over the table, snatched Dora’s first piece of cake, from which she had just taken one dainty little bite, out of her very fingers and, opening his mouth to the fullest extent, crammed the whole slice in. Dora’s lip trembled and Marilla was speechless with horror. Anne promptly exclaimed, with her best “schoolma’am” air,

“Oh, Davy, gentlemen don’t do things like that.”

“I know they don’t,” said Davy, as soon as he could speak, “but I ain’t a gemplum.”

“But don’t you want to be?” said shocked Anne.

“Course I do. But you can’t be a gemplum till you grow up.”

“Oh, indeed you can,” Anne hastened to say, thinking she saw a chance to sow good seed betimes. “You can begin to be a gentleman when you are a little boy. And gentlemen NEVER snatch things from ladies ... or forget to say thank you ... or pull anybody’s hair.”

“They don’t have much fun, that’s a fact,” said Davy frankly. “I guess I’ll wait till I’m grown up to be one.”

Marilla, with a resigned air, had cut another piece of cake for Dora. She did not feel able to cope with Davy just then. It had been a hard day for her, what with the funeral and the long drive. At that moment she looked forward to the future with a pessimism that would have done credit to Eliza Andrews herself.

The twins were not noticeably alike, although both were fair. Dora had long sleek curls that never got out of order. Davy had a crop of fuzzy little

yellow ringlets all over his round head. Dora's hazel eyes were gentle and mild; Davy's were as roguish and dancing as an elf's. Dora's nose was straight, Davy's a positive snub; Dora had a "prunes and prisms" mouth, Davy's was all smiles; and besides, he had a dimple in one cheek and none in the other, which gave him a dear, comical, lopsided look when he laughed. Mirth and mischief lurked in every corner of his little face.

"They'd better go to bed," said Marilla, who thought it was the easiest way to dispose of them. "Dora will sleep with me and you can put Davy in the west gable. You're not afraid to sleep alone, are you, Davy?"

"No; but I ain't going to bed for ever so long yet," said Davy comfortably.

"Oh, yes, you are." That was all the much-tried Marilla said, but something in her tone squelched even Davy. He trotted obediently upstairs with Anne.

"When I'm grown up the very first thing I'm going to do is stay up ALL night just to see what it would be like," he told her confidentially.

In after years Marilla never thought of that first week of the twins' sojourn at Green Gables without a shiver. Not that it really was so much worse than the weeks that followed it; but it seemed so by reason of its novelty. There was seldom a waking minute of any day when Davy was not in mischief or devising it; but his first notable exploit occurred two days after his arrival, on Sunday morning ... a fine, warm day, as hazy and mild as September. Anne dressed him for church while Marilla attended to Dora. Davy at first objected strongly to having his face washed.

"Marilla washed it yesterday ... and Mrs. Wiggins scoured me with hard soap the day of the funeral. That's enough for one week. I don't see the good of being so awful clean. It's lots more comfable being dirty."

"Paul Irving washes his face every day of his own accord," said Anne astutely.

Davy had been an inmate of Green Gables for little over forty-eight hours; but he already worshipped Anne and hated Paul Irving, whom he had heard

Anne praising enthusiastically the day after his arrival. If Paul Irving washed his face every day, that settled it. He, Davy Keith, would do it too, if it killed him. The same consideration induced him to submit meekly to the other details of his toilet, and he was really a handsome little lad when all was done. Anne felt an almost maternal pride in him as she led him into the old Cuthbert pew.

Davy behaved quite well at first, being occupied in casting covert glances at all the small boys within view and wondering which was Paul Irving. The first two hymns and the Scripture reading passed off uneventfully. Mr. Allan was praying when the sensation came.

Lauretta White was sitting in front of Davy, her head slightly bent and her fair hair hanging in two long braids, between which a tempting expanse of white neck showed, encased in a loose lace frill. Lauretta was a fat, placid-looking child of eight, who had conducted herself irreproachably in church from the very first day her mother carried her there, an infant of six months.

Davy thrust his hand into his pocket and produced ... a caterpillar, a furry, squirming caterpillar. Marilla saw and clutched at him but she was too late. Davy dropped the caterpillar down Lauretta's neck.

Right into the middle of Mr. Allan's prayer burst a series of piercing shrieks. The minister stopped appalled and opened his eyes. Every head in the congregation flew up. Lauretta White was dancing up and down in her pew, clutching frantically at the back of her dress.

"Ow ... mommer ... mommer ... ow ... take it off ... ow ... get it out ... ow ... that bad boy put it down my neck ... ow ... mommer ... it's going further down ... ow ... ow ... ow... ."

Mrs. White rose and with a set face carried the hysterical, writhing Lauretta out of church. Her shrieks died away in the distance and Mr. Allan proceeded with the service. But everybody felt that it was a failure that day. For the first time in her life Marilla took no notice of the text and Anne sat with scarlet cheeks of mortification.

When they got home Marilla put Davy to bed and made him stay there for the rest of the day. She would not give him any dinner but allowed him a plain tea of bread and milk. Anne carried it to him and sat sorrowfully by him while he ate it with an unrepentant relish. But Anne's mournful eyes troubled him.

"I s'pose," he said reflectively, "that Paul Irving wouldn't have dropped a caterpillar down a girl's neck in church, would he?"

"Indeed he wouldn't," said Anne sadly.

"Well, I'm kind of sorry I did it, then," conceded Davy. "But it was such a jolly big caterpillar ... I picked him up on the church steps just as we went in. It seemed a pity to waste him. And say, wasn't it fun to hear that girl yell?"

Tuesday afternoon the Aid Society met at Green Gables. Anne hurried home from school, for she knew that Marilla would need all the assistance she could give. Dora, neat and proper, in her nicely starched white dress and black sash, was sitting with the members of the Aid in the parlor, speaking demurely when spoken to, keeping silence when not, and in every way comporting herself as a model child. Davy, blissfully dirty, was making mud pies in the barnyard.

"I told him he might," said Marilla wearily. "I thought it would keep him out of worse mischief. He can only get dirty at that. We'll have our teas over before we call him to his. Dora can have hers with us, but I would never dare to let Davy sit down at the table with all the Aids here."

When Anne went to call the Aids to tea she found that Dora was not in the parlor. Mrs. Jasper Bell said Davy had come to the front door and called her out. A hasty consultation with Marilla in the pantry resulted in a decision to let both children have their teas together later on.

Tea was half over when the dining room was invaded by a forlorn figure. Marilla and Anne stared in dismay, the Aids in amazement. Could that be Dora ... that sobbing nondescript in a drenched, dripping dress and hair from which the water was streaming on Marilla's new coin-spot rug?

“Dora, what has happened to you?” cried Anne, with a guilty glance at Mrs. Jasper Bell, whose family was said to be the only one in the world in which accidents never occurred.

“Davy made me walk the pigpen fence,” wailed Dora. “I didn’t want to but he called me a fraid-cat. And I fell off into the pigpen and my dress got all dirty and the pig runned right over me. My dress was just awful but Davy said if I’d stand under the pump he’d wash it clean, and I did and he pumped water all over me but my dress ain’t a bit cleaner and my pretty sash and shoes is all spoiled.”

Anne did the honors of the table alone for the rest of the meal while Marilla went upstairs and redressed Dora in her old clothes. Davy was caught and sent to bed without any supper. Anne went to his room at twilight and talked to him seriously ... a method in which she had great faith, not altogether unjustified by results. She told him she felt very badly over his conduct.

“I feel sorry now myself,” admitted Davy, “but the trouble is I never feel sorry for doing things till after I’ve did them. Dora wouldn’t help me make pies, cause she was afraid of messing her clo’es and that made me hopping mad. I s’pose Paul Irving wouldn’t have made HIS sister walk a pigpen fence if he knew she’d fall in?”

“No, he would never dream of such a thing. Paul is a perfect little gentleman.”

Davy screwed his eyes tight shut and seemed to meditate on this for a time. Then he crawled up and put his arms about Anne’s neck, snuggling his flushed little face down on her shoulder.

“Anne, don’t you like me a little bit, even if I ain’t a good boy like Paul?”

“Indeed I do,” said Anne sincerely. Somehow, it was impossible to help liking Davy. “But I’d like you better still if you weren’t so naughty.”

“I ... did something else today,” went on Davy in a muffled voice. “I’m sorry now but I’m awful scared to tell you. You won’t be very cross, will

you? And you won't tell Marilla, will you?"

"I don't know, Davy. Perhaps I ought to tell her. But I think I can promise you I won't if you promise me that you will never do it again, whatever it is."

"No, I never will. Anyhow, it's not likely I'd find any more of them this year. I found this one on the cellar steps."

"Davy, what is it you've done?"

"I put a toad in Marilla's bed. You can go and take it out if you like. But say, Anne, wouldn't it be fun to leave it there?"

"Davy Keith!" Anne sprang from Davy's clinging arms and flew across the hall to Marilla's room. The bed was slightly rumped. She threw back the blankets in nervous haste and there in very truth was the toad, blinking at her from under a pillow.

"How can I carry that awful thing out?" moaned Anne with a shudder. The fire shovel suggested itself to her and she crept down to get it while Marilla was busy in the pantry. Anne had her own troubles carrying that toad downstairs, for it hopped off the shovel three times and once she thought she had lost it in the hall. When she finally deposited it in the cherry orchard she drew a long breath of relief.

"If Marilla knew she'd never feel safe getting into bed again in her life. I'm so glad that little sinner repented in time. There's Diana signaling to me from her window. I'm glad ... I really feel the need of some diversion, for what with Anthony Pye in school and Davy Keith at home my nerves have had about all they can endure for one day."

IX

A Question of Color

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“That old nuisance of a Rachel Lynde was here again today, pestering me for a subscription towards buying a carpet for the vestry room,” said Mr. Harrison wrathfully. “I detest that woman more than anybody I know. She can put a whole sermon, text, comment, and application, into six words, and throw it at you like a brick.”

Anne, who was perched on the edge of the veranda, enjoying the charm of a mild west wind blowing across a newly ploughed field on a gray November twilight and piping a quaint little melody among the twisted firs below the garden, turned her dreamy face over her shoulder.

“The trouble is, you and Mrs. Lynde don’t understand one another,” she explained. “That is always what is wrong when people don’t like each other. I didn’t like Mrs. Lynde at first either; but as soon as I came to understand her I learned to.”

“Mrs. Lynde may be an acquired taste with some folks; but I didn’t keep on eating bananas because I was told I’d learn to like them if I did,” growled Mr. Harrison. “And as for understanding her, I understand that she is a confirmed busybody and I told her so.”

“Oh, that must have hurt her feelings very much,” said Anne reproachfully. “How could you say such a thing? I said some dreadful things to Mrs. Lynde long ago but it was when I had lost my temper. I couldn’t say them DELIBERATELY.”

“It was the truth and I believe in telling the truth to everybody.”

“But you don’t tell the whole truth,” objected Anne. “You only tell the disagreeable part of the truth. Now, you’ve told me a dozen times that my hair was red, but you’ve never once told me that I had a nice nose.”

“I daresay you know it without any telling,” chuckled Mr. Harrison.

“I know I have red hair too ... although it’s MUCH darker than it used to be ... so there’s no need of telling me that either.”

“Well, well, I’ll try and not mention it again since you’re so sensitive. You must excuse me, Anne. I’ve got a habit of being outspoken and folks mustn’t mind it.”

“But they can’t help minding it. And I don’t think it’s any help that it’s your habit. What would you think of a person who went about sticking

pins and needles into people and saying, 'Excuse me, you mustn't mind it ... it's just a habit I've got.' You'd think he was crazy, wouldn't you? And as for Mrs. Lynde being a busybody, perhaps she is. But did you tell her she had a very kind heart and always helped the poor, and never said a word when Timothy Cotton stole a crock of butter out of her dairy and told his wife he'd bought it from her? Mrs. Cotton cast it up to her the next time they met that it tasted of turnips and Mrs. Lynde just said she was sorry it had turned out so poorly."

"I suppose she has some good qualities," conceded Mr. Harrison grudgingly. "Most folks have. I have some myself, though you might never suspect it. But anyhow I ain't going to give anything to that carpet. Folks are everlasting begging for money here, it seems to me. How's your project of painting the hall coming on?"

"Splendidly. We had a meeting of the A.V.I.S. last Friday night and found that we had plenty of money subscribed to paint the hall and shingle the roof too. MOST people gave very liberally, Mr. Harrison."

Anne was a sweet-souled lass, but she could instill some venom into innocent italics when occasion required.

"What color are you going to have it?"

"We have decided on a very pretty green. The roof will be dark red, of course. Mr. Roger Pye is going to get the paint in town today."

"Who's got the job?"

"Mr. Joshua Pye of Carmody. He has nearly finished the shingling. We had to give him the contract, for every one of the Pyes ... and there are four families, you know ... said they wouldn't give a cent unless Joshua got it. They had subscribed twelve dollars between them and we thought that was too much to lose, although some people think we shouldn't have given in to the Pyes. Mrs. Lynde says they try to run everything."

"The main question is will this Joshua do his work well. If he does I don't see that it matters whether his name is Pye or Pudding."

“He has the reputation of being a good workman, though they say he’s a very peculiar man. He hardly ever talks.”

“He’s peculiar enough all right then,” said Mr. Harrison drily. “Or at least, folks here will call him so. I never was much of a talker till I came to Avonlea and then I had to begin in self-defense or Mrs. Lynde would have said I was dumb and started a subscription to have me taught sign language. You’re not going yet, Anne?”

“I must. I have some sewing to do for Dora this evening. Besides, Davy is probably breaking Marilla’s heart with some new mischief by this time. This morning the first thing he said was, ‘Where does the dark go, Anne? I want to know.’ I told him it went around to the other side of the world but after breakfast he declared it didn’t ... that it went down the well. Marilla says she caught him hanging over the wellbox four times today, trying to reach down to the dark.”

“He’s a limb,” declared Mr. Harrison. “He came over here yesterday and pulled six feathers out of Ginger’s tail before I could get in from the barn. The poor bird has been moping ever since. Those children must be a sight of trouble to you folks.”

“Everything that’s worth having is some trouble,” said Anne, secretly resolving to forgive Davy’s next offence, whatever it might be, since he had avenged her on Ginger.

Mr. Roger Pye brought the hall paint home that night and Mr. Joshua Pye, a surly, taciturn man, began painting the next day. He was not disturbed in his task. The hall was situated on what was called “the lower road.” In late autumn this road was always muddy and wet, and people going to Carmody traveled by the longer “upper” road. The hall was so closely surrounded by fir woods that it was invisible unless you were near it. Mr. Joshua Pye painted away in the solitude and independence that were so dear to his unsociable heart.

Friday afternoon he finished his job and went home to Carmody. Soon after his departure Mrs. Rachel Lynde drove by, having braved the mud of

the lower road out of curiosity to see what the hall looked like in its new coat of paint. When she rounded the spruce curve she saw.

The sight affected Mrs. Lynde oddly. She dropped the reins, held up her hands, and said “Gracious Providence!” She stared as if she could not believe her eyes. Then she laughed almost hysterically.

“There must be some mistake ... there must. I knew those Pyes would make a mess of things.”

Mrs. Lynde drove home, meeting several people on the road and stopping to tell them about the hall. The news flew like wildfire. Gilbert Blythe, poring over a text book at home, heard it from his father’s hired boy at sunset, and rushed breathlessly to Green Gables, joined on the way by Fred Wright. They found Diana Barry, Jane Andrews, and Anne Shirley, despair personified, at the yard gate of Green Gables, under the big leafless willows.

“It isn’t true surely, Anne?” exclaimed Gilbert.

“It is true,” answered Anne, looking like the muse of tragedy. “Mrs. Lynde called on her way from Carmody to tell me. Oh, it is simply dreadful! What is the use of trying to improve anything?”

“What is dreadful?” asked Oliver Sloane, arriving at this moment with a bandbox he had brought from town for Marilla.

“Haven’t you heard?” said Jane wrathfully. “Well, its simply this... Joshua Pye has gone and painted the hall blue instead of green... a deep, brilliant blue, the shade they use for painting carts and wheelbarrows. And Mrs. Lynde says it is the most hideous color for a building, especially when combined with a red roof, that she ever saw or imagined. You could simply have knocked me down with a feather when I heard it. It’s heartbreaking, after all the trouble we’ve had.”

“How on earth could such a mistake have happened?” wailed Diana.

The blame of this unmerciful disaster was eventually narrowed down to the Pyes. The Improvers had decided to use Morton-Harris paints and the Morton-Harris paint cans were numbered according to a color card. A purchaser chose his shade on the card and ordered by the accompanying number. Number 147 was the shade of green desired and when Mr. Roger Pye sent word to the Improvers by his son, John Andrew, that he was going to town and would get their paint for them, the Improvers told John Andrew to tell his father to get 147. John Andrew always averred that he did so, but Mr. Roger Pye as stanchly declared that John Andrew told him 157; and there the matter stands to this day.

That night there was blank dismay in every Avonlea house where an Improver lived. The gloom at Green Gables was so intense that it quenched even Davy. Anne wept and would not be comforted.

“I must cry, even if I am almost seventeen, Marilla,” she sobbed. “It is so mortifying. And it sounds the death knell of our society. We’ll simply be laughed out of existence.”

In life, as in dreams, however, things often go by contraries. The Avonlea people did not laugh; they were too angry. Their money had gone to paint the hall and consequently they felt themselves bitterly aggrieved by the mistake. Public indignation centered on the Pyes. Roger Pye and John Andrew had bungled the matter between them; and as for Joshua Pye, he must be a born fool not to suspect there was something wrong when he opened the cans and saw the color of the paint. Joshua Pye, when thus animadverted upon, retorted that the Avonlea taste in colors was no business of his, whatever his private opinion might be; he had been hired to paint the hall, not to talk about it; and he meant to have his money for it.

The Improvers paid him his money in bitterness of spirit, after consulting Mr. Peter Sloane, who was a magistrate.

“You’ll have to pay it,” Peter told him. “You can’t hold him responsible for the mistake, since he claims he was never told what the color was supposed to be but just given the cans and told to go ahead. But it’s a burning shame and that hall certainly does look awful.”

The luckless Improvers expected that Avonlea would be more prejudiced than ever against them; but instead, public sympathy veered around in their favor. People thought the eager, enthusiastic little band who had worked so hard for their object had been badly used. Mrs. Lynde told them to keep on and show the Pyes that there really were people in the world who could do things without making a muddle of them. Mr. Major Spencer sent them word that he would clean out all the stumps along the road front of his farm and seed it down with grass at his own expense; and Mrs. Hiram Sloane called at the school one day and beckoned Anne mysteriously out into the porch to tell her that if the “Sassiety” wanted to make a geranium bed at the crossroads in the spring they needn’t be afraid of her cow, for she would see that the marauding animal was kept within safe bounds. Even Mr. Harrison chuckled, if he chuckled at all, in private, and was all sympathy outwardly.

“Never mind, Anne. Most paints fade uglier every year but that blue is as ugly as it can be to begin with, so it’s bound to fade prettier. And the roof is shingled and painted all right. Folks will be able to sit in the hall after this without being leaked on. You’ve accomplished so much anyhow.”

“But Avonlea’s blue hall will be a byword in all the neighboring settlements from this time out,” said Anne bitterly.

And it must be confessed that it was.

X

Davy in Search of a Sensation

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Anne, walking home from school through the Birch Path one November afternoon, felt convinced afresh that life was a very wonderful thing. The day had been a good day; all had gone well in her little kingdom. St. Clair Donnell had not fought any of the other boys over the question of his name; Prillie Rogerson’s face had been so puffed up from the effects of

toothache that she did not once try to coquette with the boys in her vicinity. Barbara Shaw had met with only ONE accident ... spilling a dipper of water over the floor ... and Anthony Pye had not been in school at all.

“What a nice month this November has been!” said Anne, who had never quite got over her childish habit of talking to herself. “November is usually such a disagreeable month ... as if the year had suddenly found out that she was growing old and could do nothing but weep and fret over it. This year is growing old gracefully ... just like a stately old lady who knows she can be charming even with gray hair and wrinkles. We’ve had lovely days and delicious twilights. This last fortnight has been so peaceful, and even Davy has been almost well-behaved. I really think he is improving a great deal. How quiet the woods are today ... not a murmur except that soft wind purring in the treetops! It sounds like surf on a faraway shore. How dear the woods are! You beautiful trees! I love every one of you as a friend.”

Anne paused to throw her arm about a slim young birch and kiss its cream-white trunk. Diana, rounding a curve in the path, saw her and laughed.

“Anne Shirley, you’re only pretending to be grown up. I believe when you’re alone you’re as much a little girl as you ever were.”

“Well, one can’t get over the habit of being a little girl all at once,” said Anne gaily. “You see, I was little for fourteen years and I’ve only been grown-uppish for scarcely three. I’m sure I shall always feel like a child in the woods. These walks home from school are almost the only time I have for dreaming ... except the half-hour or so before I go to sleep. I’m so busy with teaching and studying and helping Marilla with the twins that I haven’t another moment for imagining things. You don’t know what splendid adventures I have for a little while after I go to bed in the east gable every night. I always imagine I’m something very brilliant and triumphant and splendid ... a great prima donna or a Red Cross nurse or a queen. Last night I was a queen. It’s really splendid to imagine you are a queen. You have all the fun of it without any of the inconveniences and you can stop being a queen whenever you want to, which you couldn’t in real life. But here in the woods I like best to imagine quite different things

... I'm a dryad living in an old pine, or a little brown wood-elf hiding under a crinkled leaf. That white birch you caught me kissing is a sister of mine. The only difference is, she's a tree and I'm a girl, but that's no real difference. Where are you going, Diana?"

"Down to the Dicksons. I promised to help Alberta cut out her new dress. Can't you walk down in the evening, Anne, and come home with me?"

"I might ... since Fred Wright is away in town," said Anne with a rather too innocent face.

Diana blushed, tossed her head, and walked on. She did not look offended, however.

Anne fully intended to go down to the Dicksons' that evening, but she did not. When she arrived at Green Gables she found a state of affairs which banished every other thought from her mind. Marilla met her in the yard ... a wild-eyed Marilla.

"Anne, Dora is lost!"

"Dora! Lost!" Anne looked at Davy, who was swinging on the yard gate, and detected merriment in his eyes. "Davy, do you know where she is?"

"No, I don't," said Davy stoutly. "I haven't seen her since dinner time, cross my heart."

"I've been away ever since one o'clock," said Marilla. "Thomas Lynde took sick all of a sudden and Rachel sent up for me to go at once. When I left here Dora was playing with her doll in the kitchen and Davy was making mud pies behind the barn. I only got home half an hour ago ... and no Dora to be seen. Davy declares he never saw her since I left."

"Neither I did," avowed Davy solemnly.

"She must be somewhere around," said Anne. "She would never wander far away alone ... you know how timid she is. Perhaps she has fallen asleep in one of the rooms."

Marilla shook her head.

“I’ve hunted the whole house through. But she may be in some of the buildings.”

A thorough search followed. Every corner of house, yard, and outbuildings was ransacked by those two distracted people. Anne roved the orchards and the Haunted Wood, calling Dora’s name. Marilla took a candle and explored the cellar. Davy accompanied each of them in turn, and was fertile in thinking of places where Dora could possibly be. Finally they met again in the yard.

“It’s a most mysterious thing,” groaned Marilla.

“Where can she be?” said Anne miserably

“Maybe she’s tumbled into the well,” suggested Davy cheerfully.

Anne and Marilla looked fearfully into each other’s eyes. The thought had been with them both through their entire search but neither had dared to put it into words.

“She ... she might have,” whispered Marilla.

Anne, feeling faint and sick, went to the wellbox and peered over. The bucket sat on the shelf inside. Far down below was a tiny glimmer of still water. The Cuthbert well was the deepest in Avonlea. If Dora... but Anne could not face the idea. She shuddered and turned away.

“Run across for Mr. Harrison,” said Marilla, wringing her hands.

“Mr. Harrison and John Henry are both away ... they went to town today. I’ll go for Mr. Barry.”

Mr. Barry came back with Anne, carrying a coil of rope to which was attached a clawlike instrument that had been the business end of a grubbing fork. Marilla and Anne stood by, cold and shaken with horror and dread, while Mr. Barry dragged the well, and Davy, astride the gate, watched the group with a face indicative of huge enjoyment.

Finally Mr. Barry shook his head, with a relieved air.

“She can’t be down there. It’s a mighty curious thing where she could have got to, though. Look here, young man, are you sure you’ve no idea where your sister is?”

“I’ve told you a dozen times that I haven’t,” said Davy, with an injured air. “Maybe a tramp come and stole her.”

“Nonsense,” said Marilla sharply, relieved from her horrible fear of the well. “Anne, do you suppose she could have strayed over to Mr. Harrison’s? She has always been talking about his parrot ever since that time you took her over.”

“I can’t believe Dora would venture so far alone but I’ll go over and see,” said Anne.

Nobody was looking at Davy just then or it would have been seen that a very decided change came over his face. He quietly slipped off the gate and ran, as fast as his fat legs could carry him, to the barn.

Anne hastened across the fields to the Harrison establishment in no very hopeful frame of mind. The house was locked, the window shades were down, and there was no sign of anything living about the place. She stood on the veranda and called Dora loudly.

Ginger, in the kitchen behind her, shrieked and swore with sudden fierceness; but between his outbursts Anne heard a plaintive cry from the little building in the yard which served Mr. Harrison as a toolhouse. Anne flew to the door, unhasped it, and caught up a small mortal with a tearstained face who was sitting forlornly on an upturned nail keg.

“Oh, Dora, Dora, what a fright you have given us! How came you to be here?”

“Davy and I came over to see Ginger,” sobbed Dora, “but we couldn’t see him after all, only Davy made him swear by kicking the door. And then Davy brought me here and run out and shut the door; and I couldn’t get

out. I cried and cried, I was frightened, and oh, I'm so hungry and cold; and I thought you'd never come, Anne."

"Davy?" But Anne could say no more. She carried Dora home with a heavy heart. Her joy at finding the child safe and sound was drowned out in the pain caused by Davy's behavior. The freak of shutting Dora up might easily have been pardoned. But Davy had told falsehoods ... downright coldblooded falsehoods about it. That was the ugly fact and Anne could not shut her eyes to it. She could have sat down and cried with sheer disappointment. She had grown to love Davy dearly ... how dearly she had not known until this minute ... and it hurt her unbearably to discover that he was guilty of deliberate falsehood.

Marilla listened to Anne's tale in a silence that boded no good Davy-ward; Mr. Barry laughed and advised that Davy be summarily dealt with. When he had gone home Anne soothed and warmed the sobbing, shivering Dora, got her her supper and put her to bed. Then she returned to the kitchen, just as Marilla came grimly in, leading, or rather pulling, the reluctant, cobwebby Davy, whom she had just found hidden away in the darkest corner of the stable.

She jerked him to the mat on the middle of the floor and then went and sat down by the east window. Anne was sitting limply by the west window. Between them stood the culprit. His back was toward Marilla and it was a meek, subdued, frightened back; but his face was toward Anne and although it was a little shamefaced there was a gleam of comradeship in Davy's eyes, as if he knew he had done wrong and was going to be punished for it, but could count on a laugh over it all with Anne later on.

But no half hidden smile answered him in Anne's gray eyes, as there might have done had it been only a question of mischief. There was something else ... something ugly and repulsive.

"How could you behave so, Davy?" she asked sorrowfully.

Davy squirmed uncomfortably.

“I just did it for fun. Things have been so awful quiet here for so long that I thought it would be fun to give you folks a big scare. It was, too.”

In spite of fear and a little remorse Davy grinned over the recollection.

“But you told a falsehood about it, Davy,” said Anne, more sorrowfully than ever.

Davy looked puzzled.

“What’s a falsehood? Do you mean a whopper?”

“I mean a story that was not true.”

“Course I did,” said Davy frankly. “If I hadn’t you wouldn’t have been scared. I HAD to tell it.”

Anne was feeling the reaction from her fright and exertions. Davy’s impenitent attitude gave the finishing touch. Two big tears brimmed up in her eyes.

“Oh, Davy, how could you?” she said, with a quiver in her voice. “Don’t you know how wrong it was?”

Davy was aghast. Anne crying ... he had made Anne cry! A flood of real remorse rolled like a wave over his warm little heart and engulfed it. He rushed to Anne, hurled himself into her lap, flung his arms around her neck, and burst into tears.

“I didn’t know it was wrong to tell whoppers,” he sobbed. “How did you expect me to know it was wrong? All Mr. Sprott’s children told them REGULAR every day, and cross their hearts too. I s’pose Paul Irving never tells whoppers and here I’ve been trying awful hard to be as good as him, but now I s’pose you’ll never love me again. But I think you might have told me it was wrong. I’m awful sorry I’ve made you cry, Anne, and I’ll never tell a whopper again.”

Davy buried his face in Anne’s shoulder and cried stormily. Anne, in a sudden glad flash of understanding, held him tight and looked over his

curly thatch at Marilla.

“He didn’t know it was wrong to tell falsehoods, Marilla. I think we must forgive him for that part of it this time if he will promise never to say what isn’t true again.”

“I never will, now that I know it’s bad,” asseverated Davy between sobs. “If you ever catch me telling a whopper again you can ...” Davy groped mentally for a suitable penance ... “you can skin me alive, Anne.”

“Don’t say ‘whopper,’ Davy ... say ‘falsehood,’” said the schoolma’am.

“Why?” queried Davy, settling comfortably down and looking up with a tearstained, investigating face. “Why ain’t whopper as good as falsehood? I want to know. It’s just as big a word.”

“It’s slang; and it’s wrong for little boys to use slang.”

“There’s an awful lot of things it’s wrong to do,” said Davy with a sigh. “I never s’posed there was so many. I’m sorry it’s wrong to tell whop ... falsehoods, ‘cause it’s awful handy, but since it is I’m never going to tell any more. What are you going to do to me for telling them this time? I want to know.” Anne looked beseechingly at Marilla.

“I don’t want to be too hard on the child,” said Marilla. “I daresay nobody ever did tell him it was wrong to tell lies, and those Sprott children were no fit companions for him. Poor Mary was too sick to train him properly and I presume you couldn’t expect a six-year-old child to know things like that by instinct. I suppose we’ll just have to assume he doesn’t know ANYTHING right and begin at the beginning. But he’ll have to be punished for shutting Dora up, and I can’t think of any way except to send him to bed without his supper and we’ve done that so often. Can’t you suggest something else, Anne? I should think you ought to be able to, with that imagination you’re always talking of.”

“But punishments are so horrid and I like to imagine only pleasant things,” said Anne, cuddling Davy. “There are so many unpleasant things in the world already that there is no use in imagining any more.”

In the end Davy was sent to bed, as usual, there to remain until noon next day. He evidently did some thinking, for when Anne went up to her room a little later she heard him calling her name softly. Going in, she found him sitting up in bed, with his elbows on his knees and his chin propped on his hands.

“Anne,” he said solemnly, “is it wrong for everybody to tell whop ... falsehoods? I want to know?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“Is it wrong for a grownup person?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” said Davy decidedly, “Marilla is bad, for SHE tells them. And she’s worse’n me, for I didn’t know it was wrong but she does.”

“Davy Keith, Marilla never told a story in her life,” said Anne indignantly.

“She did so. She told me last Tuesday that something dreadful WOULD happen to me if I didn’t say my prayers every night. And I haven’t said them for over a week, just to see what would happen ... and nothing has,” concluded Davy in an aggrieved tone.

Anne choked back a mad desire to laugh with the conviction that it would be fatal, and then earnestly set about saving Marilla’s reputation.

“Why, Davy Keith,” she said solemnly, “something dreadful HAS happened to you this very day.”

Davy looked sceptical.

“I s’pose you mean being sent to bed without any supper,” he said scornfully, “but THAT isn’t dreadful. Course, I don’t like it, but I’ve been sent to bed so much since I come here that I’m getting used to it. And you don’t save anything by making me go without supper either, for I always eat twice as much for breakfast.”

“I don’t mean your being sent to bed. I mean the fact that you told a falsehood today. And, Davy,” ... Anne leaned over the footboard of the bed and shook her finger impressively at the culprit ... “for a boy to tell what isn’t true is almost the worst thing that could HAPPEN to him ... almost the very worst. So you see Marilla told you the truth.”

“But I thought the something bad would be exciting,” protested Davy in an injured tone.

“Marilla isn’t to blame for what you thought. Bad things aren’t always exciting. They’re very often just nasty and stupid.”

“It was awful funny to see Marilla and you looking down the well, though,” said Davy, hugging his knees.

Anne kept a sober face until she got downstairs and then she collapsed on the sitting room lounge and laughed until her sides ached.

“I wish you’d tell me the joke,” said Marilla, a little grimly. “I haven’t seen much to laugh at today.”

“You’ll laugh when you hear this,” assured Anne. And Marilla did laugh, which showed how much her education had advanced since the adoption of Anne. But she sighed immediately afterwards.

“I suppose I shouldn’t have told him that, although I heard a minister say it to a child once. But he did aggravate me so. It was that night you were at the Carmody concert and I was putting him to bed. He said he didn’t see the good of praying until he got big enough to be of some importance to God. Anne, I do not know what we are going to do with that child. I never saw his beat. I’m feeling clean discouraged.”

“Oh, don’t say that, Marilla. Remember how bad I was when I came here.”

“Anne, you never were bad ... NEVER. I see that now, when I’ve learned what real badness is. You were always getting into terrible scrapes, I’ll admit, but your motive was always good. Davy is just bad from sheer love of it.”

“Oh, no, I don’t think it is real badness with him either,” pleaded Anne. “It’s just mischief. And it is rather quiet for him here, you know. He has no other boys to play with and his mind has to have something to occupy it. Dora is so prim and proper she is no good for a boy’s playmate. I really think it would be better to let them go to school, Marilla.”

“No,” said Marilla resolutely, “my father always said that no child should be cooped up in the four walls of a school until it was seven years old, and Mr. Allan says the same thing. The twins can have a few lessons at home but go to school they shan’t till they’re seven.”

“Well, we must try to reform Davy at home then,” said Anne cheerfully. “With all his faults he’s really a dear little chap. I can’t help loving him. Marilla, it may be a dreadful thing to say, but honestly, I like Davy better than Dora, for all she’s so good.”

“I don’t know but that I do, myself,” confessed Marilla, “and it isn’t fair, for Dora isn’t a bit of trouble. There couldn’t be a better child and you’d hardly know she was in the house.”

“Dora is too good,” said Anne. “She’d behave just as well if there wasn’t a soul to tell her what to do. She was born already brought up, so she doesn’t need us; and I think,” concluded Anne, hitting on a very vital truth, “that we always love best the people who need us. Davy needs us badly.”

“He certainly needs something,” agreed Marilla. “Rachel Lynde would say it was a good spanking.”

XI

Facts and Fancies

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“Teaching is really very interesting work,” wrote Anne to a Queen’s Academy chum. “Jane says she thinks it is monotonous but I don’t find it so. Something funny is almost sure to happen every day, and the children say such amusing things. Jane says she punishes her pupils when they make funny speeches, which is probably why she finds teaching monotonous. This afternoon little Jimmy Andrews was trying to spell ‘speckled’ and couldn’t manage it. ‘Well,’ he said finally, ‘I can’t spell it but I know what it means.’

“‘What?’ I asked.

“‘St. Clair Donnell’s face, miss.’

“St. Clair is certainly very much freckled, although I try to prevent the others from commenting on it ... for I was freckled once and well do I remember it. But I don’t think St. Clair minds. It was because Jimmy called him ‘St. Clair’ that St. Clair pounded him on the way home from school. I heard of the pounding, but not officially, so I don’t think I’ll take any notice of it.

“Yesterday I was trying to teach Lottie Wright to do addition. I said, ‘If you had three candies in one hand and two in the other, how many would you have altogether?’ ‘A mouthful,’ said Lottie. And in the nature study class, when I asked them to give me a good reason why toads shouldn’t be killed, Benjie Sloane gravely answered, ‘Because it would rain the next day.’

“It’s so hard not to laugh, Stella. I have to save up all my amusement until I get home, and Marilla says it makes her nervous to hear wild shrieks of mirth proceeding from the east gable without any apparent cause. She says a man in Grafton went insane once and that was how it began.

“Did you know that Thomas a Becket was canonized as a SNAKE? Rose Bell says he was ... also that William Tyndale WROTE the New Testament. Claude White says a ‘glacier’ is a man who puts in window frames!

“I think the most difficult thing in teaching, as well as the most interesting, is to get the children to tell you their real thoughts about things. One stormy day last week I gathered them around me at dinner hour and tried to get them to talk to me just as if I were one of themselves. I asked them to tell me the things they most wanted. Some of the answers were commonplace enough ... dolls, ponies, and skates. Others were decidedly original. Hester Boulter wanted ‘to wear her Sunday dress every day and eat in the sitting room.’ Hannah Bell wanted ‘to be good without having to take any trouble about it.’ Marjory White, aged ten, wanted to be a WIDOW. Questioned why, she gravely said that if you weren’t married people called you an old maid, and if you were your husband bossed you; but if you were a widow there’d be no danger of either. The most remarkable wish was Sally Bell’s. She wanted a ‘honeymoon.’ I asked her if she knew what it was and she said she thought it was an extra nice kind of bicycle because her cousin in Montreal went on a honeymoon when he was married and he had always had the very latest in bicycles!

“Another day I asked them all to tell me the naughtiest thing they had ever done. I couldn’t get the older ones to do so, but the third class answered quite freely. Eliza Bell had ‘set fire to her aunt’s carded rolls.’ Asked if she meant to do it she said, ‘not altogether.’ She just tried a little end to see how it would burn and the whole bundle blazed up in a jiffy. Emerson Gillis had spent ten cents for candy when he should have put it in his missionary box. Annetta Bell’s worst crime was ‘eating some blueberries that grew in the graveyard.’ Willie White had ‘slid down the sheephouse roof a lot of times with his Sunday trousers on.’ ‘But I was punished for it ‘cause I had to wear patched pants to Sunday School all summer, and when you’re punished for a thing you don’t have to repent of it,’ declared Willie.

“I wish you could see some of their compositions ... so much do I wish it that I’ll send you copies of some written recently. Last week I told the fourth class I wanted them to write me letters about anything they pleased,

adding by way of suggestion that they might tell me of some place they had visited or some interesting thing or person they had seen. They were to write the letters on real note paper, seal them in an envelope, and address them to me, all without any assistance from other people. Last Friday morning I found a pile of letters on my desk and that evening I realized afresh that teaching has its pleasures as well as its pains. Those compositions would atone for much. Here is Ned Clay's, address, spelling, and grammar as originally penned.

“Miss teacher ShiRley

Green gabels.

p.e. Island can

birds

“Dear teacher I think I will write you a composition about birds. birds is very useful animals. my cat catches birds. His name is William but pa calls him tom. he is oll striped and he got one of his ears froz of last winter. only for that he would be a goodlooking cat. My unkle has adopted a cat. it come to his house one day and woudent go away and unkle says it has forgot more than most people ever knowed. he lets it sleep on his rocking chare and my aunt says he thinks more of it than he does of his children. that is not right. we ought to be kind to cats and give them new milk but we ought not be better to them than to our children. this is oll I can think of so no more at present from

edward blake ClaY.’”

“St. Clair Donnell's is, as usual, short and to the point. St. Clair never wastes words. I do not think he chose his subject or added the postscript out of malice aforethought. It is just that he has not a great deal of tact or imagination.”

“Dear Miss Shirley

“You told us to describe something strange we have seen. I will describe the Avonlea Hall. It has two doors, an inside one and an outside one. It has six windows and a chimney. It has two ends and two sides. It is painted blue. That is what makes it strange. It is built on the lower Carmody road. It is the third most important building in Avonlea. The others are the church and the blacksmith shop. They hold debating clubs and lectures in it and concerts.

“Yours truly,

“Jacob Donnell.

“P.S. The hall is a very bright blue.”

“Annetta Bell’s letter was quite long, which surprised me, for writing essays is not Annetta’s forte, and hers are generally as brief as St. Clair’s. Annetta is a quiet little puss and a model of good behavior, but there isn’t a shadow of originality in her. Here is her letter. —

“Dearest teacher,

“I think I will write you a letter to tell you how much I love you. I love you with my whole heart and soul and mind ... with all there is of me to love ... and I want to serve you for ever. It would be my highest privilege. That is why I try so hard to be good in school and learn my lessons.

“You are so beautiful, my teacher. Your voice is like music and your eyes are like pansies when the dew is on them. You are like a tall stately queen. Your hair is like rippling gold. Anthony Pye says it is red, but you needn’t pay any attention to Anthony.

“I have only known you for a few months but I cannot realize that there was ever a time when I did not know you ... when you had not come into my life to bless and hallow it. I will always look back to this year as the most wonderful in my life because it brought you to me. Besides, it’s the year we moved to Avonlea from Newbridge. My love for you has made my

life very rich and it has kept me from much of harm and evil. I owe this all to you, my sweetest teacher.

“I shall never forget how sweet you looked the last time I saw you in that black dress with flowers in your hair. I shall see you like that for ever, even when we are both old and gray. You will always be young and fair to me, dearest teacher. I am thinking of you all the time... in the morning and at the noontide and at the twilight. I love you when you laugh and when you sigh ... even when you look disdainful. I never saw you look cross though Anthony Pye says you always look so but I don’t wonder you look cross at him for he deserves it. I love you in every dress ... you seem more adorable in each new dress than the last.

“Dearest teacher, good night. The sun has set and the stars are shining ... stars that are as bright and beautiful as your eyes. I kiss your hands and face, my sweet. May God watch over you and protect you from all harm.

““Your affectionate pupil,

“Annetta Bell.”

“This extraordinary letter puzzled me not a little. I knew Annetta couldn’t have composed it any more than she could fly. When I went to school the next day I took her for a walk down to the brook at recess and asked her to tell me the truth about the letter. Annetta cried and ‘fessed up freely. She said she had never written a letter and she didn’t know how to, or what to say, but there was bundle of love letters in her mother’s top bureau drawer which had been written to her by an old ‘beau.’

“‘It wasn’t father,’ sobbed Annetta, ‘it was someone who was studying for a minister, and so he could write lovely letters, but ma didn’t marry him after all. She said she couldn’t make out what he was driving at half the time. But I thought the letters were sweet and that I’d just copy things out of them here and there to write you. I put “teacher” where he put “lady” and I put in something of my own when I could think of it and I changed some words. I put “dress” in place of “mood.” I didn’t know just what a “mood” was but I s’posed it was something to wear. I didn’t s’pose you’d

know the difference. I don't see how you found out it wasn't all mine. You must be awful clever, teacher.'

"I told Annetta it was very wrong to copy another person's letter and pass it off as her own. But I'm afraid that all Annetta repented of was being found out.

"'And I do love you, teacher,' she sobbed. 'It was all true, even if the minister wrote it first. I do love you with all my heart.'

"It's very difficult to scold anybody properly under such circumstances.

"Here is Barbara Shaw's letter. I can't reproduce the blots of the original.

"'Dear teacher,

"'You said we might write about a visit. I never visited but once. It was at my Aunt Mary's last winter. My Aunt Mary is a very particular woman and a great housekeeper. The first night I was there we were at tea. I knocked over a jug and broke it. Aunt Mary said she had had that jug ever since she was married and nobody had ever broken it before. When we got up I stepped on her dress and all the gathers tore out of the skirt. The next morning when I got up I hit the pitcher against the basin and cracked them both and I upset a cup of tea on the tablecloth at breakfast. When I was helping Aunt Mary with the dinner dishes I dropped a china plate and it smashed. That evening I fell downstairs and sprained my ankle and had to stay in bed for a week. I heard Aunt Mary tell Uncle Joseph it was a mercy or I'd have broken everything in the house. When I got better it was time to go home. I don't like visiting very much. I like going to school better, especially since I came to Avonlea.

"'Yours respectfully,

"'Barbara Shaw.'"

"Willie White's began,

"'Respected Miss,

““I want to tell you about my Very Brave Aunt. She lives in Ontario and one day she went out to the barn and saw a dog in the yard. The dog had no business there so she got a stick and whacked him hard and drove him into the barn and shut him up. Pretty soon a man came looking for an inaginary lion’ (Query; — Did Willie mean a menagerie lion?) ‘that had run away from a circus. And it turned out that the dog was a lion and my Very Brave Aunt had druv him into the barn with a stick. It was a wonder she was not et up but she was very brave. Emerson Gillis says if she thought it was a dog she wasn’t any braver than if it really was a dog. But Emerson is jealous because he hasn’t got a Brave Aunt himself, nothing but uncles.’

““I have kept the best for the last. You laugh at me because I think Paul is a genius but I am sure his letter will convince you that he is a very uncommon child. Paul lives away down near the shore with his grandmother and he has no playmates ... no real playmates. You remember our School Management professor told us that we must not have ‘favorites’ among our pupils, but I can’t help loving Paul Irving the best of all mine. I don’t think it does any harm, though, for everybody loves Paul, even Mrs. Lynde, who says she could never have believed she’d get so fond of a Yankee. The other boys in school like him too. There is nothing weak or girlish about him in spite of his dreams and fancies. He is very manly and can hold his own in all games. He fought St. Clair Donnell recently because St. Clair said the Union Jack was away ahead of the Stars and Stripes as a flag. The result was a drawn battle and a mutual agreement to respect each other’s patriotism henceforth. St. Clair says he can hit the HARDEST but Paul can hit the OFTENEST.’”

“Paul’s Letter.

““My dear teacher,

““You told us we might write you about some interesting people we knew. I think the most interesting people I know are my rock people and I mean to tell you about them. I have never told anybody about them except grandma and father but I would like to have you know about them because you understand things. There are a great many people who do not understand things so there is no use in telling them.’

“‘My rock people live at the shore. I used to visit them almost every evening before the winter came. Now I can’t go till spring, but they will be there, for people like that never change ... that is the splendid thing about them. Nora was the first one of them I got acquainted with and so I think I love her the best. She lives in Andrews’ Cove and she has black hair and black eyes, and she knows all about the mermaids and the water kelpies. You ought to hear the stories she can tell. Then there are the Twin Sailors. They don’t live anywhere, they sail all the time, but they often come ashore to talk to me. They are a pair of jolly tars and they have seen everything in the world... and more than what is in the world. Do you know what happened to the youngest Twin Sailor once? He was sailing and he sailed right into a moonglade. A moonglade is the track the full moon makes on the water when it is rising from the sea, you know, teacher. Well, the youngest Twin Sailor sailed along the moonglade till he came right up to the moon, and there was a little golden door in the moon and he opened it and sailed right through. He had some wonderful adventures in the moon but it would make this letter too long to tell them.’

“‘Then there is the Golden Lady of the cave. One day I found a big cave down on the shore and I went away in and after a while I found the Golden Lady. She has golden hair right down to her feet and her dress is all glittering and glistening like gold that is alive. And she has a golden harp and plays on it all day long ... you can hear the music any time along shore if you listen carefully but most people would think it was only the wind among the rocks. I’ve never told Nora about the Golden Lady. I was afraid it might hurt her feelings. It even hurt her feelings if I talked too long with the Twin Sailors.’

“‘I always met the Twin Sailors at the Striped Rocks. The youngest Twin Sailor is very good-tempered but the oldest Twin Sailor can look dreadfully fierce at times. I have my suspicions about that oldest Twin. I believe he’d be a pirate if he dared. There’s really something very mysterious about him. He swore once and I told him if he ever did it again he needn’t come ashore to talk to me because I’d promised grandmother I’d never associate with anybody that swore. He was pretty well scared, I can tell you, and he said if I would forgive him he would take me to the sunset. So the next evening when I was sitting on the Striped Rocks the

oldest Twin came sailing over the sea in an enchanted boat and I got in her. The boat was all pearly and rainbowy, like the inside of the mussel shells, and her sail was like moonshine. Well, we sailed right across to the sunset. Think of that, teacher, I've been in the sunset. And what do you suppose it is? The sunset is a land all flowers. We sailed into a great garden, and the clouds are beds of flowers. We sailed into a great harbor, all the color of gold, and I stepped right out of the boat on a big meadow all covered with buttercups as big as roses. I stayed there for ever so long. It seemed nearly a year but the Oldest Twin says it was only a few minutes. You see, in the sunset land the time is ever so much longer than it is here.'

“‘Your loving pupil Paul Irving.’

“‘P. S. of course, this letter isn't really true, teacher. P.I.’”

XI I

A Jonah Day

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It really began the night before with a restless, wakeful vigil of grumbling toothache. When Anne arose in the dull, bitter winter morning she felt that life was flat, stale, and unprofitable.

She went to school in no angelic mood. Her cheek was swollen and her face ached. The schoolroom was cold and smoky, for the fire refused to burn and the children were huddled about it in shivering groups. Anne sent them to their seats with a sharper tone than she had ever used before. Anthony Pye strutted to his with his usual impertinent swagger and she saw him whisper something to his seat-mate and then glance at her with a grin.

Never, so it seemed to Anne, had there been so many squeaky pencils as there were that morning; and when Barbara Shaw came up to the desk with a sum she tripped over the coal scuttle with disastrous results. The coal

rolled to every part of the room, her slate was broken into fragments, and when she picked herself up, her face, stained with coal dust, sent the boys into roars of laughter.

Anne turned from the second reader class which she was hearing.

“Really, Barbara,” she said icily, “if you cannot move without falling over something you’d better remain in your seat. It is positively disgraceful for a girl of your age to be so awkward.”

Poor Barbara stumbled back to her desk, her tears combining with the coal dust to produce an effect truly grotesque. Never before had her beloved, sympathetic teacher spoken to her in such a tone or fashion, and Barbara was heartbroken. Anne herself felt a prick of conscience but it only served to increase her mental irritation, and the second reader class remember that lesson yet, as well as the unmerciful infliction of arithmetic that followed. Just as Anne was snapping the sums out St. Clair Donnell arrived breathlessly.

“You are half an hour late, St. Clair,” Anne reminded him frigidly. “Why is this?”

“Please, miss, I had to help ma make a pudding for dinner ‘cause we’re expecting company and Clarice Almira’s sick,” was St. Clair’s answer, given in a perfectly respectful voice but nevertheless provocative of great mirth among his mates.

“Take your seat and work out the six problems on page eighty-four of your arithmetic for punishment,” said Anne. St. Clair looked rather amazed at her tone but he went meekly to his desk and took out his slate. Then he stealthily passed a small parcel to Joe Sloane across the aisle. Anne caught him in the act and jumped to a fatal conclusion about that parcel.

Old Mrs. Hiram Sloane had lately taken to making and selling “nut cakes” by way of adding to her scanty income. The cakes were specially tempting to small boys and for several weeks Anne had had not a little trouble in regard to them. On their way to school the boys would invest their spare cash at Mrs. Hiram’s, bring the cakes along with them to school, and, if

possible, eat them and treat their mates during school hours. Anne had warned them that if they brought any more cakes to school they would be confiscated; and yet here was St. Clair Donnell coolly passing a parcel of them, wrapped up in the blue and white striped paper Mrs. Hiram used, under her very eyes.

“Joseph,” said Anne quietly, “bring that parcel here.”

Joe, startled and abashed, obeyed. He was a fat urchin who always blushed and stuttered when he was frightened. Never did anybody look more guilty than poor Joe at that moment.

“Throw it into the fire,” said Anne.

Joe looked very blank.

“P ... p ... p ... lease, m ... m ... miss,” he began.

“Do as I tell you, Joseph, without any words about it.”

“B ... b ... but m ... m ... miss ... th ... th ... they’re ...” gasped Joe in desperation.

“Joseph, are you going to obey me or are you NOT?” said Anne.

A bolder and more selfpossessed lad than Joe Sloane would have been overawed by her tone and the dangerous flash of her eyes. This was a new Anne whom none of her pupils had ever seen before. Joe, with an agonized glance at St. Clair, went to the stove, opened the big, square front door, and threw the blue and white parcel in, before St. Clair, who had sprung to his feet, could utter a word. Then he dodged back just in time.

For a few moments the terrified occupants of Avonlea school did not know whether it was an earthquake or a volcanic explosion that had occurred. The innocent looking parcel which Anne had rashly supposed to contain Mrs. Hiram’s nut cakes really held an assortment of firecrackers and pinwheels for which Warren Sloane had sent to town by St. Clair Donnell’s father the day before, intending to have a birthday celebration that

evening. The crackers went off in a thunderclap of noise and the pinwheels bursting out of the door spun madly around the room, hissing and spluttering. Anne dropped into her chair white with dismay and all the girls climbed shrieking upon their desks. Joe Sloane stood as one transfixed in the midst of the commotion and St. Clair, helpless with laughter, rocked to and fro in the aisle. Prillie Rogerson fainted and Annetta Bell went into hysterics.

It seemed a long time, although it was really only a few minutes, before the last pinwheel subsided. Anne, recovering herself, sprang to open doors and windows and let out the gas and smoke which filled the room. Then she helped the girls carry the unconscious Prillie into the porch, where Barbara Shaw, in an agony of desire to be useful, poured a pailful of half frozen water over Prillie's face and shoulders before anyone could stop her.

It was a full hour before quiet was restored ... but it was a quiet that might be felt. Everybody realized that even the explosion had not cleared the teacher's mental atmosphere. Nobody, except Anthony Pye, dared whisper a word. Ned Clay accidentally squeaked his pencil while working a sum, caught Anne's eye and wished the floor would open and swallow him up. The geography class were whisked through a continent with a speed that made them dizzy. The grammar class were parsed and analyzed within an inch of their lives. Chester Sloane, spelling "odoriferous" with two f's, was made to feel that he could never live down the disgrace of it, either in this world or that which is to come.

Anne knew that she had made herself ridiculous and that the incident would be laughed over that night at a score of tea-tables, but the knowledge only angered her further. In a calmer mood she could have carried off the situation with a laugh but now that was impossible; so she ignored it in icy disdain.

When Anne returned to the school after dinner all the children were as usual in their seats and every face was bent studiously over a desk except Anthony Pye's. He peered across his book at Anne, his black eyes sparkling with curiosity and mockery. Anne twitched open the drawer of

her desk in search of chalk and under her very hand a lively mouse sprang out of the drawer, scampered over the desk, and leaped to the floor.

Anne screamed and sprang back, as if it had been a snake, and Anthony Pye laughed aloud.

Then a silence fell ... a very creepy, uncomfortable silence. Annetta Bell was of two minds whether to go into hysterics again or not, especially as she didn't know just where the mouse had gone. But she decided not to. Who could take any comfort out of hysterics with a teacher so white-faced and so blazing-eyed standing before one?

"Who put that mouse in my desk?" said Anne. Her voice was quite low but it made a shiver go up and down Paul Irving's spine. Joe Sloane caught her eye, felt responsible from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, but stuttered out wildly,

"N ... n ... not m ... m ... me t ... t ... teacher, n ... n ... not m ... m ... me."

Anne paid no attention to the wretched Joseph. She looked at Anthony Pye, and Anthony Pye looked back unabashed and unashamed.

"Anthony, was it you?"

"Yes, it was," said Anthony insolently.

Anne took her pointer from her desk. It was a long, heavy hardwood pointer.

"Come here, Anthony."

It was far from being the most severe punishment Anthony Pye had ever undergone. Anne, even the stormy-souled Anne she was at that moment, could not have punished any child cruelly. But the pointer nipped keenly and finally Anthony's bravado failed him; he winced and the tears came to his eyes.

Anne, conscience-stricken, dropped the pointer and told Anthony to go to his seat. She sat down at her desk feeling ashamed, repentant, and bitterly mortified. Her quick anger was gone and she would have given much to have been able to seek relief in tears. So all her boasts had come to this ... she had actually whipped one of her pupils. How Jane would triumph! And how Mr. Harrison would chuckle! But worse than this, bitterest thought of all, she had lost her last chance of winning Anthony Pye. Never would he like her now.

Anne, by what somebody has called “a Herculeaneum effort,” kept back her tears until she got home that night. Then she shut herself in the east gable room and wept all her shame and remorse and disappointment into her pillows ... wept so long that Marilla grew alarmed, invaded the room, and insisted on knowing what the trouble was.

“The trouble is, I’ve got things the matter with my conscience,” sobbed Anne. “Oh, this has been such a Jonah day, Marilla. I’m so ashamed of myself. I lost my temper and whipped Anthony Pye.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Marilla with decision. “It’s what you should have done long ago.”

“Oh, no, no, Marilla. And I don’t see how I can ever look those children in the face again. I feel that I have humiliated myself to the very dust. You don’t know how cross and hateful and horrid I was. I can’t forget the expression in Paul Irving’s eyes ... he looked so surprised and disappointed. Oh, Marilla, I HAVE tried so hard to be patient and to win Anthony’s liking ... and now it has all gone for nothing.”

Marilla passed her hard work-worn hand over the girl’s glossy, tumbled hair with a wonderful tenderness. When Anne’s sobs grew quieter she said, very gently for her,

“You take things too much to heart, Anne. We all make mistakes ... but people forget them. And Jonah days come to everybody. As for Anthony Pye, why need you care if he does dislike you? He is the only one.”

“I can’t help it. I want everybody to love me and it hurts me so when anybody doesn’t. And Anthony never will now. Oh, I just made an idiot of myself today, Marilla. I’ll tell you the whole story.”

Marilla listened to the whole story, and if she smiled at certain parts of it Anne never knew. When the tale was ended she said briskly,

“Well, never mind. This day’s done and there’s a new one coming tomorrow, with no mistakes in it yet, as you used to say yourself. Just come downstairs and have your supper. You’ll see if a good cup of tea and those plum puffs I made today won’t hearten you up.”

“Plum puffs won’t minister to a mind diseased,” said Anne disconsolately; but Marilla thought it a good sign that she had recovered sufficiently to adapt a quotation.

The cheerful supper table, with the twins’ bright faces, and Marilla’s matchless plum puffs ... of which Davy ate four ... did “hearten her up” considerably after all. She had a good sleep that night and awakened in the morning to find herself and the world transformed. It had snowed softly and thickly all through the hours of darkness and the beautiful whiteness, glittering in the frosty sunshine, looked like a mantle of charity cast over all the mistakes and humiliations of the past.

“Every morn is a fresh beginning,

Every morn is the world made new,”

sang Anne, as she dressed.

Owing to the snow she had to go around by the road to school and she thought it was certainly an impish coincidence that Anthony Pye should come ploughing along just as she left the Green Gables lane. She felt as guilty as if their positions were reversed; but to her unspeakable astonishment Anthony not only lifted his cap ... which he had never done before ... but said easily,

“Kind of bad walking, ain’t it? Can I take those books for you, teacher?”

Anne surrendered her books and wondered if she could possibly be awake. Anthony walked on in silence to the school, but when Anne took her books she smiled down at him ... not the stereotyped “kind” smile she had so persistently assumed for his benefit but a sudden outflashing of good comradeship. Anthony smiled ... no, if the truth must be told, Anthony GRINNED back. A grin is not generally supposed to be a respectful thing; yet Anne suddenly felt that if she had not yet won Anthony’s liking she had, somehow or other, won his respect.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde came up the next Saturday and confirmed this.

“Well, Anne, I guess you’ve won over Anthony Pye, that’s what. He says he believes you are some good after all, even if you are a girl. Says that whipping you gave him was ‘just as good as a man’s.’”

“I never expected to win him by whipping him, though,” said Anne, a little mournfully, feeling that her ideals had played her false somewhere. “It doesn’t seem right. I’m sure my theory of kindness can’t be wrong.”

“No, but the Pyes are an exception to every known rule, that’s what,” declared Mrs. Rachel with conviction.

Mr. Harrison said, “Thought you’d come to it,” when he heard it, and Jane rubbed it in rather unmercifully.

XII I

A Golden Picnic

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Anne, on her way to Orchard Slope, met Diana, bound for Green Gables, just where the mossy old log bridge spanned the brook below the Haunted Wood, and they sat down by the margin of the Dryad's Bubble, where tiny ferns were unrolling like curly-headed green pixy folk waking up from a nap.

"I was just on my way over to invite you to help me celebrate my birthday on Saturday," said Anne.

"Your birthday? But your birthday was in March!"

"That wasn't my fault," laughed Anne. "If my parents had consulted me it would never have happened then. I should have chosen to be born in spring, of course. It must be delightful to come into the world with the mayflowers and violets. You would always feel that you were their foster sister. But since I didn't, the next best thing is to celebrate my birthday in the spring. Priscilla is coming over Saturday and Jane will be home. We'll all four start off to the woods and spend a golden day making the acquaintance of the spring. We none of us really know her yet, but we'll meet her back there as we never can anywhere else. I want to explore all those fields and lonely places anyhow. I have a conviction that there are scores of beautiful nooks there that have never really been SEEN although they may have been LOOKED at. We'll make friends with wind and sky and sun, and bring home the spring in our hearts."

"It SOUNDS awfully nice," said Diana, with some inward distrust of Anne's magic of words. "But won't it be very damp in some places yet?"

“Oh, we’ll wear rubbers,” was Anne’s concession to practicalities. “And I want you to come over early Saturday morning and help me prepare lunch. I’m going to have the daintiest things possible ... things that will match the spring, you understand ... little jelly tarts and lady fingers, and drop cookies frosted with pink and yellow icing, and buttercup cake. And we must have sandwiches too, though they’re NOT very poetical.”

Saturday proved an ideal day for a picnic ... a day of breeze and blue, warm, sunny, with a little rollicking wind blowing across meadow and orchard. Over every sunlit upland and field was a delicate, flower-starred green.

Mr. Harrison, harrowing at the back of his farm and feeling some of the spring witch-work even in his sober, middle-aged blood, saw four girls, basket laden, tripping across the end of his field where it joined a fringing woodland of birch and fir. Their blithe voices and laughter echoed down to him.

“It’s so easy to be happy on a day like this, isn’t it?” Anne was saying, with true Anneish philosophy. “Let’s try to make this a really golden day, girls, a day to which we can always look back with delight. We’re to seek for beauty and refuse to see anything else. ‘Begone, dull care!’ Jane, you are thinking of something that went wrong in school yesterday.”

“How do you know?” gasped Jane, amazed.

“Oh, I know the expression ... I’ve felt it often enough on my own face. But put it out of your mind, there’s a dear. It will keep till Monday ... or if it doesn’t so much the better. Oh, girls, girls, see that patch of violets! There’s something for memory’s picture gallery. When I’m eighty years old ... if I ever am ... I shall shut my eyes and see those violets just as I see them now. That’s the first good gift our day has given us.”

“If a kiss could be seen I think it would look like a violet,” said Priscilla.

Anne glowed.

“I’m so glad you SPOKE that thought, Priscilla, instead of just thinking it and keeping it to yourself. This world would be a much more interesting place ... although it IS very interesting anyhow ... if people spoke out their real thoughts.”

“It would be too hot to hold some folks,” quoted Jane sagely.

“I suppose it might be, but that would be their own faults for thinking nasty things. Anyhow, we can tell all our thoughts today because we are going to have nothing but beautiful thoughts. Everybody can say just what comes into her head. THAT is conversation. Here’s a little path I never saw before. Let’s explore it.”

The path was a winding one, so narrow that the girls walked in single file and even then the fir boughs brushed their faces. Under the firs were velvety cushions of moss, and further on, where the trees were smaller and fewer, the ground was rich in a variety of green growing things.

“What a lot of elephant’s ears,” exclaimed Diana. “I’m going to pick a big bunch, they’re so pretty.”

“How did such graceful feathery things ever come to have such a dreadful name?” asked Priscilla.

“Because the person who first named them either had no imagination at all or else far too much,” said Anne, “Oh, girls, look at that!”

“That” was a shallow woodland pool in the center of a little open glade where the path ended. Later on in the season it would be dried up and its place filled with a rank growth of ferns; but now it was a glimmering placid sheet, round as a saucer and clear as crystal. A ring of slender young birches encircled it and little ferns fringed its margin.

“HOW sweet!” said Jane.

“Let us dance around it like woodnymphs,” cried Anne, dropping her basket and extending her hands.

But the dance was not a success for the ground was boggy and Jane's rubbers came off.

"You can't be a woodnymph if you have to wear rubbers," was her decision.

"Well, we must name this place before we leave it," said Anne, yielding to the indisputable logic of facts. "Everybody suggest a name and we'll draw lots. Diana?"

"Birch Pool," suggested Diana promptly.

"Crystal Lake," said Jane.

Anne, standing behind them, implored Priscilla with her eyes not to perpetrate another such name and Priscilla rose to the occasion with "Glimmer-glass." Anne's selection was "The Fairies' Mirror."

The names were written on strips of birch bark with a pencil Schoolma'am Jane produced from her pocket, and placed in Anne's hat. Then Priscilla shut her eyes and drew one. "Crystal Lake," read Jane triumphantly. Crystal Lake it was, and if Anne thought that chance had played the pool a shabby trick she did not say so.

Pushing through the undergrowth beyond, the girls came out to the young green seclusion of Mr. Silas Sloane's back pasture. Across it they found the entrance to a lane striking up through the woods and voted to explore it also. It rewarded their quest with a succession of pretty surprises. First, skirting Mr. Sloane's pasture, came an archway of wild cherry trees all in bloom. The girls swung their hats on their arms and wreathed their hair with the creamy, fluffy blossoms. Then the lane turned at right angles and plunged into a spruce wood so thick and dark that they walked in a gloom as of twilight, with not a glimpse of sky or sunlight to be seen.

"This is where the bad wood elves dwell," whispered Anne. "They are impish and malicious but they can't harm us, because they are not allowed to do evil in the spring. There was one peeping at us around that old twisted fir; and didn't you see a group of them on that big freckly

toadstool we just passed? The good fairies always dwell in the sunshiny places.”

“I wish there really were fairies,” said Jane. “Wouldn’t it be nice to have three wishes granted you ... or even only one? What would you wish for, girls, if you could have a wish granted? I’d wish to be rich and beautiful and clever.”

“I’d wish to be tall and slender,” said Diana.

“I would wish to be famous,” said Priscilla. Anne thought of her hair and then dismissed the thought as unworthy.

“I’d wish it might be spring all the time and in everybody’s heart and all our lives,” she said.

“But that,” said Priscilla, “would be just wishing this world were like heaven.”

“Only like a part of heaven. In the other parts there would be summer and autumn ... yes, and a bit of winter, too. I think I want glittering snowy fields and white frosts in heaven sometimes. Don’t you, Jane?”

“I ... I don’t know,” said Jane uncomfortably. Jane was a good girl, a member of the church, who tried conscientiously to live up to her profession and believed everything she had been taught. But she never thought about heaven any more than she could help, for all that.

“Minnie May asked me the other day if we would wear our best dresses every day in heaven,” laughed Diana.

“And didn’t you tell her we would?” asked Anne.

“Mercy, no! I told her we wouldn’t be thinking of dresses at all there.”

“Oh, I think we will ... a LITTLE,” said Anne earnestly. “There’ll be plenty of time in all eternity for it without neglecting more important things. I believe we’ll all wear beautiful dresses ... or I suppose RAIMENT would be a more suitable way of speaking. I shall want to wear

pink for a few centuries at first ... it would take me that long to get tired of it, I feel sure. I do love pink so and I can never wear it in THIS world.”

Past the spruces the lane dipped down into a sunny little open where a log bridge spanned a brook; and then came the glory of a sunlit beechwood where the air was like transparent golden wine, and the leaves fresh and green, and the wood floor a mosaic of tremulous sunshine. Then more wild cherries, and a little valley of lissome firs, and then a hill so steep that the girls lost their breath climbing it; but when they reached the top and came out into the open the prettiest surprise of all awaited them.

Beyond were the “back fields” of the farms that ran out to the upper Carmody road. Just before them, hemmed in by beeches and firs but open to the south, was a little corner and in it a garden ... or what had once been a garden. A tumbledown stone dyke, overgrown with mosses and grass, surrounded it. Along the eastern side ran a row of garden cherry trees, white as a snowdrift. There were traces of old paths still and a double line of rosebushes through the middle; but all the rest of the space was a sheet of yellow and white narcissi, in their airiest, most lavish, wind-swayed bloom above the lush green grasses.

“Oh, how perfectly lovely!” three of the girls cried. Anne only gazed in eloquent silence.

“How in the world does it happen that there ever was a garden back here?” said Priscilla in amazement.

“It must be Hester Gray’s garden,” said Diana. “I’ve heard mother speak of it but I never saw it before, and I wouldn’t have supposed that it could be in existence still. You’ve heard the story, Anne?”

“No, but the name seems familiar to me.”

“Oh, you’ve seen it in the graveyard. She is buried down there in the poplar corner. You know the little brown stone with the opening gates carved on it and ‘Sacred to the memory of Hester Gray, aged twenty-two.’ Jordan Gray is buried right beside her but there’s no stone to him. It’s a

wonder Marilla never told you about it, Anne. To be sure, it happened thirty years ago and everybody has forgotten.”

“Well, if there’s a story we must have it,” said Anne. “Let’s sit right down here among the narcissi and Diana will tell it. Why, girls, there are hundreds of them ... they’ve spread over everything. It looks as if the garden were carpeted with moonshine and sunshine combined. This is a discovery worth making. To think that I’ve lived within a mile of this place for six years and have never seen it before! Now, Diana.”

“Long ago,” began Diana, “this farm belonged to old Mr. David Gray. He didn’t live on it ... he lived where Silas Sloane lives now. He had one son, Jordan, and he went up to Boston one winter to work and while he was there he fell in love with a girl named Hester Murray. She was working in a store and she hated it. She’d been brought up in the country and she always wanted to get back. When Jordan asked her to marry him she said she would if he’d take her away to some quiet spot where she’d see nothing but fields and trees. So he brought her to Avonlea. Mrs. Lynde said he was taking a fearful risk in marrying a Yankee, and it’s certain that Hester was very delicate and a very poor housekeeper; but mother says she was very pretty and sweet and Jordan just worshipped the ground she walked on. Well, Mr. Gray gave Jordan this farm and he built a little house back here and Jordan and Hester lived in it for four years. She never went out much and hardly anybody went to see her except mother and Mrs. Lynde. Jordan made her this garden and she was crazy about it and spent most of her time in it. She wasn’t much of a housekeeper but she had a knack with flowers. And then she got sick. Mother says she thinks she was in consumption before she ever came here. She never really laid up but just grew weaker and weaker all the time. Jordan wouldn’t have anybody to wait on her. He did it all himself and mother says he was as tender and gentle as a woman. Every day he’d wrap her in a shawl and carry her out to the garden and she’d lie there on a bench quite happy. They say she used to make Jordan kneel down by her every night and morning and pray with her that she might die out in the garden when the time came. And her prayer was answered. One day Jordan carried her out to the bench and then he picked all the roses that were out and heaped them over her; and she just

smiled up at him ... and closed her eyes ... and that,” concluded Diana softly, “was the end.”

“Oh, what a dear story,” sighed Anne, wiping away her tears.

“What became of Jordan?” asked Priscilla.

“He sold the farm after Hester died and went back to Boston. Mr. Jabez Sloane bought the farm and hauled the little house out to the road. Jordan died about ten years after and he was brought home and buried beside Hester.”

“I can’t understand how she could have wanted to live back here, away from everything,” said Jane.

“Oh, I can easily understand THAT,” said Anne thoughtfully. “I wouldn’t want it myself for a steady thing, because, although I love the fields and woods, I love people too. But I can understand it in Hester. She was tired to death of the noise of the big city and the crowds of people always coming and going and caring nothing for her. She just wanted to escape from it all to some still, green, friendly place where she could rest. And she got just what she wanted, which is something very few people do, I believe. She had four beautiful years before she died... four years of perfect happiness, so I think she was to be envied more than pitied. And then to shut your eyes and fall asleep among roses, with the one you loved best on earth smiling down at you ... oh, I think it was beautiful!”

“She set out those cherry trees over there,” said Diana. “She told mother she’d never live to eat their fruit, but she wanted to think that something she had planted would go on living and helping to make the world beautiful after she was dead.”

“I’m so glad we came this way,” said Anne, the shining-eyed. “This is my adopted birthday, you know, and this garden and its story is the birthday gift it has given me. Did your mother ever tell you what Hester Gray looked like, Diana?”

“No ... only just that she was pretty.”

“I’m rather glad of that, because I can imagine what she looked like, without being hampered by facts. I think she was very slight and small, with softly curling dark hair and big, sweet, timid brown eyes, and a little wistful, pale face.”

The girls left their baskets in Hester’s garden and spent the rest of the afternoon rambling in the woods and fields surrounding it, discovering many pretty nooks and lanes. When they got hungry they had lunch in the prettiest spot of all ... on the steep bank of a gurgling brook where white birches shot up out of long feathery grasses. The girls sat down by the roots and did full justice to Anne’s dainties, even the unpoetical sandwiches being greatly appreciated by hearty, unspoiled appetites sharpened by all the fresh air and exercise they had enjoyed. Anne had brought glasses and lemonade for her guests, but for her own part drank cold brook water from a cup fashioned out of birch bark. The cup leaked, and the water tasted of earth, as brook water is apt to do in spring; but Anne thought it more appropriate to the occasion than lemonade.

“Look do you see that poem?” she said suddenly, pointing.

“Where?” Jane and Diana stared, as if expecting to see Runic rhymes on the birch trees.

“There ... down in the brook ... that old green, mossy log with the water flowing over it in those smooth ripples that look as if they’d been combed, and that single shaft of sunshine falling right athwart it, far down into the pool. Oh, it’s the most beautiful poem I ever saw.”

“I should rather call it a picture,” said Jane. “A poem is lines and verses.”

“Oh dear me, no.” Anne shook her head with its fluffy wild cherry coronal positively. “The lines and verses are only the outward garments of the poem and are no more really it than your ruffles and flounces are YOU, Jane. The real poem is the soul within them ... and that beautiful bit is the soul of an unwritten poem. It is not every day one sees a soul ... even of a poem.”

“I wonder what a soul ... a person’s soul ... would look like,” said Priscilla dreamily.

“Like that, I should think,” answered Anne, pointing to a radiance of sifted sunlight streaming through a birch tree. “Only with shape and features of course. I like to fancy souls as being made of light. And some are all shot through with rosy stains and quivers ... and some have a soft glitter like moonlight on the sea ... and some are pale and transparent like mist at dawn.”

“I read somewhere once that souls were like flowers,” said Priscilla.

“Then your soul is a golden narcissus,” said Anne, “and Diana’s is like a red, red rose. Jane’s is an apple blossom, pink and wholesome and sweet.”

“And your own is a white violet, with purple streaks in its heart,” finished Priscilla.

Jane whispered to Diana that she really could not understand what they were talking about. Could she?

The girls went home by the light of a calm golden sunset, their baskets filled with narcissus blossoms from Hester’s garden, some of which Anne carried to the cemetery next day and laid upon Hester’s grave. Minstrel robins were whistling in the firs and the frogs were singing in the marshes. All the basins among the hills were brimmed with topaz and emerald light.

“Well, we have had a lovely time after all,” said Diana, as if she had hardly expected to have it when she set out.

“It has been a truly golden day,” said Priscilla.

“I’m really awfully fond of the woods myself,” said Jane.

Anne said nothing. She was looking afar into the western sky and thinking of little Hester Gray.

XI V

A Danger Averted

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Anne, walking home from the post office one Friday evening, was joined by Mrs. Lynde, who was as usual cumbered with all the cares of church and state.

“I’ve just been down to Timothy Cotton’s to see if I could get Alice Louise to help me for a few days,” she said. “I had her last week, for, though she’s too slow to stop quick, she’s better than nobody. But she’s sick and can’t come. Timothy’s sitting there, too, coughing and complaining. He’s been dying for ten years and he’ll go on dying for ten years more. That kind can’t even die and have done with it ... they can’t stick to anything, even to being sick, long enough to finish it. They’re a terrible shiftless family and what is to become of them I don’t know, but perhaps Providence does.”

Mrs. Lynde sighed as if she rather doubted the extent of Providential knowledge on the subject.

“Marilla was in about her eyes again Tuesday, wasn’t she? What did the specialist think of them?” she continued.

“He was much pleased,” said Anne brightly. “He says there is a great improvement in them and he thinks the danger of her losing her sight completely is past. But he says she’ll never be able to read much or do any fine handwork again. How are your preparations for your bazaar coming on?”

The Ladies’ Aid Society was preparing for a fair and supper, and Mrs. Lynde was the head and front of the enterprise.

“Pretty well ... and that reminds me. Mrs. Allan thinks it would be nice to fix up a booth like an old-time kitchen and serve a supper of baked beans, doughnuts, pie, and so on. We’re collecting old-fashioned fixings

everywhere. Mrs. Simon Fletcher is going to lend us her mother's braided rugs and Mrs. Levi Boulter some old chairs and Aunt Mary Shaw will lend us her cupboard with the glass doors. I suppose Marilla will let us have her brass candlesticks? And we want all the old dishes we can get. Mrs. Allan is specially set on having a real blue willow ware platter if we can find one. But nobody seems to have one. Do you know where we could get one?"

"Miss Josephine Barry has one. I'll write and ask her if she'll lend it for the occasion," said Anne.

"Well, I wish you would. I guess we'll have the supper in about a fortnight's time. Uncle Abe Andrews is prophesying rain and storms for about that time; and that's a pretty sure sign we'll have fine weather."

The said "Uncle Abe," it may be mentioned, was at least like other prophets in that he had small honor in his own country. He was, in fact, considered in the light of a standing joke, for few of his weather predictions were ever fulfilled. Mr. Elisha Wright, who labored under the impression that he was a local wit, used to say that nobody in Avonlea ever thought of looking in the Charlottetown dailies for weather probabilities. No; they just asked Uncle Abe what it was going to be tomorrow and expected the opposite. Nothing daunted, Uncle Abe kept on prophesying.

"We want to have the fair over before the election comes off," continued Mrs. Lynde, "for the candidates will be sure to come and spend lots of money. The Tories are bribing right and left, so they might as well be given a chance to spend their money honestly for once."

Anne was a red-hot Conservative, out of loyalty to Matthew's memory, but she said nothing. She knew better than to get Mrs. Lynde started on politics. She had a letter for Marilla, postmarked from a town in British Columbia.

"It's probably from the children's uncle," she said excitedly, when she got home. "Oh, Marilla, I wonder what he says about them."

“The best plan might be to open it and see,” said Marilla curtly. A close observer might have thought that she was excited also, but she would rather have died than show it.

Anne tore open the letter and glanced over the somewhat untidy and poorly written contents.

“He says he can’t take the children this spring ... he’s been sick most of the winter and his wedding is put off. He wants to know if we can keep them till the fall and he’ll try and take them then. We will, of course, won’t we Marilla?”

“I don’t see that there is anything else for us to do,” said Marilla rather grimly, although she felt a secret relief. “Anyhow they’re not so much trouble as they were ... or else we’ve got used to them. Davy has improved a great deal.”

“His MANNERS are certainly much better,” said Anne cautiously, as if she were not prepared to say as much for his morals.

Anne had come home from school the previous evening, to find Marilla away at an Aid meeting, Dora asleep on the kitchen sofa, and Davy in the sitting room closet, blissfully absorbing the contents of a jar of Marilla’s famous yellow plum preserves ... “company jam,” Davy called it ... which he had been forbidden to touch. He looked very guilty when Anne pounced on him and whisked him out of the closet.

“Davy Keith, don’t you know that it is very wrong of you to be eating that jam, when you were told never to meddle with anything in THAT closet?”

“Yes, I knew it was wrong,” admitted Davy uncomfortably, “but plum jam is awful nice, Anne. I just peeped in and it looked so good I thought I’d take just a weeny taste. I stuck my finger in ...” Anne groaned ... “and licked it clean. And it was so much gooder than I’d ever thought that I got a spoon and just SAILED IN.”

Anne gave him such a serious lecture on the sin of stealing plum jam that Davy became conscience stricken and promised with repentant kisses

never to do it again.

“Anyhow, there’ll be plenty of jam in heaven, that’s one comfort,” he said complacently.

Anne nipped a smile in the bud.

“Perhaps there will ... if we want it,” she said, “But what makes you think so?”

“Why, it’s in the catechism,” said Davy.

“Oh, no, there is nothing like THAT in the catechism, Davy.”

“But I tell you there is,” persisted Davy. “It was in that question Marilla taught me last Sunday. ‘Why should we love God?’ It says, ‘Because He makes preserves, and redeems us.’ Preserves is just a holy way of saying jam.”

“I must get a drink of water,” said Anne hastily. When she came back it cost her some time and trouble to explain to Davy that a certain comma in the said catechism question made a great deal of difference in the meaning.

“Well, I thought it was too good to be true,” he said at last, with a sigh of disappointed conviction. “And besides, I didn’t see when He’d find time to make jam if it’s one endless Sabbath day, as the hymn says. I don’t believe I want to go to heaven. Won’t there ever be any Saturdays in heaven, Anne?”

“Yes, Saturdays, and every other kind of beautiful days. And every day in heaven will be more beautiful than the one before it, Davy,” assured Anne, who was rather glad that Marilla was not by to be shocked. Marilla, it is needless to say, was bringing the twins up in the good old ways of theology and discouraged all fanciful speculations thereupon. Davy and Dora were taught a hymn, a catechism question, and two Bible verses every Sunday. Dora learned meekly and recited like a little machine, with perhaps as much understanding or interest as if she were one. Davy, on the contrary,

had a lively curiosity, and frequently asked questions which made Marilla tremble for his fate.

“Chester Sloane says we’ll do nothing all the time in heaven but walk around in white dresses and play on harps; and he says he hopes he won’t have to go till he’s an old man, ‘cause maybe he’ll like it better then. And he thinks it will be horrid to wear dresses and I think so too. Why can’t men angels wear trousers, Anne? Chester Sloane is interested in those things, ‘cause they’re going to make a minister of him. He’s got to be a minister ‘cause his grandmother left the money to send him to college and he can’t have it unless he is a minister. She thought a minister was such a ‘spectable thing to have in a family. Chester says he doesn’t mind much ... though he’d rather be a blacksmith ... but he’s bound to have all the fun he can before he begins to be a minister, ‘cause he doesn’t expect to have much afterwards. I ain’t going to be a minister. I’m going to be a storekeeper, like Mr. Blair, and keep heaps of candy and bananas. But I’d rather like going to your kind of a heaven if they’d let me play a mouth organ instead of a harp. Do you s’pose they would?”

“Yes, I think they would if you wanted it,” was all Anne could trust herself to say.

The A.V.I.S. met at Mr. Harmon Andrews’ that evening and a full attendance had been requested, since important business was to be discussed. The A.V.I.S. was in a flourishing condition, and had already accomplished wonders. Early in the spring Mr. Major Spencer had redeemed his promise and had stumped, graded, and seeded down all the road front of his farm. A dozen other men, some prompted by a determination not to let a Spencer get ahead of them, others goaded into action by Improvers in their own households, had followed his example. The result was that there were long strips of smooth velvet turf where once had been unsightly undergrowth or brush. The farm fronts that had not been done looked so badly by contrast that their owners were secretly shamed into resolving to see what they could do another spring. The triangle of ground at the cross roads had also been cleared and seeded down, and Anne’s bed of geraniums, unharmed by any marauding cow, was already set out in the center.

Altogether, the Improvers thought that they were getting on beautifully, even if Mr. Levi Boulter, tactfully approached by a carefully selected committee in regard to the old house on his upper farm, did bluntly tell them that he wasn't going to have it meddled with.

At this especial meeting they intended to draw up a petition to the school trustees, humbly praying that a fence be put around the school grounds; and a plan was also to be discussed for planting a few ornamental trees by the church, if the funds of the society would permit of it ... for, as Anne said, there was no use in starting another subscription as long as the hall remained blue. The members were assembled in the Andrews' parlor and Jane was already on her feet to move the appointment of a committee which should find out and report on the price of said trees, when Gertie Pye swept in, pompadoured and frilled within an inch of her life. Gertie had a habit of being late ... "to make her entrance more effective," spiteful people said. Gertie's entrance in this instance was certainly effective, for she paused dramatically on the middle of the floor, threw up her hands, rolled her eyes, and exclaimed, "I've just heard something perfectly awful. What DO you think? Mr. Judson Parker IS GOING TO RENT ALL THE ROAD FENCE OF HIS FARM TO A PATENT MEDICINE COMPANY TO PAINT ADVERTISEMENTS ON."

For once in her life Gertie Pye made all the sensation she desired. If she had thrown a bomb among the complacent Improvers she could hardly have made more.

"It CAN'T be true," said Anne blankly.

"That's just what I said when I heard it first, don't you know," said Gertie, who was enjoying herself hugely. "I said it couldn't be true ... that Judson Parker wouldn't have the HEART to do it, don't you know. But father met him this afternoon and asked him about it and he said it WAS true. Just fancy! His farm is side-on to the Newbridge road and how perfectly awful it will look to see advertisements of pills and plasters all along it, don't you know?"

The Improvers DID know, all too well. Even the least imaginative among them could picture the grotesque effect of half a mile of board fence

adorned with such advertisements. All thought of church and school grounds vanished before this new danger. Parliamentary rules and regulations were forgotten, and Anne, in despair, gave up trying to keep minutes at all. Everybody talked at once and fearful was the hubbub.

“Oh, let us keep calm,” implored Anne, who was the most excited of them all, “and try to think of some way of preventing him.”

“I don’t know how you’re going to prevent him,” exclaimed Jane bitterly. “Everybody knows what Judson Parker is. He’d do ANYTHING for money. He hasn’t a SPARK of public spirit or ANY sense of the beautiful.”

The prospect looked rather unpromising. Judson Parker and his sister were the only Parkers in Avonlea, so that no leverage could be exerted by family connections. Martha Parker was a lady of all too certain age who disapproved of young people in general and the Improvers in particular. Judson was a jovial, smooth-spoken man, so uniformly goodnatured and bland that it was surprising how few friends he had. Perhaps he had got the better in too many business transactions... which seldom makes for popularity. He was reputed to be very “sharp” and it was the general opinion that he “hadn’t much principle.”

“If Judson Parker has a chance to ‘turn an honest penny,’ as he says himself, he’ll never lose it,” declared Fred Wright.

“Is there NOBODY who has any influence over him?” asked Anne despairingly.

“He goes to see Louisa Spencer at White Sands,” suggested Carrie Sloane. “Perhaps she could coax him not to rent his fences.”

“Not she,” said Gilbert emphatically. “I know Louisa Spencer well. She doesn’t ‘believe’ in Village Improvement Societies, but she DOES believe in dollars and cents. She’d be more likely to urge Judson on than to dissuade him.”

“The only thing to do is to appoint a committee to wait on him and protest,” said Julia Bell, “and you must send girls, for he’d hardly be civil

to boys ... but I won't go, so nobody need nominate me."

"Better send Anne alone," said Oliver Sloane. "She can talk Judson over if anybody can."

Anne protested. She was willing to go and do the talking; but she must have others with her "for moral support." Diana and Jane were therefore appointed to support her morally and the Improvers broke up, buzzing like angry bees with indignation. Anne was so worried that she didn't sleep until nearly morning, and then she dreamed that the trustees had put a fence around the school and painted "Try Purple Pills" all over it.

The committee waited on Judson Parker the next afternoon. Anne pleaded eloquently against his nefarious design and Jane and Diana supported her morally and valiantly. Judson was sleek, suave, flattering; paid them several compliments of the delicacy of sunflowers; felt real bad to refuse such charming young ladies ... but business was business; couldn't afford to let sentiment stand in the way these hard times.

"But I'll tell what I WILL do," he said, with a twinkle in his light, full eyes. "I'll tell the agent he must use only handsome, tasty colors ... red and yellow and so on. I'll tell him he mustn't paint the ads BLUE on any account."

The vanquished committee retired, thinking things not lawful to be uttered.

"We have done all we can do and must simply trust the rest to Providence," said Jane, with an unconscious imitation of Mrs. Lynde's tone and manner.

"I wonder if Mr. Allan could do anything," reflected Diana.

Anne shook her head.

"No, it's no use to worry Mr. Allan, especially now when the baby's so sick. Judson would slip away from him as smoothly as from us, although he HAS taken to going to church quite regularly just now. That is simply

because Louisa Spencer's father is an elder and very particular about such things."

"Judson Parker is the only man in Avonlea who would dream of renting his fences," said Jane indignantly. "Even Levi Boulter or Lorenzo White would never stoop to that, tightfisted as they are. They would have too much respect for public opinion."

Public opinion was certainly down on Judson Parker when the facts became known, but that did not help matters much. Judson chuckled to himself and defied it, and the Improvers were trying to reconcile themselves to the prospect of seeing the prettiest part of the Newbridge road defaced by advertisements, when Anne rose quietly at the president's call for reports of committees on the occasion of the next meeting of the Society, and announced that Mr. Judson Parker had instructed her to inform the Society that he was NOT going to rent his fences to the Patent Medicine Company.

Jane and Diana stared as if they found it hard to believe their ears. Parliamentary etiquette, which was generally very strictly enforced in the A.V.I.S., forbade them giving instant vent to their curiosity, but after the Society adjourned Anne was besieged for explanations. Anne had no explanation to give. Judson Parker had overtaken her on the road the preceding evening and told her that he had decided to humor the A.V.I.S. in its peculiar prejudice against patent medicine advertisements. That was all Anne would say, then or ever afterwards, and it was the simple truth; but when Jane Andrews, on her way home, confided to Oliver Sloane her firm belief that there was more behind Judson Parker's mysterious change of heart than Anne Shirley had revealed, she spoke the truth also.

Anne had been down to old Mrs. Irving's on the shore road the preceding evening and had come home by a short cut which led her first over the lowlying shore fields, and then through the beech wood below Robert Dickson's, by a little footpath that ran out to the main road just above the Lake of Shining Waters ... known to unimaginative people as Barry's pond.

Two men were sitting in their buggies, reined off to the side of the road, just at the entrance of the path. One was Judson Parker; the other was Jerry Corcoran, a Newbridge man against whom, as Mrs. Lynde would have told you in eloquent italics, nothing shady had ever been PROVED. He was an agent for agricultural implements and a prominent personage in matters political. He had a finger ... some people said ALL his fingers ... in every political pie that was cooked; and as Canada was on the eve of a general election Jerry Corcoran had been a busy man for many weeks, canvassing the county in the interests of his party's candidate. Just as Anne emerged from under the overhanging beech boughs she heard Corcoran say, "If you'll vote for Amesbury, Parker ... well, I've a note for that pair of harrows you've got in the spring. I suppose you wouldn't object to having it back, eh?"

"We ... ll, since you put it in that way," drawled Judson with a grin, "I reckon I might as well do it. A man must look out for his own interests in these hard times."

Both saw Anne at this moment and conversation abruptly ceased. Anne bowed frostily and walked on, with her chin slightly more tilted than usual. Soon Judson Parker overtook her.

"Have a lift, Anne?" he inquired genially.

"Thank you, no," said Anne politely, but with a fine, needle-like disdain in her voice that pierced even Judson Parker's none too sensitive consciousness. His face reddened and he twitched his reins angrily; but the next second prudential considerations checked him. He looked uneasily at Anne, as she walked steadily on, glancing neither to the right nor to the left. Had she heard Corcoran's unmistakable offer and his own too plain acceptance of it? Confound Corcoran! If he couldn't put his meaning into less dangerous phrases he'd get into trouble some of these long-come-shorts. And confound redheaded schoolma'ams with a habit of popping out of beechwoods where they had no business to be. If Anne had heard, Judson Parker, measuring her corn in his own half bushel, as the country saying went, and cheating himself thereby, as such people generally do, believed that she would tell it far and wide. Now, Judson Parker, as has been seen, was not overly regardful of public opinion; but to be known as

having accepted a bribe would be a nasty thing; and if it ever reached Isaac Spencer's ears farewell forever to all hope of winning Louisa Jane with her comfortable prospects as the heiress of a well-to-do farmer. Judson Parker knew that Mr. Spencer looked somewhat askance at him as it was; he could not afford to take any risks.

"Ahem ... Anne, I've been wanting to see you about that little matter we were discussing the other day. I've decided not to let my fences to that company after all. A society with an aim like yours ought to be encouraged."

Anne thawed out the merest trifle.

"Thank you," she said.

"And ... and ... you needn't mention that little conversation of mine with Jerry."

"I have no intention of mentioning it in any case," said Anne icily, for she would have seen every fence in Avonlea painted with advertisements before she would have stooped to bargain with a man who would sell his vote.

"Just so ... just so," agreed Judson, imagining that they understood each other beautifully. "I didn't suppose you would. Of course, I was only stringing Jerry ... he thinks he's so all-fired cute and smart. I've no intention of voting for Amesbury. I'm going to vote for Grant as I've always done ... you'll see that when the election comes off. I just led Jerry on to see if he would commit himself. And it's all right about the fence ... you can tell the Improvers that."

"It takes all sorts of people to make a world, as I've often heard, but I think there are some who could be spared," Anne told her reflection in the east gable mirror that night. "I wouldn't have mentioned the disgraceful thing to a soul anyhow, so my conscience is clear on THAT score. I really don't know who or what is to be thanked for this. I did nothing to bring it about, and it's hard to believe that Providence ever works by means of the kind of politics men like Judson Parker and Jerry Corcoran have."

XV

The Beginning of Vacation

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Anne locked the schoolhouse door on a still, yellow evening, when the winds were purring in the spruces around the playground, and the shadows were long and lazy by the edge of the woods. She dropped the key into her pocket with a sigh of satisfaction. The school year was ended, she had been reengaged for the next, with many expressions of satisfaction... . only Mr. Harmon Andrews told her she ought to use the strap oftener ... and two delightful months of a well-earned vacation beckoned her invitingly. Anne felt at peace with the world and herself as she walked down the hill with her basket of flowers in her hand. Since the earliest mayflowers Anne had never missed her weekly pilgrimage to Matthew's grave. Everyone else in Avonlea, except Marilla, had already forgotten quiet, shy, unimportant Matthew Cuthbert; but his memory was still green in Anne's heart and always would be. She could never forget the kind old man who had been the first to give her the love and sympathy her starved childhood had craved.

At the foot of the hill a boy was sitting on the fence in the shadow of the spruces ... a boy with big, dreamy eyes and a beautiful, sensitive face. He swung down and joined Anne, smiling; but there were traces of tears on his cheeks.

"I thought I'd wait for you, teacher, because I knew you were going to the graveyard," he said, slipping his hand into hers. "I'm going there, too ... I'm taking this bouquet of geraniums to put on Grandpa Irving's grave for grandma. And look, teacher, I'm going to put this bunch of white roses beside Grandpa's grave in memory of my little mother... because I can't go to her grave to put it there. But don't you think she'll know all about it, just the same?"

"Yes, I am sure she will, Paul."

“You see, teacher, it’s just three years today since my little mother died. It’s such a long, long time but it hurts just as much as ever ... and I miss her just as much as ever. Sometimes it seems to me that I just can’t bear it, it hurts so.”

Paul’s voice quivered and his lip trembled. He looked down at his roses, hoping that his teacher would not notice the tears in his eyes.

“And yet,” said Anne, very softly, “you wouldn’t want it to stop hurting ... you wouldn’t want to forget your little mother even if you could.”

“No, indeed, I wouldn’t ... that’s just the way I feel. You’re so good at understanding, teacher. Nobody else understands so well ... not even grandma, although she’s so good to me. Father understood pretty well, but still I couldn’t talk much to him about mother, because it made him feel so bad. When he put his hand over his face I always knew it was time to stop. Poor father, he must be dreadfully lonesome without me; but you see he has nobody but a housekeeper now and he thinks housekeepers are no good to bring up little boys, especially when he has to be away from home so much on business. Grandmothers are better, next to mothers. Someday, when I’m brought up, I’ll go back to father and we’re never going to be parted again.”

Paul had talked so much to Anne about his mother and father that she felt as if she had known them. She thought his mother must have been very like what he was himself, in temperament and disposition; and she had an idea that Stephen Irving was a rather reserved man with a deep and tender nature which he kept hidden scrupulously from the world.

“Father’s not very easy to get acquainted with,” Paul had said once. “I never got really acquainted with him until after my little mother died. But he’s splendid when you do get to know him. I love him the best in all the world, and Grandma Irving next, and then you, teacher. I’d love you next to father if it wasn’t my DUTY to love Grandma Irving best, because she’s doing so much for me. YOU know, teacher. I wish she would leave the lamp in my room till I go to sleep, though. She takes it right out as soon as she tucks me up because she says I mustn’t be a coward. I’m NOT scared,

but I'd RATHER have the light. My little mother used always to sit beside me and hold my hand till I went to sleep. I expect she spoiled me. Mothers do sometimes, you know."

No, Anne did not know this, although she might imagine it. She thought sadly of HER "little mother," the mother who had thought her so "perfectly beautiful" and who had died so long ago and was buried beside her boyish husband in that unvisited grave far away. Anne could not remember her mother and for this reason she almost envied Paul.

"My birthday is next week," said Paul, as they walked up the long red hill, basking in the June sunshine, "and father wrote me that he is sending me something that he thinks I'll like better than anything else he could send. I believe it has come already, for Grandma is keeping the bookcase drawer locked and that is something new. And when I asked her why, she just looked mysterious and said little boys mustn't be too curious. It's very exciting to have a birthday, isn't it? I'll be eleven. You'd never think it to look at me, would you? Grandma says I'm very small for my age and that it's all because I don't eat enough porridge. I do my very best, but Grandma gives such generous platefuls ... there's nothing mean about Grandma, I can tell you. Ever since you and I had that talk about praying going home from Sunday School that day, teacher ... when you said we ought to pray about all our difficulties ... I've prayed every night that God would give me enough grace to enable me to eat every bit of my porridge in the mornings. But I've never been able to do it yet, and whether it's because I have too little grace or too much porridge I really can't decide. Grandma says father was brought up on porridge, and it certainly did work well in his case, for you ought to see the shoulders he has. But sometimes," concluded Paul with a sigh and a meditative air "I really think porridge will be the death of me."

Anne permitted herself a smile, since Paul was not looking at her. All Avonlea knew that old Mrs. Irving was bringing her grandson up in accordance with the good, old-fashioned methods of diet and morals.

"Let us hope not, dear," she said cheerfully. "How are your rock people coming on? Does the oldest Twin still continue to behave himself?"

“He HAS to,” said Paul emphatically. “He knows I won’t associate with him if he doesn’t. He is really full of wickedness, I think.”

“And has Nora found out about the Golden Lady yet?”

“No; but I think she suspects. I’m almost sure she watched me the last time I went to the cave. I don’t mind if she finds out ... it is only for HER sake I don’t want her to ... so that her feelings won’t be hurt. But if she is DETERMINED to have her feelings hurt it can’t be helped.”

“If I were to go to the shore some night with you do you think I could see your rock people too?”

Paul shook his head gravely.

“No, I don’t think you could see MY rock people. I’m the only person who can see them. But you could see rock people of your own. You’re one of the kind that can. We’re both that kind. YOU know, teacher,” he added, squeezing her hand chummily. “Isn’t it splendid to be that kind, teacher?”

“Splendid,” Anne agreed, gray shining eyes looking down into blue shining ones. Anne and Paul both knew

“How fair the realm

Imagination opens to the view,”

and both knew the way to that happy land. There the rose of joy bloomed immortal by dale and stream; clouds never darkened the sunny sky; sweet bells never jangled out of tune; and kindred spirits abounded. The knowledge of that land’s geography ... “east o’ the sun, west o’ the moon” ... is priceless lore, not to be bought in any market place. It must be the gift of the good fairies at birth and the years can never deface it or take it away. It is better to possess it, living in a garret, than to be the inhabitant of palaces without it.

The Avonlea graveyard was as yet the grass-grown solitude it had always been. To be sure, the Improvers had an eye on it, and Priscilla Grant had

read a paper on cemeteries before the last meeting of the Society. At some future time the Improvers meant to have the lichened, wayward old board fence replaced by a neat wire railing, the grass mown and the leaning monuments straightened up.

Anne put on Matthew's grave the flowers she had brought for it, and then went over to the little poplar shaded corner where Hester Gray slept. Ever since the day of the spring picnic Anne had put flowers on Hester's grave when she visited Matthew's. The evening before she had made a pilgrimage back to the little deserted garden in the woods and brought therefrom some of Hester's own white roses.

"I thought you would like them better than any others, dear," she said softly.

Anne was still sitting there when a shadow fell over the grass and she looked up to see Mrs. Allan. They walked home together.

Mrs. Allan's face was not the face of the girlbride whom the minister had brought to Avonlea five years before. It had lost some of its bloom and youthful curves, and there were fine, patient lines about eyes and mouth. A tiny grave in that very cemetery accounted for some of them; and some new ones had come during the recent illness, now happily over, of her little son. But Mrs. Allan's dimples were as sweet and sudden as ever, her eyes as clear and bright and true; and what her face lacked of girlish beauty was now more than atoned for in added tenderness and strength.

"I suppose you are looking forward to your vacation, Anne?" she said, as they left the graveyard.

Anne nodded.

"Yes... . I could roll the word as a sweet morsel under my tongue. I think the summer is going to be lovely. For one thing, Mrs. Morgan is coming to the Island in July and Priscilla is going to bring her up. I feel one of my old 'thrills' at the mere thought."

“I hope you’ll have a good time, Anne. You’ve worked very hard this past year and you have succeeded.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’ve come so far short in so many things. I haven’t done what I meant to do when I began to teach last fall. I haven’t lived up to my ideals.”

“None of us ever do,” said Mrs. Allan with a sigh. “But then, Anne, you know what Lowell says, ‘Not failure but low aim is crime.’ We must have ideals and try to live up to them, even if we never quite succeed. Life would be a sorry business without them. With them it’s grand and great. Hold fast to your ideals, Anne.”

“I shall try. But I have to let go most of my theories,” said Anne, laughing a little. “I had the most beautiful set of theories you ever knew when I started out as a schoolma’am, but every one of them has failed me at some pinch or another.”

“Even the theory on corporal punishment,” teased Mrs. Allan.

But Anne flushed.

“I shall never forgive myself for whipping Anthony.”

“Nonsense, dear, he deserved it. And it agreed with him. You have had no trouble with him since and he has come to think there’s nobody like you. Your kindness won his love after the idea that a ‘girl was no good’ was rooted out of his stubborn mind.”

“He may have deserved it, but that is not the point. If I had calmly and deliberately decided to whip him because I thought it a just punishment for him I would not feel over it as I do. But the truth is, Mrs. Allan, that I just flew into a temper and whipped him because of that. I wasn’t thinking whether it was just or unjust ... even if he hadn’t deserved it I’d have done it just the same. That is what humiliates me.”

“Well, we all make mistakes, dear, so just put it behind you. We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but never carry them forward

into the future with us. There goes Gilbert Blythe on his wheel ... home for his vacation too, I suppose. How are you and he getting on with your studies?"

"Pretty well. We plan to finish the Virgil tonight ... there are only twenty lines to do. Then we are not going to study any more until September."

"Do you think you will ever get to college?"

"Oh, I don't know." Anne looked dreamily afar to the opal-tinted horizon. "Marilla's eyes will never be much better than they are now, although we are so thankful to think that they will not get worse. And then there are the twins ... somehow I don't believe their uncle will ever really send for them. Perhaps college may be around the bend in the road, but I haven't got to the bend yet and I don't think much about it lest I might grow discontented."

"Well, I should like to see you go to college, Anne; but if you never do, don't be discontented about it. We make our own lives wherever we are, after all ... college can only help us to do it more easily. They are broad or narrow according to what we put into them, not what we get out. Life is rich and full here ... everywhere ... if we can only learn how to open our whole hearts to its richness and fulness."

"I think I understand what you mean," said Anne thoughtfully, "and I know I have so much to feel thankful for ... oh, so much ... my work, and Paul Irving, and the dear twins, and all my friends. Do you know, Mrs. Allan, I'm so thankful for friendship. It beautifies life so much."

"True friendship is a very helpful thing indeed," said Mrs. Allan, "and we should have a very high ideal of it, and never sully it by any failure in truth and sincerity. I fear the name of friendship is often degraded to a kind of intimacy that has nothing of real friendship in it."

“Yes ... like Gertie Pye’s and Julia Bell’s. They are very intimate and go everywhere together; but Gertie is always saying nasty things of Julia behind her back and everybody thinks she is jealous of her because she is always so pleased when anybody criticizes Julia. I think it is desecration to call that friendship. If we have friends we should look only for the best in them and give them the best that is in us, don’t you think? Then friendship would be the most beautiful thing in the world.”

“Friendship IS very beautiful,” smiled Mrs. Allan, “but some day ...”

Then she paused abruptly. In the delicate, white-browed face beside her, with its candid eyes and mobile features, there was still far more of the child than of the woman. Anne’s heart so far harbored only dreams of friendship and ambition, and Mrs. Allan did not wish to brush the bloom from her sweet unconsciousness. So she left her sentence for the future years to finish.

XV I

The Substance of Things Hoped For

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“Anne,” said Davy appealingly, scrambling up on the shiny, leather-covered sofa in the Green Gables kitchen, where Anne sat, reading a letter, “Anne, I’m AWFUL hungry. You’ve no idea.”

“I’ll get you a piece of bread and butter in a minute,” said Anne absently. Her letter evidently contained some exciting news, for her cheeks were as pink as the roses on the big bush outside, and her eyes were as starry as only Anne’s eyes could be.

“But I ain’t bread and butter hungry,” said Davy in a disgusted tone. “I’m plum cake hungry.”

“Oh,” laughed Anne, laying down her letter and putting her arm about Davy to give him a squeeze, “that’s a kind of hunger that can be endured very comfortably, Davy-boy. You know it’s one of Marilla’s rules that you can’t have anything but bread and butter between meals.”

“Well, gimme a piece then ... please.”

Davy had been at last taught to say “please,” but he generally tacked it on as an afterthought. He looked with approval at the generous slice Anne presently brought to him. “You always put such a nice lot of butter on it, Anne. Marilla spreads it pretty thin. It slips down a lot easier when there’s plenty of butter.”

The slice “slipped down” with tolerable ease, judging from its rapid disappearance. Davy slid head first off the sofa, turned a double somersault on the rug, and then sat up and announced decidedly,

“Anne, I’ve made up my mind about heaven. I don’t want to go there.”

“Why not?” asked Anne gravely.

“Cause heaven is in Simon Fletcher’s garret, and I don’t like Simon Fletcher.”

“Heaven in ... Simon Fletcher’s garret!” gasped Anne, too amazed even to laugh. “Davy Keith, whatever put such an extraordinary idea into your head?”

“Milty Boulter says that’s where it is. It was last Sunday in Sunday School. The lesson was about Elijah and Elisha, and I up and asked Miss Rogerson where heaven was. Miss Rogerson looked awful offended. She was cross anyhow, because when she’d asked us what Elijah left Elisha when he went to heaven Milty Boulter said, ‘His old clo’es,’ and us fellows all laughed before we thought. I wish you could think first and do things afterwards, ‘cause then you wouldn’t do them. But Milty didn’t mean to be disrespeckful. He just couldn’t think of the name of the thing. Miss Rogerson said heaven was where God was and I wasn’t to ask questions like that. Milty nudged me and said in a whisper, ‘Heaven’s in

Uncle Simon's garret and I'll explain about it on the road home.' So when we was coming home he explained. Milty's a great hand at explaining things. Even if he don't know anything about a thing he'll make up a lot of stuff and so you get it explained all the same. His mother is Mrs. Simon's sister and he went with her to the funeral when his cousin, Jane Ellen, died. The minister said she'd gone to heaven, though Milty says she was lying right before them in the coffin. But he s'posed they carried the coffin to the garret afterwards. Well, when Milty and his mother went upstairs after it was all over to get her bonnet he asked her where heaven was that Jane Ellen had gone to, and she pointed right to the ceiling and said, 'Up there.' Milty knew there wasn't anything but the garret over the ceiling, so that's how HE found out. And he's been awful scared to go to his Uncle Simon's ever since."

Anne took Davy on her knee and did her best to straighten out this theological tangle also. She was much better fitted for the task than Marilla, for she remembered her own childhood and had an instinctive understanding of the curious ideas that seven-year-olds sometimes get about matters that are, of course, very plain and simple to grown up people. She had just succeeded in convincing Davy that heaven was NOT in Simon Fletcher's garret when Marilla came in from the garden, where she and Dora had been picking peas. Dora was an industrious little soul and never happier than when "helping" in various small tasks suited to her chubby fingers. She fed chickens, picked up chips, wiped dishes, and ran errands galore. She was neat, faithful and observant; she never had to be told how to do a thing twice and never forgot any of her little duties. Davy, on the other hand, was rather heedless and forgetful; but he had the born knack of winning love, and even yet Anne and Marilla liked him the better.

While Dora proudly shelled the peas and Davy made boats of the pods, with masts of matches and sails of paper, Anne told Marilla about the wonderful contents of her letter.

"Oh, Marilla, what do you think? I've had a letter from Priscilla and she says that Mrs. Morgan is on the Island, and that if it is fine Thursday they are going to drive up to Avonlea and will reach here about twelve. They will spend the afternoon with us and go to the hotel at White Sands in the

evening, because some of Mrs. Morgan's American friends are staying there. Oh, Marilla, isn't it wonderful? I can hardly believe I'm not dreaming."

"I daresay Mrs. Morgan is a lot like other people," said Marilla drily, although she did feel a trifle excited herself. Mrs. Morgan was a famous woman and a visit from her was no commonplace occurrence. "They'll be here to dinner, then?"

"Yes; and oh, Marilla, may I cook every bit of the dinner myself? I want to feel that I can do something for the author of 'The Rosebud Garden,' if it is only to cook a dinner for her. You won't mind, will you?"

"Goodness, I'm not so fond of stewing over a hot fire in July that it would vex me very much to have someone else do it. You're quite welcome to the job."

"Oh, thank you," said Anne, as if Marilla had just conferred a tremendous favor, "I'll make out the menu this very night."

"You'd better not try to put on too much style," warned Marilla, a little alarmed by the high-flown sound of 'menu.' "You'll likely come to grief if you do."

"Oh, I'm not going to put on any 'style,' if you mean trying to do or have things we don't usually have on festal occasions," assured Anne. "That would be affectation, and, although I know I haven't as much sense and steadiness as a girl of seventeen and a schoolteacher ought to have, I'm not so silly as THAT. But I want to have everything as nice and dainty as possible. Davy-boy, don't leave those peapods on the back stairs ... someone might slip on them. I'll have a light soup to begin with ... you know I can make lovely cream-of-onion soup ... and then a couple of roast fowls. I'll have the two white roosters. I have real affection for those roosters and they've been pets ever since the gray hen hatched out just the two of them ... little balls of yellow down. But I know they would have to be sacrificed sometime, and surely there couldn't be a worthier occasion than this. But oh, Marilla, I cannot kill them ... not even for Mrs."

Morgan's sake. I'll have to ask John Henry Carter to come over and do it for me."

"I'll do it," volunteered Davy, "if Marilla'll hold them by the legs, 'cause I guess it'd take both my hands to manage the axe. It's awful jolly fun to see them hopping about after their heads are cut off."

"Then I'll have peas and beans and creamed potatoes and a lettuce salad, for vegetables," resumed Anne, "and for dessert, lemon pie with whipped cream, and coffee and cheese and lady fingers. I'll make the pies and lady fingers tomorrow and do up my white muslin dress. And I must tell Diana tonight, for she'll want to do up hers. Mrs. Morgan's heroines are nearly always dressed in white muslin, and Diana and I have always resolved that that was what we would wear if we ever met her. It will be such a delicate compliment, don't you think? Davy, dear, you mustn't poke peapods into the cracks of the floor. I must ask Mr. and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy to dinner, too, for they're all very anxious to meet Mrs. Morgan. It's so fortunate she's coming while Miss Stacy is here. Davy dear, don't sail the peapods in the water bucket ... go out to the trough. Oh, I do hope it will be fine Thursday, and I think it will, for Uncle Abe said last night when he called at Mr. Harrison's, that it was going to rain most of this week."

"That's a good sign," agreed Marilla.

Anne ran across to Orchard Slope that evening to tell the news to Diana, who was also very much excited over it, and they discussed the matter in the hammock swung under the big willow in the Barry garden.

"Oh, Anne, mayn't I help you cook the dinner?" implored Diana. "You know I can make splendid lettuce salad."

"Indeed you, may" said Anne unselfishly. "And I shall want you to help me decorate too. I mean to have the parlor simply a BOWER of blossoms ... and the dining table is to be adorned with wild roses. Oh, I do hope everything will go smoothly. Mrs. Morgan's heroines NEVER get into scrapes or are taken at a disadvantage, and they are always so selfpossessed and such good housekeepers. They seem to be BORN good housekeepers. You remember that Gertrude in 'Edgewood Days' kept

house for her father when she was only eight years old. When I was eight years old I hardly knew how to do a thing except bring up children. Mrs. Morgan must be an authority on girls when she has written so much about them, and I do want her to have a good opinion of us. I've imagined it all out a dozen different ways ... what she'll look like, and what she'll say, and what I'll say. And I'm so anxious about my nose. There are seven freckles on it, as you can see. They came at the A.V.I S. picnic, when I went around in the sun without my hat. I suppose it's ungrateful of me to worry over them, when I should be thankful they're not spread all over my face as they once were; but I do wish they hadn't come ... all Mrs. Morgan's heroines have such perfect complexions. I can't recall a freckled one among them."

"Yours are not very noticeable," comforted Diana. "Try a little lemon juice on them tonight."

The next day Anne made her pies and lady fingers, did up her muslin dress, and swept and dusted every room in the house ... a quite unnecessary proceeding, for Green Gables was, as usual, in the apple pie order dear to Marilla's heart. But Anne felt that a fleck of dust would be a desecration in a house that was to be honored by a visit from Charlotte E. Morgan. She even cleaned out the "catch-all" closet under the stairs, although there was not the remotest possibility of Mrs. Morgan's seeing its interior.

"But I want to FEEL that it is in perfect order, even if she isn't to see it," Anne told Marilla. "You know, in her book 'Golden Keys,' she makes her two heroines Alice and Louisa take for their motto that verse of Longfellow's,

'In the elder days of art

Builders wrought with greatest care

Each minute and unseen part,

For the gods see everywhere,'

and so they always kept their cellar stairs scrubbed and never forgot to sweep under the beds. I should have a guilty conscience if I thought this closet was in disorder when Mrs. Morgan was in the house. Ever since we read 'Golden Keys,' last April, Diana and I have taken that verse for our motto too."

That night John Henry Carter and Davy between them contrived to execute the two white roosters, and Anne dressed them, the usually distasteful task glorified in her eyes by the destination of the plump birds.

"I don't like picking fowls," she told Marilla, "but isn't it fortunate we don't have to put our souls into what our hands may be doing? I've been picking chickens with my hands but in imagination I've been roaming the Milky Way."

"I thought you'd scattered more feathers over the floor than usual," remarked Marilla.

Then Anne put Davy to bed and made him promise that he would behave perfectly the next day.

"If I'm as good as good can be all day tomorrow will you let me be just as bad as I like all the next day?" asked Davy.

"I couldn't do that," said Anne discreetly, "but I'll take you and Dora for a row in the flat right to the bottom of the pond, and we'll go ashore on the sandhills and have a picnic."

"It's a bargain," said Davy. "I'll be good, you bet. I meant to go over to Mr. Harrison's and fire peas from my new popgun at Ginger but another day'll do as well. I expect it will be just like Sunday, but a picnic at the shore'll make up for THAT."

XVI I

A Chapter of Accidents

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Anne woke three times in the night and made pilgrimages to her window to make sure that Uncle Abe's prediction was not coming true. Finally the morning dawned pearly and lustrous in a sky full of silver sheen and radiance, and the wonderful day had arrived.

Diana appeared soon after breakfast, with a basket of flowers over one arm and HER muslin dress over the other ... for it would not do to don it until all the dinner preparations were completed. Meanwhile she wore her afternoon pink print and a lawn apron fearfully and wonderfully ruffled and frilled; and very neat and pretty and rosy she was.

"You look simply sweet," said Anne admiringly.

Diana sighed.

"But I've had to let out every one of my dresses AGAIN. I weigh four pounds more than I did in July. Anne, WHERE will this end? Mrs. Morgan's heroines are all tall and slender."

"Well, let's forget our troubles and think of our mercies," said Anne gaily. "Mrs. Allan says that whenever we think of anything that is a trial to us we should also think of something nice that we can set over against it. If you are slightly too plump you've got the dearest dimples; and if I have a freckled nose the SHAPE of it is all right. Do you think the lemon juice did any good?"

"Yes, I really think it did," said Diana critically; and, much elated, Anne led the way to the garden, which was full of airy shadows and wavering golden lights.

"We'll decorate the parlor first. We have plenty of time, for Priscilla said they'd be here about twelve or half past at the latest, so we'll have dinner at one."

There may have been two happier and more excited girls somewhere in Canada or the United States at that moment, but I doubt it. Every snip of the scissors, as rose and peony and bluebell fell, seemed to chirp, “Mrs. Morgan is coming today.” Anne wondered how Mr. Harrison COULD go on placidly mowing hay in the field across the lane, just as if nothing were going to happen.

The parlor at Green Gables was a rather severe and gloomy apartment, with rigid horsehair furniture, stiff lace curtains, and white antimacassars that were always laid at a perfectly correct angle, except at such times as they clung to unfortunate people’s buttons. Even Anne had never been able to infuse much grace into it, for Marilla would not permit any alterations. But it is wonderful what flowers can accomplish if you give them a fair chance; when Anne and Diana finished with the room you would not have recognized it.

A great blue bowlful of snowballs overflowed on the polished table. The shining black mantelpiece was heaped with roses and ferns. Every shelf of the whatnot held a sheaf of bluebells; the dark corners on either side of the grate were lighted up with jars full of glowing crimson peonies, and the grate itself was aflame with yellow poppies. All this splendor and color, mingled with the sunshine falling through the honeysuckle vines at the windows in a leafy riot of dancing shadows over walls and floor, made of the usually dismal little room the veritable “bower” of Anne’s imagination, and even extorted a tribute of admiration from Marilla, who came in to criticize and remained to praise.

“Now, we must set the table,” said Anne, in the tone of a priestess about to perform some sacred rite in honor of a divinity. “We’ll have a big vaseful of wild roses in the center and one single rose in front of everybody’s plate — and a special bouquet of rosebuds only by Mrs. Morgan’s — an allusion to ‘The Rosebud Garden’ you know.”

The table was set in the sitting room, with Marilla’s finest linen and the best china, glass, and silver. You may be perfectly certain that every article placed on it was polished or scoured to the highest possible perfection of gloss and glitter.

Then the girls tripped out to the kitchen, which was filled with appetizing odors emanating from the oven, where the chickens were already sizzling splendidly. Anne prepared the potatoes and Diana got the peas and beans ready. Then, while Diana shut herself into the pantry to compound the lettuce salad, Anne, whose cheeks were already beginning to glow crimson, as much with excitement as from the heat of the fire, prepared the bread sauce for the chickens, minced her onions for the soup, and finally whipped the cream for her lemon pies.

And what about Davy all this time? Was he redeeming his promise to be good? He was, indeed. To be sure, he insisted on remaining in the kitchen, for his curiosity wanted to see all that went on. But as he sat quietly in a corner, busily engaged in untying the knots in a piece of herring net he had brought home from his last trip to the shore, nobody objected to this.

At half past eleven the lettuce salad was made, the golden circles of the pies were heaped with whipped cream, and everything was sizzling and bubbling that ought to sizzle and bubble.

“We’d better go and dress now,” said Anne, “for they may be here by twelve. We must have dinner at sharp one, for the soup must be served as soon as it’s done.”

Serious indeed were the toilet rites presently performed in the east gable. Anne peered anxiously at her nose and rejoiced to see that its freckles were not at all prominent, thanks either to the lemon juice or to the unusual flush on her cheeks. When they were ready they looked quite as sweet and trim and girlish as ever did any of “Mrs. Morgan’s heroines.”

“I do hope I’ll be able to say something once in a while, and not sit like a mute,” said Diana anxiously. “All Mrs. Morgan’s heroines converse so beautifully. But I’m afraid I’ll be tonguetied and stupid. And I’ll be sure to say ‘I seen.’ I haven’t often said it since Miss Stacy taught here; but in moments of excitement it’s sure to pop out. Anne, if I were to say ‘I seen’ before Mrs. Morgan I’d die of mortification. And it would be almost as bad to have nothing to say.”

“I’m nervous about a good many things,” said Anne, “but I don’t think there is much fear that I won’t be able to talk.”

And, to do her justice, there wasn’t.

Anne shrouded her muslin glories in a big apron and went down to concoct her soup. Marilla had dressed herself and the twins, and looked more excited than she had ever been known to look before. At half past twelve the Allans and Miss Stacy came. Everything was going well but Anne was beginning to feel nervous. It was surely time for Priscilla and Mrs. Morgan to arrive. She made frequent trips to the gate and looked as anxiously down the lane as ever her namesake in the Bluebeard story peered from the tower casement.

“Suppose they don’t come at all?” she said piteously.

“Don’t suppose it. It would be too mean,” said Diana, who, however, was beginning to have uncomfortable misgivings on the subject.

“Anne,” said Marilla, coming out from the parlor, “Miss Stacy wants to see Miss Barry’s willowware platter.”

Anne hastened to the sitting room closet to get the platter. She had, in accordance with her promise to Mrs. Lynde, written to Miss Barry of Charlottetown, asking for the loan of it. Miss Barry was an old friend of Anne’s, and she promptly sent the platter out, with a letter exhorting Anne to be very careful of it, for she had paid twenty dollars for it. The platter had served its purpose at the Aid bazaar and had then been returned to the Green Gables closet, for Anne would not trust anybody but herself to take it back to town.

She carried the platter carefully to the front door where her guests were enjoying the cool breeze that blew up from the brook. It was examined and admired; then, just as Anne had taken it back into her own hands, a terrific crash and clatter sounded from the kitchen pantry. Marilla, Diana, and Anne fled out, the latter pausing only long enough to set the precious platter hastily down on the second step of the stairs.

When they reached the pantry a truly harrowing spectacle met their eyes ... a guilty looking small boy scrambling down from the table, with his clean print blouse liberally plastered with yellow filling, and on the table the shattered remnants of what had been two brave, becreamd lemon pies.

Davy had finished ravelling out his herring net and had wound the twine into a ball. Then he had gone into the pantry to put it up on the shelf above the table, where he already kept a score or so of similar balls, which, so far as could be discovered, served no useful purpose save to yield the joy of possession. Davy had to climb on the table and reach over to the shelf at a dangerous angle ... something he had been forbidden by Marilla to do, as he had come to grief once before in the experiment. The result in this instance was disastrous. Davy slipped and came sprawling squarely down on the lemon pies. His clean blouse was ruined for that time and the pies for all time. It is, however, an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the pig was eventually the gainer by Davy's mischance.

"Davy Keith," said Marilla, shaking him by the shoulder, "didn't I forbid you to climb up on that table again? Didn't I?"

"I forgot," whimpered Davy. "You've told me not to do such an awful lot of things that I can't remember them all."

"Well, you march upstairs and stay there till after dinner. Perhaps you'll get them sorted out in your memory by that time. No, Anne, never you mind interceding for him. I'm not punishing him because he spoiled your pies ... that was an accident. I'm punishing him for his disobedience. Go, Davy, I say."

"Ain't I to have any dinner?" wailed Davy.

"You can come down after dinner is over and have yours in the kitchen."

"Oh, all right," said Davy, somewhat comforted. "I know Anne'll save some nice bones for me, won't you, Anne? 'Cause you know I didn't mean to fall on the pies. Say, Anne, since they ARE spoiled can't I take some of the pieces upstairs with me?"

“No, no lemon pie for you, Master Davy,” said Marilla, pushing him toward the hall.

“What shall we do for dessert?” asked Anne, looking regretfully at the wreck and ruin.

“Get out a crock of strawberry preserves,” said Marilla consolingly. “There’s plenty of whipped cream left in the bowl for it.”

One o’clock came ... but no Priscilla or Mrs. Morgan. Anne was in an agony. Everything was done to a turn and the soup was just what soup should be, but couldn’t be depended on to remain so for any length of time.

“I don’t believe they’re coming after all,” said Marilla crossly.

Anne and Diana sought comfort in each other’s eyes.

At half past one Marilla again emerged from the parlor.

“Girls, we MUST have dinner. Everybody is hungry and it’s no use waiting any longer. Priscilla and Mrs. Morgan are not coming, that’s plain, and nothing is being improved by waiting.”

Anne and Diana set about lifting the dinner, with all the zest gone out of the performance.

“I don’t believe I’ll be able to eat a mouthful,” said Diana dolefully.

“Nor I. But I hope everything will be nice for Miss Stacy’s and Mr. and Mrs. Allan’s sakes,” said Anne listlessly.

When Diana dished the peas she tasted them and a very peculiar expression crossed her face.

“Anne, did YOU put sugar in these peas?”

“Yes,” said Anne, mashing the potatoes with the air of one expected to do her duty. “I put a spoonful of sugar in. We always do. Don’t you like it?”

“But I put a spoonful in too, when I set them on the stove,” said Diana.

Anne dropped her masher and tasted the peas also. Then she made a grimace.

“How awful! I never dreamed you had put sugar in, because I knew your mother never does. I happened to think of it, for a wonder ... I’m always forgetting it ... so I popped a spoonful in.”

“It’s a case of too many cooks, I guess,” said Marilla, who had listened to this dialogue with a rather guilty expression. “I didn’t think you’d remember about the sugar, Anne, for I’m perfectly certain you never did before ... so I put in a spoonful.”

The guests in the parlor heard peal after peal of laughter from the kitchen, but they never knew what the fun was about. There were no green peas on the dinner table that day, however.

“Well,” said Anne, sobering down again with a sigh of recollection, “we have the salad anyhow and I don’t think anything has happened to the beans. Let’s carry the things in and get it over.”

It cannot be said that that dinner was a notable success socially. The Allans and Miss Stacy exerted themselves to save the situation and Marilla’s customary placidity was not noticeably ruffled. But Anne and Diana, between their disappointment and the reaction from their excitement of the forenoon, could neither talk nor eat. Anne tried heroically to bear her part in the conversation for the sake of her guests; but all the sparkle had been quenched in her for the time being, and, in spite of her love for the Allans and Miss Stacy, she couldn’t help thinking how nice it would be when everybody had gone home and she could bury her weariness and disappointment in the pillows of the east gable.

There is an old proverb that really seems at times to be inspired ... “it never rains but it pours.” The measure of that day’s tribulations was not yet full. Just as Mr. Allan had finished returning thanks there arose a strange, ominous sound on the stairs, as of some hard, heavy object

bounding from step to step, finishing up with a grand smash at the bottom. Everybody ran out into the hall. Anne gave a shriek of dismay.

At the bottom of the stairs lay a big pink conch shell amid the fragments of what had been Miss Barry's platter; and at the top of the stairs knelt a terrified Davy, gazing down with wide-open eyes at the havoc.

"Davy," said Marilla ominously, "did you throw that conch down ON PURPOSE?"

"No, I never did," whimpered Davy. "I was just kneeling here, quiet as quiet, to watch you folks through the bannisters, and my foot struck that old thing and pushed it off ... and I'm awful hungry ... and I do wish you'd lick a fellow and have done with it, instead of always sending him upstairs to miss all the fun."

"Don't blame Davy," said Anne, gathering up the fragments with trembling fingers. "It was my fault. I set that platter there and forgot all about it. I am properly punished for my carelessness; but oh, what will Miss Barry say?"

"Well, you know she only bought it, so it isn't the same as if it was an heirloom," said Diana, trying to console.

The guests went away soon after, feeling that it was the most tactful thing to do, and Anne and Diana washed the dishes, talking less than they had ever been known to do before. Then Diana went home with a headache and Anne went with another to the east gable, where she stayed until Marilla came home from the post office at sunset, with a letter from Priscilla, written the day before. Mrs. Morgan had sprained her ankle so severely that she could not leave her room.

"And oh, Anne dear," wrote Priscilla, "I'm so sorry, but I'm afraid we won't get up to Green Gables at all now, for by the time Aunt's ankle is well she will have to go back to Toronto. She has to be there by a certain date."

“Well,” sighed Anne, laying the letter down on the red sandstone step of the back porch, where she was sitting, while the twilight rained down out of a dappled sky, “I always thought it was too good to be true that Mrs. Morgan should really come. But there ... that speech sounds as pessimistic as Miss Eliza Andrews and I’m ashamed of making it. After all, it was NOT too good to be true ... things just as good and far better are coming true for me all the time. And I suppose the events of today have a funny side too. Perhaps when Diana and I are old and gray we shall be able to laugh over them. But I feel that I can’t expect to do it before then, for it has truly been a bitter disappointment.”

“You’ll probably have a good many more and worse disappointments than that before you get through life,” said Marilla, who honestly thought she was making a comforting speech. “It seems to me, Anne, that you are never going to outgrow your fashion of setting your heart so on things and then crashing down into despair because you don’t get them.”

“I know I’m too much inclined that, way” agreed Anne ruefully. “When I think something nice is going to happen I seem to fly right up on the wings of anticipation; and then the first thing I realize I drop down to earth with a thud. But really, Marilla, the flying part IS glorious as long as it lasts ... it’s like soaring through a sunset. I think it almost pays for the thud.”

“Well, maybe it does,” admitted Marilla. “I’d rather walk calmly along and do without both flying and thud. But everybody has her own way of living ... I used to think there was only one right way ... but since I’ve had you and the twins to bring up I don’t feel so sure of it. What are you going to do about Miss Barry’s platter?”

“Pay her back the twenty dollars she paid for it, I suppose. I’m so thankful it wasn’t a cherished heirloom because then no money could replace it.”

“Maybe you could find one like it somewhere and buy it for her.”

“I’m afraid not. Platters as old as that are very scarce. Mrs. Lynde couldn’t find one anywhere for the supper. I only wish I could, for of course Miss Barry would just as soon have one platter as another, if both were equally old and genuine. Marilla, look at that big star over Mr. Harrison’s maple

grove, with all that holy hush of silvery sky about it. It gives me a feeling that is like a prayer. After all, when one can see stars and skies like that, little disappointments and accidents can't matter so much, can they?"

"Where's Davy?" said Marilla, with an indifferent glance at the star.

"In bed. I've promised to take him and Dora to the shore for a picnic tomorrow. Of course, the original agreement was that he must be good. But he TRIED to be good ... and I hadn't the heart to disappoint him."

"You'll drown yourself or the twins, rowing about the pond in that flat," grumbled Marilla. "I've lived here for sixty years and I've never been on the pond yet."

"Well, it's never too late to mend," said Anne roguishly. "Suppose you come with us tomorrow. We'll shut Green Gables up and spend the whole day at the shore, daffing the world aside."

"No, thank you," said Marilla, with indignant emphasis. "I'd be a nice sight, wouldn't I, rowing down the pond in a flat? I think I hear Rachel pronouncing on it. There's Mr. Harrison driving away somewhere. Do you suppose there is any truth in the gossip that Mr. Harrison is going to see Isabella Andrews?"

"No, I'm sure there isn't. He just called there one evening on business with Mr. Harmon Andrews and Mrs. Lynde saw him and said she knew he was courting because he had a white collar on. I don't believe Mr. Harrison will ever marry. He seems to have a prejudice against marriage."

"Well, you can never tell about those old bachelors. And if he had a white collar on I'd agree with Rachel that it looks suspicious, for I'm sure he never was seen with one before."

"I think he only put it on because he wanted to conclude a business deal with Harmon Andrews," said Anne. "I've heard him say that's the only time a man needs to be particular about his appearance, because if he looks prosperous the party of the second part won't be so likely to try to cheat him. I really feel sorry for Mr. Harrison; I don't believe he feels

satisfied with his life. It must be very lonely to have no one to care about except a parrot, don't you think? But I notice Mr. Harrison doesn't like to be pitied. Nobody does, I imagine."

"There's Gilbert coming up the lane," said Marilla. "If he wants you to go for a row on the pond mind you put on your coat and rubbers. There's a heavy dew tonight."

XVII I

An Adventure on the Tory Road

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“Anne,” said Davy, sitting up in bed and propping his chin on his hands, “Anne, where is sleep? People go to sleep every night, and of course I know it’s the place where I do the things I dream, but I want to know WHERE it is and how I get there and back without knowing anything about it ... and in my nighty too. Where is it?”

Anne was kneeling at the west gable window watching the sunset sky that was like a great flower with petals of crocus and a heart of fiery yellow. She turned her head at Davy’s question and answered dreamily,

““Over the mountains of the moon,
Down the valley of the shadow.””

Paul Irving would have known the meaning of this, or made a meaning out of it for himself, if he didn’t; but practical Davy, who, as Anne often despairingly remarked, hadn’t a particle of imagination, was only puzzled and disgusted.

“Anne, I believe you’re just talking nonsense.”

“Of course, I was, dear boy. Don’t you know that it is only very foolish folk who talk sense all the time?”

“Well, I think you might give a sensible answer when I ask a sensible question,” said Davy in an injured tone.

“Oh, you are too little to understand,” said Anne. But she felt rather ashamed of saying it; for had she not, in keen remembrance of many

similar snubs administered in her own early years, solemnly vowed that she would never tell any child it was too little to understand? Yet here she was doing it ... so wide sometimes is the gulf between theory and practice.

“Well, I’m doing my best to grow,” said Davy, “but it’s a thing you can’t hurry much. If Marilla wasn’t so stingy with her jam I believe I’d grow a lot faster.”

“Marilla is not stingy, Davy,” said Anne severely. “It is very ungrateful of you to say such a thing.”

“There’s another word that means the same thing and sounds a lot better, but I don’t just remember it,” said Davy, frowning intently. “I heard Marilla say she was it, herself, the other day.”

“If you mean ECONOMICAL, it’s a VERY different thing from being stingy. It is an excellent trait in a person if she is economical. If Marilla had been stingy she wouldn’t have taken you and Dora when your mother died. Would you have liked to live with Mrs. Wiggins?”

“You just bet I wouldn’t!” Davy was emphatic on that point. “Nor I don’t want to go out to Uncle Richard neither. I’d far rather live here, even if Marilla is that long-tailed word when it comes to jam, ‘cause YOU’RE here, Anne. Say, Anne, won’t you tell me a story ‘fore I go to sleep? I don’t want a fairy story. They’re all right for girls, I s’pose, but I want something exciting ... lots of killing and shooting in it, and a house on fire, and in’trusting things like that.”

Fortunately for Anne, Marilla called out at this moment from her room.

“Anne, Diana’s signaling at a great rate. You’d better see what she wants.”

Anne ran to the east gable and saw flashes of light coming through the twilight from Diana’s window in groups of five, which meant, according to their old childish code, “Come over at once for I have something important to reveal.” Anne threw her white shawl over her head and hastened through the Haunted Wood and across Mr. Bell’s pasture corner to Orchard Slope.

“I’ve good news for you, Anne,” said Diana. “Mother and I have just got home from Carmody, and I saw Mary Sentner from Spencervale in Mr. Blair’s store. She says the old Copp girls on the Tory Road have a willowware platter and she thinks it’s exactly like the one we had at the supper. She says they’ll likely sell it, for Martha Copp has never been known to keep anything she COULD sell; but if they won’t there’s a platter at Wesley Keyson’s at Spencervale and she knows they’d sell it, but she isn’t sure it’s just the same kind as Aunt Josephine’s.”

“I’ll go right over to Spencervale after it tomorrow,” said Anne resolutely, “and you must come with me. It will be such a weight off my mind, for I have to go to town day after tomorrow and how can I face your Aunt Josephine without a willowware platter? It would be even worse than the time I had to confess about jumping on the spare room bed.”

Both girls laughed over the old memory ... concerning which, if any of my readers are ignorant and curious, I must refer them to Anne’s earlier history.

The next afternoon the girls fared forth on their platter hunting expedition. It was ten miles to Spencervale and the day was not especially pleasant for traveling. It was very warm and windless, and the dust on the road was such as might have been expected after six weeks of dry weather.

“Oh, I do wish it would rain soon,” sighed Anne. “Everything is so parched up. The poor fields just seem pitiful to me and the trees seem to be stretching out their hands pleading for rain. As for my garden, it hurts me every time I go into it. I suppose I shouldn’t complain about a garden when the farmers’ crops are suffering so. Mr. Harrison says his pastures are so scorched up that his poor cows can hardly get a bite to eat and he feels guilty of cruelty to animals every time he meets their eyes.”

After a wearisome drive the girls reached Spencervale and turned down the “Tory” Road ... a green, solitary highway where the strips of grass between the wheel tracks bore evidence to lack of travel. Along most of its extent it was lined with thickset young spruces crowding down to the roadway, with here and there a break where the back field of a Spencervale

farm came out to the fence or an expanse of stumps was aflame with fireweed and goldenrod.

“Why is it called the Tory Road?” asked Anne.

“Mr. Allan says it is on the principle of calling a place a grove because there are no trees in it,” said Diana, “for nobody lives along the road except the Copp girls and old Martin Bovyer at the further end, who is a Liberal. The Tory government ran the road through when they were in power just to show they were doing something.”

Diana’s father was a Liberal, for which reason she and Anne never discussed politics. Green Gables folk had always been Conservatives.

Finally the girls came to the old Copp homestead ... a place of such exceeding external neatness that even Green Gables would have suffered by contrast. The house was a very old-fashioned one, situated on a slope, which fact had necessitated the building of a stone basement under one end. The house and outbuildings were all whitewashed to a condition of blinding perfection and not a weed was visible in the prim kitchen garden surrounded by its white paling.

“The shades are all down,” said Diana ruefully. “I believe that nobody is home.”

This proved to be the case. The girls looked at each other in perplexity.

“I don’t know what to do,” said Anne. “If I were sure the platter was the right kind I would not mind waiting until they came home. But if it isn’t it may be too late to go to Wesley Keyson’s afterward.”

Diana looked at a certain little square window over the basement.

“That is the pantry window, I feel sure,” she said, “because this house is just like Uncle Charles’ at Newbridge, and that is their pantry window. The shade isn’t down, so if we climbed up on the roof of that little house we could look into the pantry and might be able to see the platter. Do you think it would be any harm?”

“No, I don’t think so,” decided Anne, after due reflection, “since our motive is not idle curiosity.”

This important point of ethics being settled, Anne prepared to mount the aforesaid “little house,” a construction of lathes, with a peaked roof, which had in times past served as a habitation for ducks. The Copp girls had given up keeping ducks ... “because they were such untidy birds” ... and the house had not been in use for some years, save as an abode of correction for setting hens. Although scrupulously whitewashed it had become somewhat shaky, and Anne felt rather dubious as she scrambled up from the vantage point of a keg placed on a box.

“I’m afraid it won’t bear my weight,” she said as she gingerly stepped on the roof.

“Lean on the window sill,” advised Diana, and Anne accordingly leaned. Much to her delight, she saw, as she peered through the pane, a willowware platter, exactly such as she was in quest of, on the shelf in front of the window. So much she saw before the catastrophe came. In her joy Anne forgot the precarious nature of her footing, incautiously ceased to lean on the window sill, gave an impulsive little hop of pleasure ... and the next moment she had crashed through the roof up to her armpits, and there she hung, quite unable to extricate herself. Diana dashed into the duck house and, seizing her unfortunate friend by the waist, tried to draw her down.

“Ow ... don’t,” shrieked poor Anne. “There are some long splinters sticking into me. See if you can put something under my feet ... then perhaps I can draw myself up.”

Diana hastily dragged in the previously mentioned keg and Anne found that it was just sufficiently high to furnish a secure resting place for her feet. But she could not release herself.

“Could I pull you out if I crawled up?” suggested Diana.

Anne shook her head hopelessly.

“No ... the splinters hurt too badly. If you can find an axe you might chop me out, though. Oh dear, I do really begin to believe that I was born under an ill-omened star.”

Diana searched faithfully but no axe was to be found.

“I’ll have to go for help,” she said, returning to the prisoner.

“No, indeed, you won’t,” said Anne vehemently. “If you do the story of this will get out everywhere and I shall be ashamed to show my face. No, we must just wait until the Copp girls come home and bind them to secrecy. They’ll know where the axe is and get me out. I’m not uncomfortable, as long as I keep perfectly still ... not uncomfortable in BODY I mean. I wonder what the Copp girls value this house at. I shall have to pay for the damage I’ve done, but I wouldn’t mind that if I were only sure they would understand my motive in peeping in at their pantry window. My sole comfort is that the platter is just the kind I want and if Miss Copp will only sell it to me I shall be resigned to what has happened.”

“What if the Copp girls don’t come home until after night ... or till tomorrow?” suggested Diana.

“If they’re not back by sunset you’ll have to go for other assistance, I suppose,” said Anne reluctantly, “but you mustn’t go until you really have to. Oh dear, this is a dreadful predicament. I wouldn’t mind my misfortunes so much if they were romantic, as Mrs. Morgan’s heroines’ always are, but they are always just simply ridiculous. Fancy what the Copp girls will think when they drive into their yard and see a girl’s head and shoulders sticking out of the roof of one of their outhouses. Listen ... is that a wagon? No, Diana, I believe it is thunder.”

Thunder it was undoubtedly, and Diana, having made a hasty pilgrimage around the house, returned to announce that a very black cloud was rising rapidly in the northwest.

“I believe we’re going to have a heavy thunder-shower,” she exclaimed in dismay, “Oh, Anne, what will we do?”

“We must prepare for it,” said Anne tranquilly. A thunderstorm seemed a trifle in comparison with what had already happened. “You’d better drive the horse and buggy into that open shed. Fortunately my parasol is in the buggy. Here ... take my hat with you. Marilla told me I was a goose to put on my best hat to come to the Tory Road and she was right, as she always is.”

Diana untied the pony and drove into the shed, just as the first heavy drops of rain fell. There she sat and watched the resulting downpour, which was so thick and heavy that she could hardly see Anne through it, holding the parasol bravely over her bare head. There was not a great deal of thunder, but for the best part of an hour the rain came merrily down. Occasionally Anne slanted back her parasol and waved an encouraging hand to her friend; But conversation at that distance was quite out of the question. Finally the rain ceased, the sun came out, and Diana ventured across the puddles of the yard.

“Did you get very wet?” she asked anxiously.

“Oh, no,” returned Anne cheerfully. “My head and shoulders are quite dry and my skirt is only a little damp where the rain beat through the lathes. Don’t pity me, Diana, for I haven’t minded it at all. I kept thinking how much good the rain will do and how glad my garden must be for it, and imagining what the flowers and buds would think when the drops began to fall. I imagined out a most interesting dialogue between the asters and the sweet peas and the wild canaries in the lilac bush and the guardian spirit of the garden. When I go home I mean to write it down. I wish I had a pencil and paper to do it now, because I daresay I’ll forget the best parts before I reach home.”

Diana the faithful had a pencil and discovered a sheet of wrapping paper in the box of the buggy. Anne folded up her dripping parasol, put on her hat, spread the wrapping paper on a shingle Diana handed up, and wrote out her garden idyl under conditions that could hardly be considered as favorable to literature. Nevertheless, the result was quite pretty, and Diana was “enraptured” when Anne read it to her.

“Oh, Anne, it’s sweet ... just sweet. DO send it to the ‘Canadian Woman.’”

Anne shook her head.

“Oh, no, it wouldn’t be suitable at all. There is no PLOT in it, you see. It’s just a string of fancies. I like writing such things, but of course nothing of the sort would ever do for publication, for editors insist on plots, so Priscilla says. Oh, there’s Miss Sarah Copp now. PLEASE, Diana, go and explain.”

Miss Sarah Copp was a small person, garbed in shabby black, with a hat chosen less for vain adornment than for qualities that would wear well. She looked as amazed as might be expected on seeing the curious tableau in her yard, but when she heard Diana’s explanation she was all sympathy. She hurriedly unlocked the back door, produced the axe, and with a few skillfull blows set Anne free. The latter, somewhat tired and stiff, ducked down into the interior of her prison and thankfully emerged into liberty once more.

“Miss Copp,” she said earnestly. “I assure you I looked into your pantry window only to discover if you had a willowware platter. I didn’t see anything else — I didn’t LOOK for anything else.”

“Bless you, that’s all right,” said Miss Sarah amiably. “You needn’t worry — there’s no harm done. Thank goodness, we Copps keep our pantries presentable at all times and don’t care who sees into them. As for that old duckhouse, I’m glad it’s smashed, for maybe now Martha will agree to having it taken down. She never would before for fear it might come in handy sometime and I’ve had to whitewash it every spring. But you might as well argue with a post as with Martha. She went to town today — I drove her to the station. And you want to buy my platter. Well, what will you give for it?”

“Twenty dollars,” said Anne, who was never meant to match business wits with a Copp, or she would not have offered her price at the start.

“Well, I’ll see,” said Miss Sarah cautiously. “That platter is mine fortunately, or I’d never dare to sell it when Martha wasn’t here. As it is, I daresay she’ll raise a fuss. Martha’s the boss of this establishment I can tell you. I’m getting awful tired of living under another woman’s thumb.

But come in, come in. You must be real tired and hungry. I'll do the best I can for you in the way of tea but I warn you not to expect anything but bread and butter and some cowcumbers. Martha locked up all the cake and cheese and preserves afore she went. She always does, because she says I'm too extravagant with them if company comes."

The girls were hungry enough to do justice to any fare, and they enjoyed Miss Sarah's excellent bread and butter and "cowcumbers" thoroughly. When the meal was over Miss Sarah said,

"I don't know as I mind selling the platter. But it's worth twenty-five dollars. It's a very old platter."

Diana gave Anne's foot a gentle kick under the table, meaning, "Don't agree — she'll let it go for twenty if you hold out." But Anne was not minded to take any chances in regard to that precious platter. She promptly agreed to give twenty-five and Miss Sarah looked as if she felt sorry she hadn't asked for thirty.

"Well, I guess you may have it. I want all the money I can scare up just now. The fact is—" Miss Sarah threw up her head importantly, with a proud flush on her thin cheeks—"I'm going to be married — to Luther Wallace. He wanted me twenty years ago. I liked him real well but he was poor then and father packed him off. I s'pose I shouldn't have let him go so meek but I was timid and frightened of father. Besides, I didn't know men were so skurse."

When the girls were safely away, Diana driving and Anne holding the coveted platter carefully on her lap, the green, rain-freshened solitudes of the Tory Road were enlivened by ripples of girlish laughter.

"I'll amuse your Aunt Josephine with the 'strange eventful history' of this afternoon when I go to town tomorrow. We've had a rather trying time but it's over now. I've got the platter, and that rain has laid the dust beautifully. So 'all's well that ends well.'"

"We're not home yet," said Diana rather pessimistically, "and there's no telling what may happen before we are. You're such a girl to have

adventures, Anne.”

“Having adventures comes natural to some people,” said Anne serenely. “You just have a gift for them or you haven’t.”

XI X

Just a Happy Day

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“After all,” Anne had said to Marilla once, “I believe the nicest and sweetest days are not those on which anything very splendid or wonderful or exciting happens but just those that bring simple little pleasures, following one another softly, like pearls slipping off a string.”

Life at Green Gables was full of just such days, for Anne’s adventures and misadventures, like those of other people, did not all happen at once, but were sprinkled over the year, with long stretches of harmless, happy days between, filled with work and dreams and laughter and lessons. Such a day came late in August. In the forenoon Anne and Diana rowed the delighted twins down the pond to the sandshore to pick “sweet grass” and paddle in the surf, over which the wind was harping an old lyric learned when the world was young.

In the afternoon Anne walked down to the old Irving place to see Paul. She found him stretched out on the grassy bank beside the thick fir grove that sheltered the house on the north, absorbed in a book of fairy tales. He sprang up radiantly at sight of her.

“Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come, teacher,” he said eagerly, “because Grandma’s away. You’ll stay and have tea with me, won’t you? It’s so lonesome to have tea all by oneself. YOU know, teacher. I’ve had serious thoughts of asking Young Mary Joe to sit down and eat her tea with me, but I expect Grandma wouldn’t approve. She says the French have to be kept in their place. And anyhow, it’s difficult to talk with Young Mary Joe.

She just laughs and says, ‘Well, yous do beat all de kids I ever knowed.’ That isn’t my idea of conversation.”

“Of course I’ll stay to tea,” said Anne gaily. “I was dying to be asked. My mouth has been watering for some more of your grandma’s delicious shortbread ever since I had tea here before.”

Paul looked very sober.

“If it depended on me, teacher,” he said, standing before Anne with his hands in his pockets and his beautiful little face shadowed with sudden care, “You should have shortbread with a right good will. But it depends on Mary Joe. I heard Grandma tell her before she left that she wasn’t to give me any shortcake because it was too rich for little boys’ stomachs. But maybe Mary Joe will cut some for you if I promise I won’t eat any. Let us hope for the best.”

“Yes, let us,” agreed Anne, whom this cheerful philosophy suited exactly, “and if Mary Joe proves hard-hearted and won’t give me any shortbread it doesn’t matter in the least, so you are not to worry over that.”

“You’re sure you won’t mind if she doesn’t?” said Paul anxiously.

“Perfectly sure, dear heart.”

“Then I won’t worry,” said Paul, with a long breath of relief, “especially as I really think Mary Joe will listen to reason. She’s not a naturally unreasonable person, but she has learned by experience that it doesn’t do to disobey Grandma’s orders. Grandma is an excellent woman but people must do as she tells them. She was very much pleased with me this morning because I managed at last to eat all my plateful of porridge. It was a great effort but I succeeded. Grandma says she thinks she’ll make a man of me yet. But, teacher, I want to ask you a very important question. You will answer it truthfully, won’t you?”

“I’ll try,” promised Anne.

“Do you think I’m wrong in my upper story?” asked Paul, as if his very existence depended on her reply.

“Goodness, no, Paul,” exclaimed Anne in amazement. “Certainly you’re not. What put such an idea into your head?”

“Mary Joe ... but she didn’t know I heard her. Mrs. Peter Sloane’s hired girl, Veronica, came to see Mary Joe last evening and I heard them talking in the kitchen as I was going through the hall. I heard Mary Joe say, ‘Dat Paul, he is de queeres’ leetle boy. He talks dat queer. I tink dere’s someting wrong in his upper story.’ I couldn’t sleep last night for ever so long, thinking of it, and wondering if Mary Joe was right. I couldn’t bear to ask Grandma about it somehow, but I made up my mind I’d ask you. I’m so glad you think I’m all right in my upper story.”

“Of course you are. Mary Joe is a silly, ignorant girl, and you are never to worry about anything she says,” said Anne indignantly, secretly resolving to give Mrs. Irving a discreet hint as to the advisability of restraining Mary Joe’s tongue.

“Well, that’s a weight off my mind,” said Paul. “I’m perfectly happy now, teacher, thanks to you. It wouldn’t be nice to have something wrong in your upper story, would it, teacher? I suppose the reason Mary Joe imagines I have is because I tell her what I think about things sometimes.”

“It is a rather dangerous practice,” admitted Anne, out of the depths of her own experience.

“Well, by and by I’ll tell you the thoughts I told Mary Joe and you can see for yourself if there’s anything queer in them,” said Paul, “but I’ll wait till it begins to get dark. That is the time I ache to tell people things, and when nobody else is handy I just HAVE to tell Mary Joe. But after this I won’t, if it makes her imagine I’m wrong in my upper story. I’ll just ache and bear it.”

“And if the ache gets too bad you can come up to Green Gables and tell me your thoughts,” suggested Anne, with all the gravity that endeared her to children, who so dearly love to be taken seriously.

“Yes, I will. But I hope Davy won’t be there when I go because he makes faces at me. I don’t mind VERY much because he is such a little boy and I am quite a big one, but still it is not pleasant to have faces made at you. And Davy makes such terrible ones. Sometimes I am frightened he will never get his face straightened out again. He makes them at me in church when I ought to be thinking of sacred things. Dora likes me though, and I like her, but not so well as I did before she told Minnie May Barry that she meant to marry me when I grew up. I may marry somebody when I grow up but I’m far too young to be thinking of it yet, don’t you think, teacher?”

“Rather young,” agreed teacher.

“Speaking of marrying, reminds me of another thing that has been troubling me of late,” continued Paul. “Mrs. Lynde was down here one day last week having tea with Grandma, and Grandma made me show her my little mother’s picture ... the one father sent me for my birthday present. I didn’t exactly want to show it to Mrs. Lynde. Mrs. Lynde is a good, kind woman, but she isn’t the sort of person you want to show your mother’s picture to. YOU know, teacher. But of course I obeyed Grandma. Mrs. Lynde said she was very pretty but kind of actressy looking, and must have been an awful lot younger than father. Then she said, ‘Some of these days your pa will be marrying again likely. How will you like to have a new ma, Master Paul?’ Well, the idea almost took my breath away, teacher, but I wasn’t going to let Mrs. Lynde see THAT. I just looked her straight in the face ... like this ... and I said, ‘Mrs. Lynde, father made a pretty good job of picking out my first mother and I could trust him to pick out just as good a one the second time.’ And I CAN trust him, teacher. But still, I hope, if he ever does give me a new mother, he’ll ask my opinion about her before it’s too late. There’s Mary Joe coming to call us to tea. I’ll go and consult with her about the shortbread.”

As a result of the “consultation,” Mary Joe cut the shortbread and added a dish of preserves to the bill of fare. Anne poured the tea and she and Paul had a very merry meal in the dim old sitting room whose windows were open to the gulf breezes, and they talked so much “nonsense” that Mary Joe was quite scandalized and told Veronica the next evening that “de school mees” was as queer as Paul. After tea Paul took Anne up to his

room to show her his mother's picture, which had been the mysterious birthday present kept by Mrs. Irving in the bookcase. Paul's little low-ceilinged room was a soft whirl of ruddy light from the sun that was setting over the sea and swinging shadows from the fir trees that grew close to the square, deep-set window. From out this soft glow and glamor shone a sweet, girlish face, with tender mother eyes, that was hanging on the wall at the foot of the bed.

"That's my little mother," said Paul with loving pride. "I got Grandma to hang it there where I'd see it as soon as I opened my eyes in the morning. I never mind not having the light when I go to bed now, because it just seems as if my little mother was right here with me. Father knew just what I would like for a birthday present, although he never asked me. Isn't it wonderful how much fathers DO know?"

"Your mother was very lovely, Paul, and you look a little like her. But her eyes and hair are darker than yours."

"My eyes are the same color as father's," said Paul, flying about the room to heap all available cushions on the window seat, "but father's hair is gray. He has lots of it, but it is gray. You see, father is nearly fifty. That's ripe old age, isn't it? But it's only OUTSIDE he's old. INSIDE he's just as young as anybody. Now, teacher, please sit here; and I'll sit at your feet. May I lay my head against your knee? That's the way my little mother and I used to sit. Oh, this is real splendid, I think."

"Now, I want to hear those thoughts which Mary Joe pronounces so queer," said Anne, patting the mop of curls at her side. Paul never needed any coaxing to tell his thoughts ... at least, to congenial souls.

"I thought them out in the fir grove one night," he said dreamily. "Of course I didn't BELIEVE them but I THOUGHT them. YOU know, teacher. And then I wanted to tell them to somebody and there was nobody but Mary Joe. Mary Joe was in the pantry setting bread and I sat down on the bench beside her and I said, 'Mary Joe, do you know what I think? I think the evening star is a lighthouse on the land where the fairies dwell.' And Mary Joe said, 'Well, yous are de queer one. Dare ain't no such ting as fairies.' I was very much provoked. Of course, I knew there are no

fairies; but that needn't prevent my thinking there is. You know, teacher. But I tried again quite patiently. I said, 'Well then, Mary Joe, do you know what I think? I think an angel walks over the world after the sun sets ... a great, tall, white angel, with silvery folded wings ... and sings the flowers and birds to sleep. Children can hear him if they know how to listen.' Then Mary Joe held up her hands all over flour and said, 'Well, yous are de queer leetle boy. Yous make me feel scare.' And she really did look scared. I went out then and whispered the rest of my thoughts to the garden. There was a little birch tree in the garden and it died. Grandma says the salt spray killed it; but I think the dryad belonging to it was a foolish dryad who wandered away to see the world and got lost. And the little tree was so lonely it died of a broken heart."

"And when the poor, foolish little dryad gets tired of the world and comes back to her tree HER heart will break," said Anne.

"Yes; but if dryads are foolish they must take the consequences, just as if they were real people," said Paul gravely. "Do you know what I think about the new moon, teacher? I think it is a little golden boat full of dreams."

"And when it tips on a cloud some of them spill out and fall into your sleep."

"Exactly, teacher. Oh, you DO know. And I think the violets are little snips of the sky that fell down when the angels cut out holes for the stars to shine through. And the buttercups are made out of old sunshine; and I think the sweet peas will be butterflies when they go to heaven. Now, teacher, do you see anything so very queer about those thoughts?"

"No, laddie dear, they are not queer at all; they are strange and beautiful thoughts for a little boy to think, and so people who couldn't think anything of the sort themselves, if they tried for a hundred years, think them queer. But keep on thinking them, Paul ... some day you are going to be a poet, I believe."

When Anne reached home she found a very different type of boyhood waiting to be put to bed. Davy was sulky; and when Anne had undressed

him he bounced into bed and buried his face in the pillow.

“Davy, you have forgotten to say your prayers,” said Anne rebukingly.

“No, I didn’t forget,” said Davy defiantly, “but I ain’t going to say my prayers any more. I’m going to give up trying to be good, ‘cause no matter how good I am you’d like Paul Irving better. So I might as well be bad and have the fun of it.”

“I don’t like Paul Irving BETTER,” said Anne seriously. “I like you just as well, only in a different way.”

“But I want you to like me the same way,” pouted Davy.

“You can’t like different people the same way. You don’t like Dora and me the same way, do you?”

Davy sat up and reflected.

“No ... o ... o,” he admitted at last, “I like Dora because she’s my sister but I like you because you’re YOU.”

“And I like Paul because he is Paul and Davy because he is Davy,” said Anne gaily.

“Well, I kind of wish I’d said my prayers then,” said Davy, convinced by this logic. “But it’s too much bother getting out now to say them. I’ll say them twice over in the morning, Anne. Won’t that do as well?”

No, Anne was positive it would not do as well. So Davy scrambled out and knelt down at her knee. When he had finished his devotions he leaned back on his little, bare, brown heels and looked up at her.

“Anne, I’m gooder than I used to be.”

“Yes, indeed you are, Davy,” said Anne, who never hesitated to give credit where credit was due.

“I KNOW I’m gooder,” said Davy confidently, “and I’ll tell you how I know it. Today Marilla give me two pieces of bread and jam, one for me and one for Dora. One was a good deal bigger than the other and Marilla didn’t say which was mine. But I give the biggest piece to Dora. That was good of me, wasn’t it?”

“Very good, and very manly, Davy.”

“Of course,” admitted Davy, “Dora wasn’t very hungry and she only et half her slice and then she give the rest to me. But I didn’t know she was going to do that when I give it to her, so I WAS good, Anne.”

In the twilight Anne sauntered down to the Dryad’s Bubble and saw Gilbert Blythe coming down through the dusky Haunted Wood. She had a sudden realization that Gilbert was a schoolboy no longer. And how manly he looked — the tall, frank-faced fellow, with the clear, straightforward eyes and the broad shoulders. Anne thought Gilbert was a very handsome lad, even though he didn’t look at all like her ideal man. She and Diana had long ago decided what kind of a man they admired and their tastes seemed exactly similar. He must be very tall and distinguished looking, with melancholy, inscrutable eyes, and a melting, sympathetic voice. There was nothing either melancholy or inscrutable in Gilbert’s physiognomy, but of course that didn’t matter in friendship!

Gilbert stretched himself out on the ferns beside the Bubble and looked approvingly at Anne. If Gilbert had been asked to describe his ideal woman the description would have answered point for point to Anne, even to those seven tiny freckles whose obnoxious presence still continued to vex her soul. Gilbert was as yet little more than a boy; but a boy has his dreams as have others, and in Gilbert’s future there was always a girl with big, limpid gray eyes, and a face as fine and delicate as a flower. He had made up his mind, also, that his future must be worthy of its goddess. Even in quiet Avonlea there were temptations to be met and faced. White Sands youth were a rather “fast” set, and Gilbert was popular wherever he went. But he meant to keep himself worthy of Anne’s friendship and perhaps some distant day her love; and he watched over word and thought and deed as jealously as if her clear eyes were to pass in judgment on it. She held over him the unconscious influence that every girl, whose ideals

are high and pure, wields over her friends; an influence which would endure as long as she was faithful to those ideals and which she would as certainly lose if she were ever false to them. In Gilbert's eyes Anne's greatest charm was the fact that she never stooped to the petty practices of so many of the Avonlea girls — the small jealousies, the little deceits and rivalries, the palpable bids for favor. Anne held herself apart from all this, not consciously or of design, but simply because anything of the sort was utterly foreign to her transparent, impulsive nature, crystal clear in its motives and aspirations.

But Gilbert did not attempt to put his thoughts into words, for he had already too good reason to know that Anne would mercilessly and frostily nip all attempts at sentiment in the bud — or laugh at him, which was ten times worse.

"You look like a real dryad under that birch tree," he said teasingly.

"I love birch trees," said Anne, laying her cheek against the creamy satin of the slim bole, with one of the pretty, caressing gestures that came so natural to her.

"Then you'll be glad to hear that Mr. Major Spencer has decided to set out a row of white birches all along the road front of his farm, by way of encouraging the A.V.I.S.," said Gilbert. "He was talking to me about it today. Major Spencer is the most progressive and public-spirited man in Avonlea. And Mr. William Bell is going to set out a spruce hedge along his road front and up his lane. Our Society is getting on splendidly, Anne. It is past the experimental stage and is an accepted fact. The older folks are beginning to take an interest in it and the White Sands people are talking of starting one too. Even Elisha Wright has come around since that day the Americans from the hotel had the picnic at the shore. They praised our roadsides so highly and said they were so much prettier than in any other part of the Island. And when, in due time, the other farmers follow Mr. Spencer's good example and plant ornamental trees and hedges along their road fronts Avonlea will be the prettiest settlement in the province."

"The Aids are talking of taking up the graveyard," said Anne, "and I hope they will, because there will have to be a subscription for that, and it

would be no use for the Society to try it after the hall affair. But the Aids would never have stirred in the matter if the Society hadn't put it into their thoughts unofficially. Those trees we planted on the church grounds are flourishing, and the trustees have promised me that they will fence in the school grounds next year. If they do I'll have an arbor day and every scholar shall plant a tree; and we'll have a garden in the corner by the road."

"We've succeeded in almost all our plans so far, except in getting the old Boulter house removed," said Gilbert, "and I've given THAT up in despair. Levi won't have it taken down just to vex us. There's a contrary streak in all the Boulders and it's strongly developed in him."

"Julia Bell wants to send another committee to him, but I think the better way will just be to leave him severely alone," said Anne sagely.

"And trust to Providence, as Mrs. Lynde says," smiled Gilbert. "Certainly, no more committees. They only aggravate him. Julia Bell thinks you can do anything, if you only have a committee to attempt it. Next spring, Anne, we must start an agitation for nice lawns and grounds. We'll sow good seed betimes this winter. I've a treatise here on lawns and lawnmaking and I'm going to prepare a paper on the subject soon. Well, I suppose our vacation is almost over. School opens Monday. Has Ruby Gillis got the Carmody school?"

"Yes; Priscilla wrote that she had taken her own home school, so the Carmody trustees gave it to Ruby. I'm sorry Priscilla is not coming back, but since she can't I'm glad Ruby has got the school. She will be home for Saturdays and it will seem like old times, to have her and Jane and Diana and myself all together again."

Marilla, just home from Mrs. Lynde's, was sitting on the back porch step when Anne returned to the house.

"Rachel and I have decided to have our cruise to town tomorrow," she said. "Mr. Lynde is feeling better this week and Rachel wants to go before he has another sick spell."

“I intend to get up extra early tomorrow morning, for I’ve ever so much to do,” said Anne virtuously. “For one thing, I’m going to shift the feathers from my old bedtick to the new one. I ought to have done it long ago but I’ve just kept putting it off ... it’s such a detestable task. It’s a very bad habit to put off disagreeable things, and I never mean to again, or else I can’t comfortably tell my pupils not to do it. That would be inconsistent. Then I want to make a cake for Mr. Harrison and finish my paper on gardens for the A.V.I.S., and write Stella, and wash and starch my muslin dress, and make Dora’s new apron.”

“You won’t get half done,” said Marilla pessimistically. “I never yet planned to do a lot of things but something happened to prevent me.”

XX

The Way It Often Happens

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Anne rose betimes the next morning and blithely greeted the fresh day, when the banners of the sunrise were shaken triumphantly across the pearly skies. Green Gables lay in a pool of sunshine, flecked with the dancing shadows of poplar and willow. Beyond the land was Mr. Harrison's wheatfield, a great, windrippled expanse of pale gold. The world was so beautiful that Anne spent ten blissful minutes hanging idly over the garden gate drinking the loveliness in.

After breakfast Marilla made ready for her journey. Dora was to go with her, having been long promised this treat.

"Now, Davy, you try to be a good boy and don't bother Anne," she straitly charged him. "If you are good I'll bring you a striped candy cane from town."

For alas, Marilla had stooped to the evil habit of bribing people to be good!

"I won't be bad on purpose, but s'posen I'm bad zacksidentally?" Davy wanted to know.

"You'll have to guard against accidents," admonished Marilla. "Anne, if Mr. Shearer comes today get a nice roast and some steak. If he doesn't you'll have to kill a fowl for dinner tomorrow."

Anne nodded.

"I'm not going to bother cooking any dinner for just Davy and myself today," she said. "That cold ham bone will do for noon lunch and I'll have

some steak fried for you when you come home at night.”

“I’m going to help Mr. Harrison haul dulce this morning,” announced Davy. “He asked me to, and I guess he’ll ask me to dinner too. Mr. Harrison is an awful kind man. He’s a real sociable man. I hope I’ll be like him when I grow up. I mean BEHAVE like him ... I don’t want to LOOK like him. But I guess there’s no danger, for Mrs. Lynde says I’m a very handsome child. Do you s’pose it’ll last, Anne? I want to know?”

“I daresay it will,” said Anne gravely. “You ARE a handsome boy, Davy,”

... Marilla looked volumes of disapproval ... “but you must live up to it and be just as nice and gentlemanly as you look to be.”

“And you told Minnie May Barry the other day, when you found her crying ‘cause some one said she was ugly, that if she was nice and kind and loving people wouldn’t mind her looks,” said Davy discontentedly. “Seems to me you can’t get out of being good in this world for some reason or ‘nother. You just HAVE to behave.”

“Don’t you want to be good?” asked Marilla, who had learned a great deal but had not yet learned the futility of asking such questions.

“Yes, I want to be good but not TOO good,” said Davy cautiously. “You don’t have to be very good to be a Sunday School superintendent. Mr. Bell’s that, and he’s a real bad man.”

“Indeed he’s not,” said Marilla indignantly.

“He is ... he says he is himself,” asseverated Davy. “He said it when he prayed in Sunday School last Sunday. He said he was a vile worm and a miserable sinner and guilty of the blackest ‘niquity. What did he do that was so bad, Marilla? Did he kill anybody? Or steal the collection cents? I want to know.”

Fortunately Mrs. Lynde came driving up the lane at this moment and Marilla made off, feeling that she had escaped from the snare of the

fowler, and wishing devoutly that Mr. Bell were not quite so highly figurative in his public petitions, especially in the hearing of small boys who were always “wanting to know.”

Anne, left alone in her glory, worked with a will. The floor was swept, the beds made, the hens fed, the muslin dress washed and hung out on the line. Then Anne prepared for the transfer of feathers. She mounted to the garret and donned the first old dress that came to hand ... a navy blue cashmere she had worn at fourteen. It was decidedly on the short side and as “skimpy” as the notable wincey Anne had worn upon the occasion of her debut at Green Gables; but at least it would not be materially injured by down and feathers. Anne completed her toilet by tying a big red and white spotted handkerchief that had belonged to Matthew over her head, and, thus accoutred, betook herself to the kitchen chamber, whither Marilla, before her departure, had helped her carry the feather bed.

A cracked mirror hung by the chamber window and in an unlucky moment Anne looked into it. There were those seven freckles on her nose, more rampant than ever, or so it seemed in the glare of light from the unshaded window.

“Oh, I forgot to rub that lotion on last night,” she thought. “I’d better run down to the pantry and do it now.”

Anne had already suffered many things trying to remove those freckles. On one occasion the entire skin had peeled off her nose but the freckles remained. A few days previously she had found a recipe for a freckle lotion in a magazine and, as the ingredients were within her reach, she straightway compounded it, much to the disgust of Marilla, who thought that if Providence had placed freckles on your nose it was your bounden duty to leave them there.

Anne scurried down to the pantry, which, always dim from the big willow growing close to the window, was now almost dark by reason of the shade drawn to exclude flies. Anne caught the bottle containing the lotion from the shelf and copiously anointed her nose therewith by means of a little sponge sacred to the purpose. This important duty done, she returned to her work. Any one who has ever shifted feathers from one tick to another

will not need to be told that when Anne finished she was a sight to behold. Her dress was white with down and fluff, and her front hair, escaping from under the handkerchief, was adorned with a veritable halo of feathers. At this auspicious moment a knock sounded at the kitchen door.

“That must be Mr. Shearer,” thought Anne. “I’m in a dreadful mess but I’ll have to run down as I am, for he’s always in a hurry.”

Down flew Anne to the kitchen door. If ever a charitable floor did open to swallow up a miserable, befeathered damsel the Green Gables porch floor should promptly have engulfed Anne at that moment. On the doorstep were standing Priscilla Grant, golden and fair in silk attire, a short, stout gray-haired lady in a tweed suit, and another lady, tall stately, wonderfully gowned, with a beautiful, highbred face and large, black-lashed violet eyes, whom Anne “instinctively felt,” as she would have said in her earlier days, to be Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan.

In the dismay of the moment one thought stood out from the confusion of Anne’s mind and she grasped at it as at the proverbial straw. All Mrs. Morgan’s heroines were noted for “rising to the occasion.” No matter what their troubles were, they invariably rose to the occasion and showed their superiority over all ills of time, space, and quantity. Anne therefore felt it was HER duty to rise to the occasion and she did it, so perfectly that Priscilla afterward declared she never admired Anne Shirley more than at that moment. No matter what her outraged feelings were she did not show them. She greeted Priscilla and was introduced to her companions as calmly and composedly as if she had been arrayed in purple and fine linen. To be sure, it was somewhat of a shock to find that the lady she had instinctively felt to be Mrs. Morgan was not Mrs. Morgan at all, but an unknown Mrs. Pendexter, while the stout little gray-haired woman was Mrs. Morgan; but in the greater shock the lesser lost its power. Anne ushered her guests to the spare room and thence into the parlor, where she left them while she hastened out to help Priscilla unharness her horse.

“It’s dreadful to come upon you so unexpectedly as this,” apologized Priscilla, “but I did not know till last night that we were coming. Aunt Charlotte is going away Monday and she had promised to spend today with a friend in town. But last night her friend telephoned to her not to come

because they were quarantined for scarlet fever. So I suggested we come here instead, for I knew you were longing to see her. We called at the White Sands Hotel and brought Mrs. Pendexter with us. She is a friend of aunt's and lives in New York and her husband is a millionaire. We can't stay very long, for Mrs. Pendexter has to be back at the hotel by five o'clock."

Several times while they were putting away the horse Anne caught Priscilla looking at her in a furtive, puzzled way.

"She needn't stare at me so," Anne thought a little resentfully. "If she doesn't KNOW what it is to change a feather bed she might IMAGINE it."

When Priscilla had gone to the parlor, and before Anne could escape upstairs, Diana walked into the kitchen. Anne caught her astonished friend by the arm.

"Diana Barry, who do you suppose is in that parlor at this very moment? Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan ... and a New York millionaire's wife ... and here I am like THIS ... and NOT A THING IN THE HOUSE FOR DINNER BUT A COLD HAM BONE, Diana!"

By this time Anne had become aware that Diana was staring at her in precisely the same bewildered fashion as Priscilla had done. It was really too much.

"Oh, Diana, don't look at me so," she implored. "YOU, at least, must know that the neatest person in the world couldn't empty feathers from one tick into another and remain neat in the process."

"It ... it ... isn't the feathers," hesitated Diana. "It's ... it's ... your nose, Anne."

"My nose? Oh, Diana, surely nothing has gone wrong with it!"

Anne rushed to the little looking glass over the sink. One glance revealed the fatal truth. Her nose was a brilliant scarlet!

Anne sat down on the sofa, her dauntless spirit subdued at last.

“What is the matter with it?” asked Diana, curiosity overcoming delicacy.

“I thought I was rubbing my freckle lotion on it, but I must have used that red dye Marilla has for marking the pattern on her rugs,” was the despairing response. “What shall I do?”

“Wash it off,” said Diana practically.

“Perhaps it won’t wash off. First I dye my hair; then I dye my nose. Marilla cut my hair off when I dyed it but that remedy would hardly be practicable in this case. Well, this is another punishment for vanity and I suppose I deserve it ... though there’s not much comfort in THAT. It is really almost enough to make one believe in ill-luck, though Mrs. Lynde says there is no such thing, because everything is foreordained.”

Fortunately the dye washed off easily and Anne, somewhat consoled, betook herself to the east gable while Diana ran home. Presently Anne came down again, clothed and in her right mind. The muslin dress she had fondly hoped to wear was bobbing merrily about on the line outside, so she was forced to content herself with her black lawn. She had the fire on and the tea steeping when Diana returned; the latter wore HER muslin, at least, and carried a covered platter in her hand.

“Mother sent you this,” she said, lifting the cover and displaying a nicely carved and jointed chicken to Anne’s grateful eyes.

The chicken was supplemented by light new bread, excellent butter and cheese, Marilla’s fruit cake and a dish of preserved plums, floating in their golden syrup as in congealed summer sunshine. There was a big bowlful of pink-and-white asters also, by way of decoration; yet the spread seemed very meager beside the elaborate one formerly prepared for Mrs. Morgan.

Anne’s hungry guests, however, did not seem to think anything was lacking and they ate the simple viands with apparent enjoyment. But after the first few moments Anne thought no more of what was or was not on her bill of fare. Mrs. Morgan’s appearance might be somewhat

disappointing, as even her loyal worshippers had been forced to admit to each other; but she proved to be a delightful conversationalist. She had traveled extensively and was an excellent storyteller. She had seen much of men and women, and crystalized her experiences into witty little sentences and epigrams which made her hearers feel as if they were listening to one of the people in clever books. But under all her sparkle there was a strongly felt undercurrent of true, womanly sympathy and kindheartedness which won affection as easily as her brilliancy won admiration. Nor did she monopolize the conversation. She could draw others out as skillfully and fully as she could talk herself, and Anne and Diana found themselves chattering freely to her. Mrs. Pendexter said little; she merely smiled with her lovely eyes and lips, and ate chicken and fruit cake and preserves with such exquisite grace that she conveyed the impression of dining on ambrosia and honeydew. But then, as Anne said to Diana later on, anybody so divinely beautiful as Mrs. Pendexter didn't need to talk; it was enough for her just to LOOK.

After dinner they all had a walk through Lover's Lane and Violet Vale and the Birch Path, then back through the Haunted Wood to the Dryad's Bubble, where they sat down and talked for a delightful last half hour. Mrs. Morgan wanted to know how the Haunted Wood came by its name, and laughed until she cried when she heard the story and Anne's dramatic account of a certain memorable walk through it at the witching hour of twilight.

"It has indeed been a feast of reason and flow of soul, hasn't it?" said Anne, when her guests had gone and she and Diana were alone again. "I don't know which I enjoyed more ... listening to Mrs. Morgan or gazing at Mrs. Pendexter. I believe we had a nicer time than if we'd known they were coming and been cumbered with much serving. You must stay to tea with me, Diana, and we'll talk it all over."

"Priscilla says Mrs. Pendexter's husband's sister is married to an English earl; and yet she took a second helping of the plum preserves," said Diana, as if the two facts were somehow incompatible.

"I daresay even the English earl himself wouldn't have turned up his aristocratic nose at Marilla's plum preserves," said Anne proudly.

Anne did not mention the misfortune which had befallen HER nose when she related the day's history to Marilla that evening. But she took the bottle of freckle lotion and emptied it out of the window.

"I shall never try any beautifying messes again," she said, darkly resolute. "They may do for careful, deliberate people; but for anyone so hopelessly given over to making mistakes as I seem to be it's tempting fate to meddle with them."

XX I

Sweet Miss Lavendar

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School opened and Anne returned to her work, with fewer theories but considerably more experience. She had several new pupils, six-and seven-year-olds just venturing, round-eyed, into a world of wonder. Among them were Davy and Dora. Davy sat with Milty Boulter, who had been going to school for a year and was therefore quite a man of the world. Dora had made a compact at Sunday School the previous Sunday to sit with Lily Sloane; but Lily Sloane not coming the first day, she was temporarily assigned to Mirabel Cotton, who was ten years old and therefore, in Dora's eyes, one of the "big girls."

"I think school is great fun," Davy told Marilla when he got home that night. "You said I'd find it hard to sit still and I did ... you mostly do tell the truth, I notice ... but you can wriggle your legs about under the desk and that helps a lot. It's splendid to have so many boys to play with. I sit with Milty Boulter and he's fine. He's longer than me but I'm wider. It's nicer to sit in the back seats but you can't sit there till your legs grow long enough to touch the floor. Milty drew a picture of Anne on his slate and it was awful ugly and I told him if he made pictures of Anne like that I'd lick him at recess. I thought first I'd draw one of him and put horns and a tail on it, but I was afraid it would hurt his feelings, and Anne says you should never hurt anyone's feelings. It seems it's dreadful to have your

feelings hurt. It's better to knock a boy down than hurt his feelings if you MUST do something. Milty said he wasn't scared of me but he'd just as soon call it somebody else to 'blige me, so he rubbed out Anne's name and printed Barbara Shaw's under it. Milty doesn't like Barbara 'cause she calls him a sweet little boy and once she patted him on his head."

Dora said primly that she liked school; but she was very quiet, even for her; and when at twilight Marilla bade her go upstairs to bed she hesitated and began to cry.

"I'm ... I'm frightened," she sobbed. "I ... I don't want to go upstairs alone in the dark."

"What notion have you got into your head now?" demanded Marilla. "I'm sure you've gone to bed alone all summer and never been frightened before."

Dora still continued to cry, so Anne picked her up, cuddled her sympathetically, and whispered,

"Tell Anne all about it, sweetheart. What are you frightened of?"

"Of ... of Mirabel Cotton's uncle," sobbed Dora. "Mirabel Cotton told me all about her family today in school. Nearly everybody in her family has died ... all her grandfathers and grandmothers and ever so many uncles and aunts. They have a habit of dying, Mirabel says. Mirabel's awful proud of having so many dead relations, and she told me what they all died of, and what they said, and how they looked in their coffins. And Mirabel says one of her uncles was seen walking around the house after he was buried. Her mother saw him. I don't mind the rest so much but I can't help thinking about that uncle."

Anne went upstairs with Dora and sat by her until she fell asleep. The next day Mirabel Cotton was kept in at recess and "gently but firmly" given to understand that when you were so unfortunate as to possess an uncle who persisted in walking about houses after he had been decently interred it was not in good taste to talk about that eccentric gentleman to your deskmate of tender years. Mirabel thought this very harsh. The Cottons

had not much to boast of. How was she to keep up her prestige among her schoolmates if she were forbidden to make capital out of the family ghost?

September slipped by into a gold and crimson graciousness of October. One Friday evening Diana came over.

“I’d a letter from Ella Kimball today, Anne, and she wants us to go over to tea tomorrow afternoon to meet her cousin, Irene Trent, from town. But we can’t get one of our horses to go, for they’ll all be in use tomorrow, and your pony is lame ... so I suppose we can’t go.”

“Why can’t we walk?” suggested Anne. “If we go straight back through the woods we’ll strike the West Grafton road not far from the Kimball place. I was through that way last winter and I know the road. It’s no more than four miles and we won’t have to walk home, for Oliver Kimball will be sure to drive us. He’ll be only too glad of the excuse, for he goes to see Carrie Sloane and they say his father will hardly ever let him have a horse.”

It was accordingly arranged that they should walk, and the following afternoon they set out, going by way of Lover’s Lane to the back of the Cuthbert farm, where they found a road leading into the heart of acres of glimmering beech and maple woods, which were all in a wondrous glow of flame and gold, lying in a great purple stillness and peace.

“It’s as if the year were kneeling to pray in a vast cathedral full of mellow stained light, isn’t it?” said Anne dreamily. “It doesn’t seem right to hurry through it, does it? It seems irreverent, like running in a church.”

“We MUST hurry though,” said Diana, glancing at her watch. “We’ve left ourselves little enough time as it is.”

“Well, I’ll walk fast but don’t ask me to talk,” said Anne, quickening her pace. “I just want to drink the day’s loveliness in ... I feel as if she were holding it out to my lips like a cup of airy wine and I’ll take a sip at every step.”

Perhaps it was because she was so absorbed in “drinking it in” that Anne took the left turning when they came to a fork in the road. She should have taken the right, but ever afterward she counted it the most fortunate mistake of her life. They came out finally to a lonely, grassy road, with nothing in sight along it but ranks of spruce saplings.

“Why, where are we?” exclaimed Diana in bewilderment. “This isn’t the West Grafton road.”

“No, it’s the base line road in Middle Grafton,” said Anne, rather shamefacedly. “I must have taken the wrong turning at the fork. I don’t know where we are exactly, but we must be all of three miles from Kimballs’ still.”

“Then we can’t get there by five, for it’s half past four now,” said Diana, with a despairing look at her watch. “We’ll arrive after they have had their tea, and they’ll have all the bother of getting ours over again.”

“We’d better turn back and go home,” suggested Anne humbly. But Diana, after consideration, vetoed this.

“No, we may as well go and spend the evening, since we have come this far.”

A few yards further on the girls came to a place where the road forked again.

“Which of these do we take?” asked Diana dubiously.

Anne shook her head.

“I don’t know and we can’t afford to make any more mistakes. Here is a gate and a lane leading right into the wood. There must be a house at the other side. Let us go down and inquire.”

“What a romantic old lane this it,” said Diana, as they walked along its twists and turns. It ran under patriarchal old firs whose branches met above, creating a perpetual gloom in which nothing except moss could

grow. On either hand were brown wood floors, crossed here and there by fallen lances of sunlight. All was very still and remote, as if the world and the cares of the world were far away.

“I feel as if we were walking through an enchanted forest,” said Anne in a hushed tone. “Do you suppose we’ll ever find our way back to the real world again, Diana? We shall presently come to a palace with a spellbound princess in it, I think.”

Around the next turn they came in sight, not indeed of a palace, but of a little house almost as surprising as a palace would have been in this province of conventional wooden farmhouses, all as much alike in general characteristics as if they had grown from the same seed. Anne stopped short in rapture and Diana exclaimed, “Oh, I know where we are now. That is the little stone house where Miss Lavendar Lewis lives ... Echo Lodge, she calls it, I think. I’ve often heard of it but I’ve never seen it before. Isn’t it a romantic spot?”

“It’s the sweetest, prettiest place I ever saw or imagined,” said Anne delightedly. “It looks like a bit out of a story book or a dream.”

The house was a low-eaved structure built of undressed blocks of red Island sandstone, with a little peaked roof out of which peered two dormer windows, with quaint wooden hoods over them, and two great chimneys. The whole house was covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy, finding easy foothold on the rough stonework and turned by autumn frosts to most beautiful bronze and wine-red tints.

Before the house was an oblong garden into which the lane gate where the girls were standing opened. The house bounded it on one side; on the three others it was enclosed by an old stone dyke, so overgrown with moss and grass and ferns that it looked like a high, green bank. On the right and left the tall, dark spruces spread their palm-like branches over it; but below it was a little meadow, green with clover aftermath, sloping down to the blue loop of the Grafton River. No other house or clearing was in sight ... nothing but hills and valleys covered with feathery young firs.

“I wonder what sort of a person Miss Lewis is,” speculated Diana as they opened the gate into the garden. “They say she is very peculiar.”

“She’ll be interesting then,” said Anne decidedly. “Peculiar people are always that at least, whatever else they are or are not. Didn’t I tell you we would come to an enchanted palace? I knew the elves hadn’t woven magic over that lane for nothing.”

“But Miss Lavendar Lewis is hardly a spellbound princess,” laughed Diana. “She’s an old maid ... she’s forty-five and quite gray, I’ve heard.”

“Oh, that’s only part of the spell,” asserted Anne confidently. “At heart she’s young and beautiful still ... and if we only knew how to unloose the spell she would step forth radiant and fair again. But we don’t know how ... it’s always and only the prince who knows that ... and Miss Lavendar’s prince hasn’t come yet. Perhaps some fatal mischance has befallen him ... though THAT’S against the law of all fairy tales.”

“I’m afraid he came long ago and went away again,” said Diana. “They say she used to be engaged to Stephan Irving ... Paul’s father ... when they were young. But they quarreled and parted.”

“Hush,” warned Anne. “The door is open.”

The girls paused in the porch under the tendrils of ivy and knocked at the open door. There was a patter of steps inside and a rather odd little personage presented herself ... a girl of about fourteen, with a freckled face, a snub nose, a mouth so wide that it did really seem as if it stretched “from ear to ear,” and two long braids of fair hair tied with two enormous bows of blue ribbon.

“Is Miss Lewis at home?” asked Diana.

“Yes, ma’am. Come in, ma’am. I’ll tell Miss Lavendar you’re here, ma’am. She’s upstairs, ma’am.”

With this the small handmaiden whisked out of sight and the girls, left alone, looked about them with delighted eyes. The interior of this

wonderful little house was quite as interesting as its exterior.

The room had a low ceiling and two square, small-paned windows, curtained with muslin frills. All the furnishings were old-fashioned, but so well and daintily kept that the effect was delicious. But it must be candidly admitted that the most attractive feature, to two healthy girls who had just tramped four miles through autumn air, was a table, set out with pale blue china and laden with delicacies, while little golden-hued ferns scattered over the cloth gave it what Anne would have termed “a festal air.”

“Miss Lavendar must be expecting company to tea,” she whispered. “There are six places set. But what a funny little girl she has. She looked like a messenger from pixy land. I suppose she could have told us the road, but I was curious to see Miss Lavendar. S ... s ... sh, she’s coming.”

And with that Miss Lavendar Lewis was standing in the doorway. The girls were so surprised that they forgot good manners and simply stared. They had unconsciously been expecting to see the usual type of elderly spinster as known to their experience ... a rather angular personage, with prim gray hair and spectacles. Nothing more unlike Miss Lavendar could possibly be imagined.

She was a little lady with snow-white hair beautifully wavy and thick, and carefully arranged in becoming puffs and coils. Beneath it was an almost girlish face, pink cheeked and sweet lipped, with big soft brown eyes and dimples ... actually dimples. She wore a very dainty gown of cream muslin with pale-hued roses on it ... a gown which would have seemed ridiculously juvenile on most women of her age, but which suited Miss Lavendar so perfectly that you never thought about it at all.

“Charlotta the Fourth says that you wished to see me,” she said, in a voice that matched her appearance.

“We wanted to ask the right road to West Grafton,” said Diana. “We are invited to tea at Mr. Kimball’s, but we took the wrong path coming through the woods and came out to the base line instead of the West Grafton road. Do we take the right or left turning at your gate?”

“The left,” said Miss Lavendar, with a hesitating glance at her tea table. Then she exclaimed, as if in a sudden little burst of resolution,

“But oh, won’t you stay and have tea with me? Please, do. Mr. Kimball’s will have tea over before you get there. And Charlotta the Fourth and I will be so glad to have you.”

Diana looked mute inquiry at Anne.

“We’d like to stay,” said Anne promptly, for she had made up her mind that she wanted to know more of this surprising Miss Lavendar, “if it won’t inconvenience you. But you are expecting other guests, aren’t you?”

Miss Lavendar looked at her tea table again, and blushed.

“I know you’ll think me dreadfully foolish,” she said. “I AM foolish ... and I’m ashamed of it when I’m found out, but never unless I AM found out. I’m not expecting anybody ... I was just pretending I was. You see, I was so lonely. I love company ... that is, the right kind of company...but so few people ever come here because it is so far out of the way. Charlotta the Fourth was lonely too. So I just pretended I was going to have a tea party. I cooked for it ... and decorated the table for it... and set it with my mother’s wedding china ... and I dressed up for it.” Diana secretly thought Miss Lavendar quite as peculiar as report had pictured her. The idea of a woman of forty-five playing at having a tea party, just as if she were a little girl! But Anne of the shining eyes exclaimed joyfully, “Oh, do YOU imagine things too?”

That “too” revealed a kindred spirit to Miss Lavendar.

“Yes, I do,” she confessed, boldly. “Of course it’s silly in anybody as old as I am. But what is the use of being an independent old maid if you can’t be silly when you want to, and when it doesn’t hurt anybody? A person must have some compensations. I don’t believe I could live at times if I didn’t pretend things. I’m not often caught at it though, and Charlotta the Fourth never tells. But I’m glad to be caught today, for you have really come and I have tea all ready for you. Will you go up to the spare room and take off your hats? It’s the white door at the head of the stairs. I must

run out to the kitchen and see that Charlotta the Fourth isn't letting the tea boil. Charlotta the Fourth is a very good girl but she WILL let the tea boil."

Miss Lavendar tripped off to the kitchen on hospitable thoughts intent and the girls found their way up to the spare room, an apartment as white as its door, lighted by the ivy-hung dormer window and looking, as Anne said, like the place where happy dreams grew.

"This is quite an adventure, isn't it?" said Diana. "And isn't Miss Lavendar sweet, if she IS a little odd? She doesn't look a bit like an old maid."

"She looks just as music sounds, I think," answered Anne.

When they went down Miss Lavendar was carrying in the teapot, and behind her, looking vastly pleased, was Charlotta the Fourth, with a plate of hot biscuits.

"Now, you must tell me your names," said Miss Lavendar. "I'm so glad you are young girls. I love young girls. It's so easy to pretend I'm a girl myself when I'm with them. I do hate" ... with a little grimace ... "to believe I'm old. Now, who are you ... just for convenience' sake? Diana Barry? And Anne Shirley? May I pretend that I've known you for a hundred years and call you Anne and Diana right away?"

"You, may" the girls said both together.

"Then just let's sit comfily down and eat everything," said Miss Lavendar happily. "Charlotta, you sit at the foot and help with the chicken. It is so fortunate that I made the sponge cake and doughnuts. Of course, it was foolish to do it for imaginary guests ... I know Charlotta the Fourth thought so, didn't you, Charlotta? But you see how well it has turned out. Of course they wouldn't have been wasted, for Charlotta the Fourth and I could have eaten them through time. But sponge cake is not a thing that improves with time."

That was a merry and memorable meal; and when it was over they all went out to the garden, lying in the glamor of sunset.

“I do think you have the loveliest place here,” said Diana, looking round her admiringly.

“Why do you call it Echo Lodge?” asked Anne.

“Charlotta,” said Miss Lavendar, “go into the house and bring out the little tin horn that is hanging over the clock shelf.”

Charlotta the Fourth skipped off and returned with the horn.

“Blow it, Charlotta,” commanded Miss Lavendar.

Charlotta accordingly blew, a rather raucous, strident blast. There was moment’s stillness ... and then from the woods over the river came a multitude of fairy echoes, sweet, elusive, silvery, as if all the “horns of elfland” were blowing against the sunset. Anne and Diana exclaimed in delight.

“Now laugh, Charlotta ... laugh loudly.”

Charlotta, who would probably have obeyed if Miss Lavendar had told her to stand on her head, climbed upon the stone bench and laughed loud and heartily. Back came the echoes, as if a host of pixy people were mimicking her laughter in the purple woodlands and along the fir-fringed points.

“People always admire my echoes very much,” said Miss Lavendar, as if the echoes were her personal property. “I love them myself. They are very good company ... with a little pretending. On calm evenings Charlotta the Fourth and I often sit out here and amuse ourselves with them. Charlotta, take back the horn and hang it carefully in its place.”

“Why do you call her Charlotta the Fourth?” asked Diana, who was bursting with curiosity on this point.

“Just to keep her from getting mixed up with other Charlottas in my thoughts,” said Miss Lavendar seriously. “They all look so much alike

there's no telling them apart. Her name isn't really Charlotta at all. It is ... let me see ... what is it? I THINK it's Leonora ... yes, it IS Leonora. You see, it is this way. When mother died ten years ago I couldn't stay here alone ... and I couldn't afford to pay the wages of a grownup girl. So I got little Charlotta Bowman to come and stay with me for board and clothes. Her name really was Charlotta ... she was Charlotta the First. She was just thirteen. She stayed with me till she was sixteen and then she went away to Boston, because she could do better there. Her sister came to stay with me then. Her name was Julietta ... Mrs. Bowman had a weakness for fancy names I think ... but she looked so like Charlotta that I kept calling her that all the time ...and she didn't mind. So I just gave up trying to remember her right name. She was Charlotta the Second, and when she went away Evelina came and she was Charlotta the Third. Now I have Charlotta the Fourth; but when she is sixteen ... she's fourteen now ... she will want to go to Boston too, and what I shall do then I really do not know. Charlotta the Fourth is the last of the Bowman girls, and the best. The other Charlottas always let me see that they thought it silly of me to pretend things but Charlotta the Fourth never does, no matter what she may really think. I don't care what people think about me if they don't let me see it."

"Well," said Diana looking regretfully at the setting sun. "I suppose we must go if we want to get to Mr. Kimball's before dark. We've had a lovely time, Miss Lewis."

"Won't you come again to see me?" pleaded Miss Lavendar.

Tall Anne put her arm about the little lady.

"Indeed we shall," she promised. "Now that we have discovered you we'll wear out our welcome coming to see you. Yes, we must go ... 'we must tear ourselves away,' as Paul Irving says every time he comes to Green Gables."

"Paul Irving?" There was a subtle change in Miss Lavendar's voice. "Who is he? I didn't think there was anybody of that name in Avonlea."

Anne felt vexed at her own heedlessness. She had forgotten about Miss Lavendar's old romance when Paul's name slipped out.

"He is a little pupil of mine," she explained slowly. "He came from Boston last year to live with his grandmother, Mrs. Irving of the shore road."

"Is he Stephen Irving's son?" Miss Lavendar asked, bending over her namesake border so that her face was hidden.

"Yes."

"I'm going to give you girls a bunch of lavender apiece," said Miss Lavendar brightly, as if she had not heard the answer to her question. "It's very sweet, don't you think? Mother always loved it. She planted these borders long ago. Father named me Lavendar because he was so fond of it. The very first time he saw mother was when he visited her home in East Grafton with her brother. He fell in love with her at first sight; and they put him in the spare room bed to sleep and the sheets were scented with lavender and he lay awake all night and thought of her. He always loved the scent of lavender after that ... and that was why he gave me the name. Don't forget to come back soon, girls dear. We'll be looking for you, Charlotta the Fourth and I."

She opened the gate under the firs for them to pass through. She looked suddenly old and tired; the glow and radiance had faded from her face; her parting smile was as sweet with ineradicable youth as ever, but when the girls looked back from the first curve in the lane they saw her sitting on the old stone bench under the silver poplar in the middle of the garden with her head leaning wearily on her hand.

"She does look lonely," said Diana softly. "We must come often to see her."

"I think her parents gave her the only right and fitting name that could possibly be given her," said Anne. "If they had been so blind as to name her Elizabeth or Nellie or Muriel she must have been called Lavendar just the same, I think. It's so suggestive of sweetness and old-fashioned graces

and 'silk attire.' Now, my name just smacks of bread and butter, patchwork and chores."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Diana. "Anne seems to me real stately and like a queen. But I'd like Kerrenhappuch if it happened to be your name. I think people make their names nice or ugly just by what they are themselves. I can't bear Josie or Gertie for names now but before I knew the Pye girls I thought them real pretty."

"That's a lovely idea, Diana," said Anne enthusiastically. "Living so that you beautify your name, even if it wasn't beautiful to begin with ... making it stand in people's thoughts for something so lovely and pleasant that they never think of it by itself. Thank you, Diana."

XXI I

Odds and Ends

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“So you had tea at the stone house with Lavendar Lewis?” said Marilla at the breakfast table next morning. “What is she like now? It’s over fifteen years since I saw her last ... it was one Sunday in Grafton church. I suppose she has changed a great deal. Davy Keith, when you want something you can’t reach, ask to have it passed and don’t spread yourself over the table in that fashion. Did you ever see Paul Irving doing that when he was here to meals?”

“But Paul’s arms are longer’n mine,” brumbled Davy. “They’ve had eleven years to grow and mine’ve only had seven. ‘Sides, I DID ask, but you and Anne was so busy talking you didn’t pay any ‘tention. ‘Sides, Paul’s never been here to any meal escept tea, and it’s easier to be p’lite at tea than at breakfast. You ain’t half as hungry. It’s an awful long while between supper and breakfast. Now, Anne, that spoonful ain’t any bigger than it was last year and I’M ever so much bigger.”

“Of course, I don’t know what Miss Lavendar used to look like but I don’t fancy somehow that she has changed a great deal,” said Anne, after she had helped Davy to maple syrup, giving him two spoonfuls to pacify him. “Her hair is snow-white but her face is fresh and almost girlish, and she has the sweetest brown eyes ... such a pretty shade of woodbrown with little golden glints in them ... and her voice makes you think of white satin and tinkling water and fairy bells all mixed up together.”

“She was reckoned a great beauty when she was a girl,” said Marilla. “I never knew her very well but I liked her as far as I did know her. Some folks thought her peculiar even then. DAVY, if ever I catch you at such a trick again you’ll be made to wait for your meals till everyone else is done, like the French.”

Most conversations between Anne and Marilla in the presence of the twins, were punctuated by these rebukes Davy-ward. In this instance, Davy, sad to relate, not being able to scoop up the last drops of his syrup with his spoon, had solved the difficulty by lifting his plate in both hands and applying his small pink tongue to it. Anne looked at him with such horrified eyes that the little sinner turned red and said, half shamefacedly, half defiantly,

“There ain’t any wasted that way.”

“People who are different from other people are always called peculiar,” said Anne. “And Miss Lavendar is certainly different, though it’s hard to say just where the difference comes in. Perhaps it is because she is one of those people who never grow old.”

“One might as well grow old when all your generation do,” said Marilla, rather reckless of her pronouns. “If you don’t, you don’t fit in anywhere. Far as I can learn Lavendar Lewis has just dropped out of everything. She’s lived in that out of the way place until everybody has forgotten her. That stone house is one of the oldest on the Island. Old Mr. Lewis built it eighty years ago when he came out from England. Davy, stop joggling Dora’s elbow. Oh, I saw you! You needn’t try to look innocent. What does make you behave so this morning?”

“Maybe I got out of the wrong side of the bed,” suggested Davy. “Milty Boulter says if you do that things are bound to go wrong with you all day. His grandmother told him. But which is the right side? And what are you to do when your bed’s against the wall? I want to know.”

“I’ve always wondered what went wrong between Stephen Irving and Lavendar Lewis,” continued Marilla, ignoring Davy. “They were certainly engaged twenty-five years ago and then all at once it was broken off. I don’t know what the trouble was but it must have been something terrible, for he went away to the States and never come home since.”

“Perhaps it was nothing very dreadful after all. I think the little things in life often make more trouble than the big things,” said Anne, with one of those flashes of insight which experience could not have bettered.

“Marilla, please don’t say anything about my being at Miss Lavendar’s to Mrs. Lynde. She’d be sure to ask a hundred questions and somehow I wouldn’t like it ... nor Miss Lavendar either if she knew, I feel sure.”

“I daresay Rachel would be curious,” admitted Marilla, “though she hasn’t as much time as she used to have for looking after other people’s affairs. She’s tied home now on account of Thomas; and she’s feeling pretty downhearted, for I think she’s beginning to lose hope of his ever getting better. Rachel will be left pretty lonely if anything happens to him, with all her children settled out west, except Eliza in town; and she doesn’t like her husband.”

Marilla’s pronouns slandered Eliza, who was very fond of her husband.

“Rachel says if he’d only brace up and exert his will power he’d get better. But what is the use of asking a jellyfish to sit up straight?” continued Marilla. “Thomas Lynde never had any will power to exert. His mother ruled him till he married and then Rachel carried it on. It’s a wonder he dared to get sick without asking her permission. But there, I shouldn’t talk so. Rachel has been a good wife to him. He’d never have amounted to anything without her, that’s certain. He was born to be ruled; and it’s well he fell into the hands of a clever, capable manager like Rachel. He didn’t mind her way. It saved him the bother of ever making up his own mind about anything. Davy, do stop squirming like an eel.”

“I’ve nothing else to do,” protested Davy. “I can’t eat any more, and it’s no fun watching you and Anne eat.”

“Well, you and Dora go out and give the hens their wheat,” said Marilla. “And don’t you try to pull any more feathers out of the white rooster’s tail either.”

“I wanted some feathers for an Injun headdress,” said Davy sulkily. “Milty Boulter has a dandy one, made out of the feathers his mother give him when she killed their old white gobbler. You might let me have some. That rooster’s got ever so many more’n he wants.”

“You may have the old feather duster in the garret,” said Anne, “and I’ll dye them green and red and yellow for you.”

“You do spoil that boy dreadfully,” said Marilla, when Davy, with a radiant face, had followed prim Dora out. Marilla’s education had made great strides in the past six years; but she had not yet been able to rid herself of the idea that it was very bad for a child to have too many of its wishes indulged.

“All the boys of his class have Indian headdresses, and Davy wants one too,” said Anne. “I know how it feels ... I’ll never forget how I used to long for puffed sleeves when all the other girls had them. And Davy isn’t being spoiled. He is improving every day. Think what a difference there is in him since he came here a year ago.”

“He certainly doesn’t get into as much mischief since he began to go to school,” acknowledged Marilla. “I suppose he works off the tendency with the other boys. But it’s a wonder to me we haven’t heard from Richard Keith before this. Never a word since last May.”

“I’ll be afraid to hear from him,” sighed Anne, beginning to clear away the dishes. “If a letter should come I’d dread opening it, for fear it would tell us to send the twins to him.”

A month later a letter did come. But it was not from Richard Keith. A friend of his wrote to say that Richard Keith had died of consumption a fortnight previously. The writer of the letter was the executor of his will and by that will the sum of two thousand dollars was left to Miss Marilla Cuthbert in trust for David and Dora Keith until they came of age or married. In the meantime the interest was to be used for their maintenance.

“It seems dreadful to be glad of anything in connection with a death,” said Anne soberly. “I’m sorry for poor Mr. Keith; but I AM glad that we can keep the twins.”

“It’s a very good thing about the money,” said Marilla practically. “I wanted to keep them but I really didn’t see how I could afford to do it,

especially when they grew older. The rent of the farm doesn't do any more than keep the house and I was bound that not a cent of your money should be spent on them. You do far too much for them as it is. Dora didn't need that new hat you bought her any more than a cat needs two tails. But now the way is made clear and they are provided for."

Davy and Dora were delighted when they heard that they were to live at Green Gables, "for good." The death of an uncle whom they had never seen could not weigh a moment in the balance against that. But Dora had one misgiving.

"Was Uncle Richard buried?" she whispered to Anne.

"Yes, dear, of course."

"He ... he ... isn't like Mirabel Cotton's uncle, is he?" in a still more agitated whisper. "He won't walk about houses after being buried, will he, Anne?"

XXII I

Miss Lavendar's Romance

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"I think I'll take a walk through to Echo Lodge this evening," said Anne, one Friday afternoon in December.

"It looks like snow," said Marilla dubiously.

"I'll be there before the snow comes and I mean to stay all night. Diana can't go because she has company, and I'm sure Miss Lavendar will be looking for me tonight. It's a whole fortnight since I was there."

Anne had paid many a visit to Echo Lodge since that October day. Sometimes she and Diana drove around by the road; sometimes they

walked through the woods. When Diana could not go Anne went alone. Between her and Miss Lavendar had sprung up one of those fervent, helpful friendships possible only between a woman who has kept the freshness of youth in her heart and soul, and a girl whose imagination and intuition supplied the place of experience. Anne had at last discovered a real “kindred spirit,” while into the little lady’s lonely, sequestered life of dreams Anne and Diana came with the wholesome joy and exhilaration of the outer existence, which Miss Lavendar, “the world forgetting, by the world forgot,” had long ceased to share; they brought an atmosphere of youth and reality to the little stone house. Charlotta the Fourth always greeted them with her very widest smile ... and Charlotta’s smiles WERE fearfully wide ... loving them for the sake of her adored mistress as well as for their own. Never had there been such “high jinks” held in the little stone house as were held there that beautiful, late-lingering autumn, when November seemed October over again, and even December aped the sunshine and hazes of summer.

But on this particular day it seemed as if December had remembered that it was time for winter and had turned suddenly dull and brooding, with a windless hush predictive of coming snow. Nevertheless, Anne keenly enjoyed her walk through the great gray maze of the beechlands; though alone she never found it lonely; her imagination peopled her path with merry companions, and with these she carried on a gay, pretended conversation that was wittier and more fascinating than conversations are apt to be in real life, where people sometimes fail most lamentably to talk up to the requirements. In a “make believe” assembly of choice spirits everybody says just the thing you want her to say and so gives you the chance to say just what YOU want to say. Attended by this invisible company, Anne traversed the woods and arrived at the fir lane just as broad, feathery flakes began to flutter down softly.

At the first bend she came upon Miss Lavendar, standing under a big, broad-branching fir. She wore a gown of warm, rich red, and her head and shoulders were wrapped in a silvery gray silk shawl.

“You look like the queen of the fir wood fairies,” called Anne merrily.

“I thought you would come tonight, Anne,” said Miss Lavendar, running forward. “And I’m doubly glad, for Charlotta the Fourth is away. Her mother is sick and she had to go home for the night. I should have been very lonely if you hadn’t come ... even the dreams and the echoes wouldn’t have been enough company. Oh, Anne, how pretty you are,” she added suddenly, looking up at the tall, slim girl with the soft rose-flush of walking on her face. “How pretty and how young! It’s so delightful to be seventeen, isn’t it? I do envy you,” concluded Miss Lavendar candidly.

“But you are only seventeen at heart,” smiled Anne.

“No, I’m old ... or rather middle-aged, which is far worse,” sighed Miss Lavendar. “Sometimes I can pretend I’m not, but at other times I realize it. And I can’t reconcile myself to it as most women seem to. I’m just as rebellious as I was when I discovered my first gray hair. Now, Anne, don’t look as if you were trying to understand. Seventeen CAN’T understand. I’m going to pretend right away that I am seventeen too, and I can do it, now that you’re here. You always bring youth in your hand like a gift. We’re going to have a jolly evening. Tea first ... what do you want for tea? We’ll have whatever you like. Do think of something nice and indigestible.”

There were sounds of riot and mirth in the little stone house that night. What with cooking and feasting and making candy and laughing and “pretending,” it is quite true that Miss Lavendar and Anne comported themselves in a fashion entirely unsuited to the dignity of a spinster of forty-five and a sedate schoolma’am. Then, when they were tired, they sat down on the rug before the grate in the parlor, lighted only by the soft fireshine and perfumed deliciously by Miss Lavendar’s open rose-jar on the mantel. The wind had risen and was sighing and wailing around the eaves and the snow was thudding softly against the windows, as if a hundred storm sprites were tapping for entrance.

“I’m so glad you’re here, Anne,” said Miss Lavendar, nibbling at her candy. “If you weren’t I should be blue ... very blue ... almost navy blue. Dreams and make-believes are all very well in the daytime and the sunshine, but when dark and storm come they fail to satisfy. One wants real things then. But you don’t know this ... seventeen never knows it. At seventeen dreams DO satisfy because you think the realities are waiting for you further on. When I was seventeen, Anne, I didn’t think forty-five would find me a white-haired little old maid with nothing but dreams to fill my life.”

“But you aren’t an old maid,” said Anne, smiling into Miss Lavendar’s wistful woodbrown eyes. “Old maids are BORN ... they don’t BECOME.”

“Some are born old maids, some achieve old maidenhood, and some have old maidenhood thrust upon them,” parodied Miss Lavendar whimsically.

“You are one of those who have achieved it then,” laughed Anne, “and you’ve done it so beautifully that if every old maid were like you they would come into the fashion, I think.”

“I always like to do things as well as possible,” said Miss Lavendar meditatively, “and since an old maid I had to be I was determined to be a very nice one. People say I’m odd; but it’s just because I follow my own way of being an old maid and refuse to copy the traditional pattern. Anne, did anyone ever tell you anything about Stephen Irving and me?”

“Yes,” said Anne candidly, “I’ve heard that you and he were engaged once.”

“So we were ... twenty-five years ago ... a lifetime ago. And we were to have been married the next spring. I had my wedding dress made, although nobody but mother and Stephen ever knew THAT. We’d been engaged in a way almost all our lives, you might say. When Stephen was a little boy his mother would bring him here when she came to see my mother; and the second time he ever came ... he was nine and I was six ... he told me out in the garden that he had pretty well made up his mind to marry me when he grew up. I remember that I said ‘Thank you’; and when he was gone I

told mother very gravely that there was a great weight off my mind, because I wasn't frightened any more about having to be an old maid. How poor mother laughed!"

"And what went wrong?" asked Anne breathlessly.

"We had just a stupid, silly, commonplace quarrel. So commonplace that, if you'll believe me, I don't even remember just how it began. I hardly know who was the more to blame for it. Stephen did really begin it, but I suppose I provoked him by some foolishness of mine. He had a rival or two, you see. I was vain and coquettish and liked to tease him a little. He was a very highstrung, sensitive fellow. Well, we parted in a temper on both sides. But I thought it would all come right; and it would have if Stephen hadn't come back too soon. Anne, my dear, I'm sorry to say" ... Miss Lavendar dropped her voice as if she were about to confess a predilection for murdering people, "that I am a dreadfully sulky person. Oh, you needn't smile, ... it's only too true. I DO sulk; and Stephen came back before I had finished sulking. I wouldn't listen to him and I wouldn't forgive him; and so he went away for good. He was too proud to come again. And then I sulked because he didn't come. I might have sent for him perhaps, but I couldn't humble myself to do that. I was just as proud as he was ... pride and sulkiness make a very bad combination, Anne. But I could never care for anybody else and I didn't want to. I knew I would rather be an old maid for a thousand years than marry anybody who wasn't Stephen Irving. Well, it all seems like a dream now, of course. How sympathetic you look, Anne ... as sympathetic as only seventeen can look. But don't overdo it. I'm really a very happy, contented little person in spite of my broken heart. My heart did break, if ever a heart did, when I realized that Stephen Irving was not coming back. But, Anne, a broken heart in real life isn't half as dreadful as it is in books. It's a good deal like a bad tooth ... though you won't think THAT a very romantic simile. It takes spells of aching and gives you a sleepless night now and then, but between times it lets you enjoy life and dreams and echoes and peanut candy as if there were nothing the matter with it. And now you're looking disappointed. You don't think I'm half as interesting a person as you did five minutes ago when you believed I was always the prey of a tragic memory bravely hidden beneath external smiles. That's the worst ... or the

best ... of real life, Anne. It WON'T let you be miserable. It keeps on trying to make you comfortable ... and succeeding...even when you're determined to be unhappy and romantic. Isn't this candy scrumptious? I've eaten far more than is good for me already but I'm going to keep recklessly on."

After a little silence Miss Lavendar said abruptly,

"It gave me a shock to hear about Stephen's son that first day you were here, Anne. I've never been able to mention him to you since, but I've wanted to know all about him. What sort of a boy is he?"

"He is the dearest, sweetest child I ever knew, Miss Lavendar ... and he pretends things too, just as you and I do."

"I'd like to see him," said Miss Lavendar softly, as if talking to herself. "I wonder if he looks anything like the little dream-boy who lives here with me ... MY little dream-boy."

"If you would like to see Paul I'll bring him through with me sometime," said Anne.

"I would like it ... but not too soon. I want to get used to the thought. There might be more pain than pleasure in it ... if he looked too much like Stephen ... or if he didn't look enough like him. In a month's time you may bring him."

Accordingly, a month later Anne and Paul walked through the woods to the stone house, and met Miss Lavendar in the lane. She had not been expecting them just then and she turned very pale.

"So this is Stephen's boy," she said in a low tone, taking Paul's hand and looking at him as he stood, beautiful and boyish, in his smart little fur coat and cap. "He ... he is very like his father."

"Everybody says I'm a chip off the old block," remarked Paul, quite at his ease.

Anne, who had been watching the little scene, drew a relieved breath. She saw that Miss Lavendar and Paul had “taken” to each other, and that there would be no constraint or stiffness. Miss Lavendar was a very sensible person, in spite of her dreams and romance, and after that first little betrayal she tucked her feelings out of sight and entertained Paul as brightly and naturally as if he were anybody’s son who had come to see her. They all had a jolly afternoon together and such a feast of fat things by way of supper as would have made old Mrs. Irving hold up her hands in horror, believing that Paul’s digestion would be ruined for ever.

“Come again, laddie,” said Miss Lavendar, shaking hands with him at parting.

“You may kiss me if you like,” said Paul gravely.

Miss Lavendar stooped and kissed him.

“How did you know I wanted to?” she whispered.

“Because you looked at me just as my little mother used to do when she wanted to kiss me. As a rule, I don’t like to be kissed. Boys don’t. You know, Miss Lewis. But I think I rather like to have you kiss me. And of course I’ll come to see you again. I think I’d like to have you for a particular friend of mine, if you don’t object.”

“I ... I don’t think I shall object,” said Miss Lavendar. She turned and went in very quickly; but a moment later she was waving a gay and smiling goodbye to them from the window.

“I like Miss Lavendar,” announced Paul, as they walked through the beech woods. “I like the way she looked at me, and I like her stone house, and I like Charlotta the Fourth. I wish Grandma Irving had a Charlotta the Fourth instead of a Mary Joe. I feel sure Charlotta the Fourth wouldn’t think I was wrong in my upper story when I told her what I think about things. Wasn’t that a splendid tea we had, teacher? Grandma says a boy shouldn’t be thinking about what he gets to eat, but he can’t help it sometimes when he is real hungry. YOU know, teacher. I don’t think Miss Lavendar would make a boy eat porridge for breakfast if he didn’t like it.

She'd get things for him he did like. But of course" ... Paul was nothing if not fair-minded ... "that mightn't be very good for him. It's very nice for a change though, teacher. YOU know."

XXI V

A Prophet in His Own Country

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One May day Avonlea folks were mildly excited over some "Avonlea Notes," signed "Observer," which appeared in the Charlottetown 'Daily Enterprise.' Gossip ascribed the authorship thereof to Charlie Sloane, partly because the said Charlie had indulged in similar literary flights in times past, and partly because one of the notes seemed to embody a sneer at Gilbert Blythe. Avonlea juvenile society persisted in regarding Gilbert Blythe and Charlie Sloane as rivals in the good graces of a certain damsel with gray eyes and an imagination.

Gossip, as usual, was wrong. Gilbert Blythe, aided and abetted by Anne, had written the notes, putting in the one about himself as a blind. Only two of the notes have any bearing on this history:

"Rumor has it that there will be a wedding in our village ere the daisies are in bloom. A new and highly respected citizen will lead to the hymeneal altar one of our most popular ladies.

"Uncle Abe, our well-known weather prophet, predicts a violent storm of thunder and lightning for the evening of the twenty-third of May, beginning at seven o'clock sharp. The area of the storm will extend over the greater part of the Province. People traveling that evening will do well to take umbrellas and mackintoshes with them."

"Uncle Abe really has predicted a storm for sometime this spring," said Gilbert, "but do you suppose Mr. Harrison really does go to see Isabella Andrews?"

“No,” said Anne, laughing, “I’m sure he only goes to play checkers with Mr. Harrison Andrews, but Mrs. Lynde says she knows Isabella Andrews must be going to get married, she’s in such good spirits this spring.”

Poor old Uncle Abe felt rather indignant over the notes. He suspected that “Observer” was making fun of him. He angrily denied having assigned any particular date for his storm but nobody believed him.

Life in Avonlea continued on the smooth and even tenor of its way. The “planting” was put in; the Improvers celebrated an Arbor Day. Each Improver set out, or caused to be set out, five ornamental trees. As the society now numbered forty members, this meant a total of two hundred young trees. Early oats greened over the red fields; apple orchards flung great blossoming arms about the farmhouses and the Snow Queen adorned itself as a bride for her husband. Anne liked to sleep with her window open and let the cherry fragrance blow over her face all night. She thought it very poetical. Marilla thought she was risking her life.

“Thanksgiving should be celebrated in the spring,” said Anne one evening to Marilla, as they sat on the front door steps and listened to the silver-sweet chorus of the frogs. “I think it would be ever so much better than having it in November when everything is dead or asleep. Then you have to remember to be thankful; but in May one simply can’t help being thankful ... that they are alive, if for nothing else. I feel exactly as Eve must have felt in the garden of Eden before the trouble began. IS that grass in the hollow green or golden? It seems to me, Marilla, that a pearl of a day like this, when the blossoms are out and the winds don’t know where to blow from next for sheer crazy delight must be pretty near as good as heaven.”

Marilla looked scandalized and glanced apprehensively around to make sure the twins were not within earshot. They came around the corner of the house just then.

“Ain’t it an awful nice-smelling evening?” asked Davy, sniffing delightedly as he swung a hoe in his grimy hands. He had been working in his garden. That spring Marilla, by way of turning Davy’s passion for reveling in mud and clay into useful channels, had given him and Dora a

small plot of ground for a garden. Both had eagerly gone to work in a characteristic fashion. Dora planted, weeded, and watered carefully, systematically, and dispassionately. As a result, her plot was already green with prim, orderly little rows of vegetables and annuals. Davy, however, worked with more zeal than discretion; he dug and hoed and raked and watered and transplanted so energetically that his seeds had no chance for their lives.

“How is your garden coming on, Davy-boy?” asked Anne.

“Kind of slow,” said Davy with a sigh. “I don’t know why the things don’t grow better. Milty Boulter says I must have planted them in the dark of the moon and that’s the whole trouble. He says you must never sow seeds or kill pork or cut your hair or do any ‘portant thing in the wrong time of the moon. Is that true, Anne? I want to know.”

“Maybe if you didn’t pull your plants up by the roots every other day to see how they’re getting on ‘at the other end,’ they’d do better,” said Marilla sarcastically.

“I only pulled six of them up,” protested Davy. “I wanted to see if there was grubs at the roots. Milty Boulter said if it wasn’t the moon’s fault it must be grubs. But I only found one grub. He was a great big juicy curly grub. I put him on a stone and got another stone and smashed him flat. He made a jolly SQUISH I tell you. I was sorry there wasn’t more of them. Dora’s garden was planted same time’s mine and her things are growing all right. It CAN’T be the moon,” Davy concluded in a reflective tone.

“Marilla, look at that apple tree,” said Anne. “Why, the thing is human. It is reaching out long arms to pick its own pink skirts daintily up and provoke us to admiration.”

“Those Yellow Duchess trees always bear well,” said Marilla complacently. “That tree’ll be loaded this year. I’m real glad... they’re great for pies.”

But neither Marilla nor Anne nor anybody else was fated to make pies out of Yellow Duchess apples that year.

The twenty-third of May came ... an unseasonably warm day, as none realized more keenly than Anne and her little beehive of pupils, sweltering over fractions and syntax in the Avonlea schoolroom. A hot breeze blew all the forenoon; but after noon hour it died away into a heavy stillness. At half past three Anne heard a low rumble of thunder. She promptly dismissed school at once, so that the children might get home before the storm came.

As they went out to the playground Anne perceived a certain shadow and gloom over the world in spite of the fact that the sun was still shining brightly. Annetta Bell caught her hand nervously.

“Oh, teacher, look at that awful cloud!”

Anne looked and gave an exclamation of dismay. In the northwest a mass of cloud, such as she had never in all her life beheld before, was rapidly rolling up. It was dead black, save where its curled and fringed edges showed a ghastly, livid white. There was something about it indescribably menacing as it gloomed up in the clear blue sky; now and again a bolt of lightning shot across it, followed by a savage growl. It hung so low that it almost seemed to be touching the tops of the wooded hills.

Mr. Harmon Andrews came clattering up the hill in his truck wagon, urging his team of grays to their utmost speed. He pulled them to a halt opposite the school.

“Guess Uncle Abe’s hit it for once in his life, Anne,” he shouted. “His storm’s coming a leetle ahead of time. Did ye ever see the like of that cloud? Here, all you young ones, that are going my way, pile in, and those that ain’t scoot for the post office if ye’ve more’n a quarter of a mile to go, and stay there till the shower’s over.”

Anne caught Davy and Dora by the hands and flew down the hill, along the Birch Path, and past Violet Vale and Willowmere, as fast as the twins’ fat legs could go. They reached Green Gables not a moment too soon and were joined at the door by Marilla, who had been hustling her ducks and chickens under shelter. As they dashed into the kitchen the light seemed to vanish, as if blown out by some mighty breath; the awful cloud rolled over

the sun and a darkness as of late twilight fell across the world. At the same moment, with a crash of thunder and a blinding glare of lightning, the hail swooped down and blotted the landscape out in one white fury.

Through all the clamor of the storm came the thud of torn branches striking the house and the sharp crack of breaking glass. In three minutes every pane in the west and north windows was broken and the hail poured in through the apertures covering the floor with stones, the smallest of which was as big as a hen's egg. For three quarters of an hour the storm raged unabated and no one who underwent it ever forgot it. Marilla, for once in her life shaken out of her composure by sheer terror, knelt by her rocking chair in a corner of the kitchen, gasping and sobbing between the deafening thunder peals. Anne, white as paper, had dragged the sofa away from the window and sat on it with a twin on either side. Davy at the first crash had howled, "Anne, Anne, is it the Judgment Day? Anne, Anne, I never meant to be naughty," and then had buried his face in Anne's lap and kept it there, his little body quivering. Dora, somewhat pale but quite composed, sat with her hand clasped in Anne's, quiet and motionless. It is doubtful if an earthquake would have disturbed Dora.

Then, almost as suddenly as it began, the storm ceased. The hail stopped, the thunder rolled and muttered away to the eastward, and the sun burst out merry and radiant over a world so changed that it seemed an absurd thing to think that a scant three quarters of an hour could have effected such a transformation.

Marilla rose from her knees, weak and trembling, and dropped on her rocker. Her face was haggard and she looked ten years older.

"Have we all come out of that alive?" she asked solemnly.

"You bet we have," piped Davy cheerfully, quite his own man again. "I wasn't a bit scared either ... only just at the first. It come on a fellow so sudden. I made up my mind quick as a wink that I wouldn't fight Teddy Sloane Monday as I'd promised; but now maybe I will. Say, Dora, was you scared?"

“Yes, I was a little scared,” said Dora primly, “but I held tight to Anne’s hand and said my prayers over and over again.”

“Well, I’d have said my prayers too if I’d have thought of it,” said Davy; “but,” he added triumphantly, “you see I came through just as safe as you for all I didn’t say them.”

Anne got Marilla a glassful of her potent currant wine ... HOW potent it was Anne, in her earlier days, had had all too good reason to know ... and then they went to the door to look out on the strange scene.

Far and wide was a white carpet, knee deep, of hailstones; drifts of them were heaped up under the eaves and on the steps. When, three or four days later, those hailstones melted, the havoc they had wrought was plainly seen, for every green growing thing in the field or garden was cut off. Not only was every blossom stripped from the apple trees but great boughs and branches were wrenched away. And out of the two hundred trees set out by the Improvers by far the greater number were snapped off or torn to shreds.

“Can it possibly be the same world it was an hour ago?” asked Anne, dazedly. “It MUST have taken longer than that to play such havoc.”

“The like of this has never been known in Prince Edward Island,” said Marilla, “never. I remember when I was a girl there was a bad storm, but it was nothing to this. We’ll hear of terrible destruction, you may be sure.”

“I do hope none of the children were caught out in it,” murmured Anne anxiously. As it was discovered later, none of the children had been, since all those who had any distance to go had taken Mr. Andrews’ excellent advice and sought refuge at the post office.

“There comes John Henry Carter,” said Marilla.

John Henry came wading through the hailstones with a rather scared grin.

“Oh, ain’t this awful, Miss Cuthbert? Mr. Harrison sent me over to see if yous had come out all right.”

“We’re none of us killed,” said Marilla grimly, “and none of the buildings was struck. I hope you got off equally well.”

“Yas’m. Not quite so well, ma’am. We was struck. The lightning knocked over the kitchen chimbley and come down the flue and knocked over Ginger’s cage and tore a hole in the floor and went into the sullar. Yas’m.”

“Was Ginger hurt?” queried Anne.

“Yas’m. He was hurt pretty bad. He was killed.” Later on Anne went over to comfort Mr. Harrison. She found him sitting by the table, stroking Ginger’s gay dead body with a trembling hand.

“Poor Ginger won’t call you any more names, Anne,” he said mournfully.

Anne could never have imagined herself crying on Ginger’s account, but the tears came into her eyes.

“He was all the company I had, Anne ... and now he’s dead. Well, well, I’m an old fool to care so much. I’ll let on I don’t care. I know you’re going to say something sympathetic as soon as I stop talking ... but don’t. If you did I’d cry like a baby. Hasn’t this been a terrible storm? I guess folks won’t laugh at Uncle Abe’s predictions again. Seems as if all the storms that he’s been prophesying all his life that never happened came all at once. Beats all how he struck the very day though, don’t it? Look at the mess we have here. I must hustle round and get some boards to patch up that hole in the floor.”

Avonlea folks did nothing the next day but visit each other and compare damages. The roads were impassable for wheels by reason of the hailstones, so they walked or rode on horseback. The mail came late with ill tidings from all over the province. Houses had been struck, people killed and injured; the whole telephone and telegraph system had been disorganized, and any number of young stock exposed in the fields had perished.

Uncle Abe waded out to the blacksmith’s forge early in the morning and spent the whole day there. It was Uncle Abe’s hour of triumph and he

enjoyed it to the full. It would be doing Uncle Abe an injustice to say that he was glad the storm had happened; but since it had to be he was very glad he had predicted it ... to the very day, too. Uncle Abe forgot that he had ever denied setting the day. As for the trifling discrepancy in the hour, that was nothing.

Gilbert arrived at Green Gables in the evening and found Marilla and Anne busily engaged in nailing strips of oilcloth over the broken windows.

“Goodness only knows when we’ll get glass for them,” said Marilla. “Mr. Barry went over to Carmody this afternoon but not a pane could he get for love or money. Lawson and Blair were cleaned out by the Carmody people by ten o’clock. Was the storm bad at White Sands, Gilbert?”

“I should say so. I was caught in the school with all the children and I thought some of them would go mad with fright. Three of them fainted, and two girls took hysterics, and Tommy Blewett did nothing but shriek at the top of his voice the whole time.”

“I only squealed once,” said Davy proudly. “My garden was all smashed flat,” he continued mournfully, “but so was Dora’s,” he added in a tone which indicated that there was yet balm in Gilead.

Anne came running down from the west gable.

“Oh, Gilbert, have you heard the news? Mr. Levi Boulter’s old house was struck and burned to the ground. It seems to me that I’m dreadfully wicked to feel glad over THAT, when so much damage has been done. Mr. Boulter says he believes the A.V.I.S. magicked up that storm on purpose.”

“Well, one thing is certain,” said Gilbert, laughing, “‘Observer’ has made Uncle Abe’s reputation as a weather prophet. ‘Uncle Abe’s storm’ will go down in local history. It is a most extraordinary coincidence that it should have come on the very day we selected. I actually have a half guilty feeling, as if I really had ‘magicked’ it up. We may as well rejoice over the old house being removed, for there’s not much to rejoice over where our young trees are concerned. Not ten of them have escaped.”

“Ah, well, we’ll just have to plant them over again next spring,” said Anne philosophically. “That is one good thing about this world ... there are always sure to be more springs.”

XX V

An Avonlea Scandal

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One blithe June morning, a fortnight after Uncle Abe's storm, Anne came slowly through the Green Gables yard from the garden, carrying in her hands two blighted stalks of white narcissus.

"Look, Marilla," she said sorrowfully, holding up the flowers before the eyes of a grim lady, with her hair coifed in a green gingham apron, who was going into the house with a plucked chicken, "these are the only buds the storm spared ... and even they are imperfect. I'm so sorry ... I wanted some for Matthew's grave. He was always so fond of June lilies."

"I kind of miss them myself," admitted Marilla, "though it doesn't seem right to lament over them when so many worse things have happened... all the crops destroyed as well as the fruit."

"But people have sown their oats over again," said Anne comfortingly, "and Mr. Harrison says he thinks if we have a good summer they will come out all right though late. And my annuals are all coming up again ... but oh, nothing can replace the June lilies. Poor little Hester Gray will have none either. I went all the way back to her garden last night but there wasn't one. I'm sure she'll miss them."

"I don't think it's right for you to say such things, Anne, I really don't," said Marilla severely. "Hester Gray has been dead for thirty years and her spirit is in heaven ... I hope."

"Yes, but I believe she loves and remembers her garden here still," said Anne. "I'm sure no matter how long I'd lived in heaven I'd like to look down and see somebody putting flowers on my grave. If I had had a garden here like Hester Gray's it would take me more than thirty years, even in heaven, to forget being homesick for it by spells."

“Well, don’t let the twins hear you talking like that,” was Marilla’s feeble protest, as she carried her chicken into the house.

Anne pinned her narcissi on her hair and went to the lane gate, where she stood for awhile sunning herself in the June brightness before going in to attend to her Saturday morning duties. The world was growing lovely again; old Mother Nature was doing her best to remove the traces of the storm, and, though she was not to succeed fully for many a moon, she was really accomplishing wonders.

“I wish I could just be idle all day today,” Anne told a bluebird, who was singing and swinging on a willow bough, “but a schoolma’am, who is also helping to bring up twins, can’t indulge in laziness, birdie. How sweet you are singing, little bird. You are just putting the feelings of my heart into song ever so much better than I could myself. Why, who is coming?”

An express wagon was jolting up the lane, with two people on the front seat and a big trunk behind. When it drew near Anne recognized the driver as the son of the station agent at Bright River; but his companion was a stranger ... a scrap of a woman who sprang nimbly down at the gate almost before the horse came to a standstill. She was a very pretty little person, evidently nearer fifty than forty, but with rosy cheeks, sparkling black eyes, and shining black hair, surmounted by a wonderful beflowered and beplumed bonnet. In spite of having driven eight miles over a dusty road she was as neat as if she had just stepped out of the proverbial bandbox.

“Is this where Mr. James A. Harrison lives?” she inquired briskly.

“No, Mr. Harrison lives over there,” said Anne, quite lost in astonishment.

“Well, I DID think this place seemed too tidy ... MUCH too tidy for James A. to be living here, unless he has greatly changed since I knew him,” chirped the little lady. “Is it true that James A. is going to be married to some woman living in this settlement?”

“No, oh no,” cried Anne, flushing so guiltily that the stranger looked curiously at her, as if she half suspected her of matrimonial designs on Mr.

Harrison.

“But I saw it in an Island paper,” persisted the Fair Unknown. “A friend sent a marked copy to me ... friends are always so ready to do such things. James A.’s name was written in over ‘new citizen.’”

“Oh, that note was only meant as a joke,” gasped Anne. “Mr. Harrison has no intention of marrying ANYBODY. I assure you he hasn’t.”

“I’m very glad to hear it,” said the rosy lady, climbing nimbly back to her seat in the wagon, “because he happens to be married already. I am his wife. Oh, you may well look surprised. I suppose he has been masquerading as a bachelor and breaking hearts right and left. Well, well, James A.,” nodding vigorously over the fields at the long white house, “your fun is over. I am here ... though I wouldn’t have bothered coming if I hadn’t thought you were up to some mischief. I suppose,” turning to Anne, “that parrot of his is as profane as ever?”

“His parrot ... is dead ... I THINK,” gasped poor Anne, who couldn’t have felt sure of her own name at that precise moment.

“Dead! Everything will be all right then,” cried the rosy lady jubilantly. “I can manage James A. if that bird is out of the way.”

With which cryptic utterance she went joyfully on her way and Anne flew to the kitchen door to meet Marilla.

“Anne, who was that woman?”

“Marilla,” said Anne solemnly, but with dancing eyes, “do I look as if I were crazy?”

“Not more so than usual,” said Marilla, with no thought of being sarcastic.

“Well then, do you think I am awake?”

“Anne, what nonsense has got into you? Who was that woman, I say?”

“Marilla, if I’m not crazy and not asleep she can’t be such stuff as dreams are made of ... she must be real. Anyway, I’m sure I couldn’t have imagined such a bonnet. She says she is Mr. Harrison’s wife, Marilla.”

Marilla stared in her turn.

“His wife! Anne Shirley! Then what has he been passing himself off as an unmarried man for?”

“I don’t suppose he did, really,” said Anne, trying to be just. “He never said he wasn’t married. People simply took it for granted. Oh Marilla, what will Mrs. Lynde say to this?”

They found out what Mrs. Lynde had to say when she came up that evening. Mrs. Lynde wasn’t surprised! Mrs. Lynde had always expected something of the sort! Mrs. Lynde had always known there was SOMETHING about Mr. Harrison!

“To think of his deserting his wife!” she said indignantly. “It’s like something you’d read of in the States, but who would expect such a thing to happen right here in Avonlea?”

“But we don’t know that he deserted her,” protested Anne, determined to believe her friend innocent till he was proved guilty. “We don’t know the rights of it at all.”

“Well, we soon will. I’m going straight over there,” said Mrs. Lynde, who had never learned that there was such a word as delicacy in the dictionary. “I’m not supposed to know anything about her arrival, and Mr. Harrison was to bring some medicine for Thomas from Carmody today, so that will be a good excuse. I’ll find out the whole story and come in and tell you on the way back.”

Mrs. Lynde rushed in where Anne had feared to tread. Nothing would have induced the latter to go over to the Harrison place; but she had her natural and proper share of curiosity and she felt secretly glad that Mrs. Lynde was going to solve the mystery. She and Marilla waited expectantly for that good lady’s return, but waited in vain. Mrs. Lynde did not revisit

Green Gables that night. Davy, arriving home at nine o'clock from the Boulter place, explained why.

"I met Mrs. Lynde and some strange woman in the Hollow," he said, "and gracious, how they were talking both at once! Mrs. Lynde said to tell you she was sorry it was too late to call tonight. Anne, I'm awful hungry. We had tea at Milty's at four and I think Mrs. Boulter is real mean. She didn't give us any preserves or cake ... and even the bread was skurce."

"Davy, when you go visiting you must never criticize anything you are given to eat," said Anne solemnly. "It is very bad manners."

"All right ... I'll only think it," said Davy cheerfully. "Do give a fellow some supper, Anne."

Anne looked at Marilla, who followed her into the pantry and shut the door cautiously.

"You can give him some jam on his bread, I know what tea at Levi Boulter's is apt to be."

Davy took his slice of bread and jam with a sigh.

"It's a kind of disappointing world after all," he remarked. "Milty has a cat that takes fits ... she's took a fit regular every day for three weeks. Milty says it's awful fun to watch her. I went down today on purpose to see her have one but the mean old thing wouldn't take a fit and just kept healthy as healthy, though Milty and me hung round all the afternoon and waited. But never mind" ... Davy brightened up as the insidious comfort of the plum jam stole into his soul ... "maybe I'll see her in one sometime yet. It doesn't seem likely she'd stop having them all at once when she's been so in the habit of it, does it? This jam is awful nice."

Davy had no sorrows that plum jam could not cure.

Sunday proved so rainy that there was no stirring abroad; but by Monday everybody had heard some version of the Harrison story. The school buzzed with it and Davy came home, full of information.

“Marilla, Mr. Harrison has a new wife ... well, not ezackly new, but they’ve stopped being married for quite a spell, Milty says. I always s’posed people had to keep on being married once they’d begun, but Milty says no, there’s ways of stopping if you can’t agree. Milty says one way is just to start off and leave your wife, and that’s what Mr. Harrison did. Milty says Mr. Harrison left his wife because she threw things at him ... HARD things ... and Arty Sloane says it was because she wouldn’t let him smoke, and Ned Clay says it was ‘cause she never let up scolding him. I wouldn’t leave MY wife for anything like that. I’d just put my foot down and say, ‘Mrs. Davy, you’ve just got to do what’ll please ME ‘cause I’m a MAN.’ THAT’D settle her pretty quick I guess. But Annetta Clay says SHE left HIM because he wouldn’t scrape his boots at the door and she doesn’t blame her. I’m going right over to Mr. Harrison’s this minute to see what she’s like.”

Davy soon returned, somewhat cast down.

“Mrs. Harrison was away ... she’s gone to Carmody with Mrs. Rachel Lynde to get new paper for the parlor. And Mr. Harrison said to tell Anne to go over and see him ‘cause he wants to have a talk with her. And say, the floor is scrubbed, and Mr. Harrison is shaved, though there wasn’t any preaching yesterday.”

The Harrison kitchen wore a very unfamiliar look to Anne. The floor was indeed scrubbed to a wonderful pitch of purity and so was every article of furniture in the room; the stove was polished until she could see her face in it; the walls were whitewashed and the window panes sparkled in the sunlight. By the table sat Mr. Harrison in his working clothes, which on Friday had been noted for sundry rents and tatters but which were now neatly patched and brushed. He was sprucely shaved and what little hair he had was carefully trimmed.

“Sit down, Anne, sit down,” said Mr. Harrison in a tone but two degrees removed from that which Avonlea people used at funerals. “Emily’s gone over to Carmody with Rachel Lynde ... she’s struck up a lifelong friendship already with Rachel Lynde. Beats all how contrary women are. Well, Anne, my easy times are over ... all over. It’s neatness and tidiness for me for the rest of my natural life, I suppose.”

Mr. Harrison did his best to speak dolefully, but an irrepressible twinkle in his eye betrayed him.

“Mr. Harrison, you are glad your wife is come back,” cried Anne, shaking her finger at him. “You needn’t pretend you’re not, because I can see it plainly.”

Mr. Harrison relaxed into a sheepish smile.

“Well ... well ... I’m getting used to it,” he conceded. “I can’t say I was sorry to see Emily. A man really needs some protection in a community like this, where he can’t play a game of checkers with a neighbor without being accused of wanting to marry that neighbor’s sister and having it put in the paper.”

“Nobody would have supposed you went to see Isabella Andrews if you hadn’t pretended to be unmarried,” said Anne severely.

“I didn’t pretend I was. If anybody’d have asked me if I was married I’d have said I was. But they just took it for granted. I wasn’t anxious to talk about the matter ... I was feeling too sore over it. It would have been nuts for Mrs. Rachel Lynde if she had known my wife had left me, wouldn’t it now?”

“But some people say that you left her.”

“She started it, Anne, she started it. I’m going to tell you the whole story, for I don’t want you to think worse of me than I deserve ... nor of Emily neither. But let’s go out on the veranda. Everything is so fearful neat in here that it kind of makes me homesick. I suppose I’ll get used to it after awhile but it eases me up to look at the yard. Emily hasn’t had time to tidy it up yet.”

As soon as they were comfortably seated on the veranda Mr. Harrison began his tale of woe.

“I lived in Scottsford, New Brunswick, before I came here, Anne. My sister kept house for me and she suited me fine; she was just reasonably

tidy and she let me alone and spoiled me ... so Emily says. But three years ago she died. Before she died she worried a lot about what was to become of me and finally she got me to promise I'd get married. She advised me to take Emily Scott because Emily had money of her own and was a pattern housekeeper. I said, says I, 'Emily Scott wouldn't look at me.' 'You ask her and see,' says my sister; and just to ease her mind I promised her I would ... and I did. And Emily said she'd have me. Never was so surprised in my life, Anne ... a smart pretty little woman like her and an old fellow like me. I tell you I thought at first I was in luck. Well, we were married and took a little wedding trip to St. John for a fortnight and then we went home. We got home at ten o'clock at night, and I give you my word, Anne, that in half an hour that woman was at work housecleaning. Oh, I know you're thinking my house needed it ... you've got a very expressive face, Anne; your thoughts just come out on it like print ... but it didn't, not that bad. It had got pretty mixed up while I was keeping bachelor's hall, I admit, but I'd got a woman to come in and clean it up before I was married and there'd been considerable painting and fixing done. I tell you if you took Emily into a brand new white marble palace she'd be into the scrubbing as soon as she could get an old dress on. Well, she cleaned house till one o'clock that night and at four she was up and at it again. And she kept on that way ... far's I could see she never stopped. It was scour and sweep and dust everlasting, except on Sundays, and then she was just longing for Monday to begin again. But it was her way of amusing herself and I could have reconciled myself to it if she'd left me alone. But that she wouldn't do. She'd set out to make me over but she hadn't caught me young enough. I wasn't allowed to come into the house unless I changed my boots for slippers at the door. I darsn't smoke a pipe for my life unless I went to the barn. And I didn't use good enough grammar. Emily'd been a schoolteacher in her early life and she'd never got over it. Then she hated to see me eating with my knife. Well, there it was, pick and nag everlasting. But I s'pose, Anne, to be fair, I was cantankerous too. I didn't try to improve as I might have done ... I just got cranky and disagreeable when she found fault. I told her one day she hadn't complained of my grammar when I proposed to her. It wasn't an overly tactful thing to say. A woman would forgive a man for beating her sooner than for hinting she was too much pleased to get him. Well, we bickered along like that and it wasn't exactly pleasant, but we might have

got used to each other after a spell if it hadn't been for Ginger. Ginger was the rock we split on at last. Emily didn't like parrots and she couldn't stand Ginger's profane habits of speech. I was attached to the bird for my brother the sailor's sake. My brother the sailor was a pet of mine when we were little tads and he'd sent Ginger to me when he was dying. I didn't see any sense in getting worked up over his swearing. There's nothing I hate worse'n profanity in a human being, but in a parrot, that's just repeating what it's heard with no more understanding of it than I'd have of Chinese, allowances might be made. But Emily couldn't see it that way. Women ain't logical. She tried to break Ginger of swearing but she hadn't any better success than she had in trying to make me stop saying 'I seen' and 'them things.' Seemed as if the more she tried the worse Ginger got, same as me.

"Well, things went on like this, both of us getting raspier, till the CLIMAX came. Emily invited our minister and his wife to tea, and another minister and HIS wife that was visiting them. I'd promised to put Ginger away in some safe place where nobody would hear him ... Emily wouldn't touch his cage with a ten-foot pole ... and I meant to do it, for I didn't want the ministers to hear anything unpleasant in my house. But it slipped my mind ... Emily was worrying me so much about clean collars and grammar that it wasn't any wonder ... and I never thought of that poor parrot till we sat down to tea. Just as minister number one was in the very middle of saying grace, Ginger, who was on the veranda outside the dining room window, lifted up HIS voice. The gobbler had come into view in the yard and the sight of a gobbler always had an unwholesome effect on Ginger. He surpassed himself that time. You can smile, Anne, and I don't deny I've chuckled some over it since myself, but at the time I felt almost as much mortified as Emily. I went out and carried Ginger to the barn. I can't say I enjoyed the meal. I knew by the look of Emily that there was trouble brewing for Ginger and James A. When the folks went away I started for the cow pasture and on the way I did some thinking. I felt sorry for Emily and kind of fancied I hadn't been so thoughtful of her as I might; and besides, I wondered if the ministers would think that Ginger had learned his vocabulary from me. The long and short of it was, I decided that Ginger would have to be mercifully disposed of and when I'd druv the cows home I went in to tell Emily so. But there was no Emily and there

was a letter on the table ... just according to the rule in story books. Emily writ that I'd have to choose between her and Ginger; she'd gone back to her own house and there she would stay till I went and told her I'd got rid of that parrot.

"I was all riled up, Anne, and I said she might stay till doomsday if she waited for that; and I stuck to it. I packed up her belongings and sent them after her. It made an awful lot of talk ... Scottsford was pretty near as bad as Avonlea for gossip ... and everybody sympathized with Emily. It kept me all cross and cantankerous and I saw I'd have to get out or I'd never have any peace. I concluded I'd come to the Island. I'd been here when I was a boy and I liked it; but Emily had always said she wouldn't live in a place where folks were scared to walk out after dark for fear they'd fall off the edge. So, just to be contrary, I moved over here. And that's all there is to it. I hadn't ever heard a word from or about Emily till I come home from the back field Saturday and found her scrubbing the floor but with the first decent dinner I'd had since she left me all ready on the table. She told me to eat it first and then we'd talk ... by which I concluded that Emily had learned some lessons about getting along with a man. So she's here and she's going to stay ... seeing that Ginger's dead and the Island's some bigger than she thought. There's Mrs. Lynde and her now. No, don't go, Anne. Stay and get acquainted with Emily. She took quite a notion to you Saturday ... wanted to know who that handsome redhaired girl was at the next house."

Mrs. Harrison welcomed Anne radiantly and insisted on her staying to tea.

"James A. has been telling me all about you and how kind you've been, making cakes and things for him," she said. "I want to get acquainted with all my new neighbors just as soon as possible. Mrs. Lynde is a lovely woman, isn't she? So friendly."

When Anne went home in the sweet June dusk, Mrs. Harrison went with her across the fields where the fireflies were lighting their starry lamps.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Harrison confidentially, "that James A. has told you our story?"

“Yes.”

“Then I needn’t tell it, for James A. is a just man and he would tell the truth. The blame was far from being all on his side. I can see that now. I wasn’t back in my own house an hour before I wished I hadn’t been so hasty but I wouldn’t give in. I see now that I expected too much of a man. And I was real foolish to mind his bad grammar. It doesn’t matter if a man does use bad grammar so long as he is a good provider and doesn’t go poking round the pantry to see how much sugar you’ve used in a week. I feel that James A. and I are going to be real happy now. I wish I knew who ‘Observer’ is, so that I could thank him. I owe him a real debt of gratitude.”

Anne kept her own counsel and Mrs. Harrison never knew that her gratitude found its way to its object. Anne felt rather bewildered over the far-reaching consequences of those foolish “notes.” They had reconciled a man to his wife and made the reputation of a prophet.

Mrs. Lynde was in the Green Gables kitchen. She had been telling the whole story to Marilla.

“Well, and how do you like Mrs. Harrison?” she asked Anne.

“Very much. I think she’s a real nice little woman.”

“That’s exactly what she is,” said Mrs. Rachel with emphasis, “and as I’ve just been sayin’ to Marilla, I think we ought all to overlook Mr. Harrison’s peculiarities for her sake and try to make her feel at home here, that’s what. Well, I must get back. Thomas’ll be wearying for me. I get out a little since Eliza came and he’s seemed a lot better these past few days, but I never like to be long away from him. I hear Gilbert Blythe has resigned from White Sands. He’ll be off to college in the fall, I suppose.”

Mrs. Rachel looked sharply at Anne, but Anne was bending over a sleepy Davy nodding on the sofa and nothing was to be read in her face. She carried Davy away, her oval girlish cheek pressed against his curly yellow head. As they went up the stairs Davy flung a tired arm about Anne’s neck and gave her a warm hug and a sticky kiss.

“You’re awful nice, Anne. Milty Boulter wrote on his slate today and showed it to Jennie Sloane,

““Roses red and vi’lets blue,

Sugar’s sweet, and so are you”

and that ‘spresses my feelings for you ezackly, Anne.”

XXV I

Around the Bend

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Thomas Lynde faded out of life as quietly and unobtrusively as he had lived it. His wife was a tender, patient, unwearied nurse. Sometimes Rachel had been a little hard on her Thomas in health, when his slowness or meekness had provoked her; but when he became ill no voice could be lower, no hand more gently skillful, no vigil more uncomplaining.

“You’ve been a good wife to me, Rachel,” he once said simply, when she was sitting by him in the dusk, holding his thin, blanched old hand in her work-hardened one. “A good wife. I’m sorry I ain’t leaving you better off; but the children will look after you. They’re all smart, capable children, just like their mother. A good mother ... a good woman”

He had fallen asleep then, and the next morning, just as the white dawn was creeping up over the pointed firs in the hollow, Marilla went softly into the east gable and wakened Anne.

“Anne, Thomas Lynde is gone ... their hired boy just brought the word. I’m going right down to Rachel.”

On the day after Thomas Lynde’s funeral Marilla went about Green Gables with a strangely preoccupied air. Occasionally she looked at Anne, seemed

on the point of saying something, then shook her head and buttoned up her mouth. After tea she went down to see Mrs. Rachel; and when she returned she went to the east gable, where Anne was correcting school exercises.

“How is Mrs. Lynde tonight?” asked the latter.

“She’s feeling calmer and more composed,” answered Marilla, sitting down on Anne’s bed ... a proceeding which betokened some unusual mental excitement, for in Marilla’s code of household ethics to sit on a bed after it was made up was an unpardonable offense. “But she’s very lonely. Eliza had to go home today ... her son isn’t well and she felt she couldn’t stay any longer.”

“When I’ve finished these exercises I’ll run down and chat awhile with Mrs. Lynde,” said Anne. “I had intended to study some Latin composition tonight but it can wait.”

“I suppose Gilbert Blythe is going to college in the fall,” said Marilla jerkily. “How would you like to go too, Anne?”

Anne looked up in astonishment.

“I would like it, of course, Marilla. But it isn’t possible.”

“I guess it can be made possible. I’ve always felt that you should go. I’ve never felt easy to think you were giving it all up on my account.”

“But Marilla, I’ve never been sorry for a moment that I stayed home. I’ve been so happy ... Oh, these past two years have just been delightful.”

“Oh, yes, I know you’ve been contented enough. But that isn’t the question exactly. You ought to go on with your education. You’ve saved enough to put you through one year at Redmond and the money the stock brought in will do for another year ... and there’s scholarships and things you might win.”

“Yes, but I can’t go, Marilla. Your eyes are better, of course; but I can’t leave you alone with the twins. They need so much looking after.”

“I won’t be alone with them. That’s what I meant to discuss with you. I had a long talk with Rachel tonight. Anne, she’s feeling dreadful bad over a good many things. She’s not left very well off. It seems they mortgaged the farm eight years ago to give the youngest boy a start when he went west; and they’ve never been able to pay much more than the interest since. And then of course Thomas’ illness has cost a good deal, one way or another. The farm will have to be sold and Rachel thinks there’ll be hardly anything left after the bills are settled. She says she’ll have to go and live with Eliza and it’s breaking her heart to think of leaving Avonlea. A woman of her age doesn’t make new friends and interests easy. And, Anne, as she talked about it the thought came to me that I would ask her to come and live with me, but I thought I ought to talk it over with you first before I said anything to her. If I had Rachel living with me you could go to college. How do you feel about it?”

“I feel ... as if ... somebody ... had handed me ... the moon ... and I didn’t know ... exactly ... what to do ... with it,” said Anne dazedly. “But as for asking Mrs. Lynde to come here, that is for you to decide, Marilla. Do you think ... are you sure ... you would like it? Mrs. Lynde is a good woman and a kind neighbor, but ... but ...”

“But she’s got her faults, you mean to say? Well, she has, of course; but I think I’d rather put up with far worse faults than see Rachel go away from Avonlea. I’d miss her terrible. She’s the only close friend I’ve got here and I’d be lost without her. We’ve been neighbors for forty-five years and we’ve never had a quarrel ... though we came rather near it that time you flew at Mrs. Rachel for calling you homely and redhaired. Do you remember, Anne?”

“I should think I do,” said Anne ruefully. “People don’t forget things like that. How I hated poor Mrs. Rachel at that moment!”

“And then that ‘apology’ you made her. Well, you were a handful, in all conscience, Anne. I did feel so puzzled and bewildered how to manage you. Matthew understood you better.”

“Matthew understood everything,” said Anne softly, as she always spoke of him.

“Well, I think it could be managed so that Rachel and I wouldn’t clash at all. It always seemed to me that the reason two women can’t get along in one house is that they try to share the same kitchen and get in each other’s way. Now, if Rachel came here, she could have the north gable for her bedroom and the spare room for a kitchen as well as not, for we don’t really need a spare room at all. She could put her stove there and what furniture she wanted to keep, and be real comfortable and independent. She’ll have enough to live on of course...her children’ll see to that...so all I’d be giving her would be house room. Yes, Anne, far as I’m concerned I’d like it.”

“Then ask her,” said Anne promptly. “I’d be very sorry myself to see Mrs. Rachel go away.”

“And if she comes,” continued Marilla, “You can go to college as well as not. She’ll be company for me and she’ll do for the twins what I can’t do, so there’s no reason in the world why you shouldn’t go.”

Anne had a long meditation at her window that night. Joy and regret struggled together in her heart. She had come at last ... suddenly and unexpectedly ... to the bend in the road; and college was around it, with a hundred rainbow hopes and visions; but Anne realized as well that when she rounded that curve she must leave many sweet things behind... all the little simple duties and interests which had grown so dear to her in the last two years and which she had glorified into beauty and delight by the enthusiasm she had put into them. She must give up her school ... and she loved every one of her pupils, even the stupid and naughty ones. The mere thought of Paul Irving made her wonder if Redmond were such a name to conjure with after all.

“I’ve put out a lot of little roots these two years,” Anne told the moon, “and when I’m pulled up they’re going to hurt a great deal. But it’s best to go, I think, and, as Marilla says, there’s no good reason why I shouldn’t. I must get out all my ambitions and dust them.”

Anne sent in her resignation the next day; and Mrs. Rachel, after a heart to heart talk with Marilla, gratefully accepted the offer of a home at Green Gables. She elected to remain in her own house for the summer, however;

the farm was not to be sold until the fall and there were many arrangements to be made.

“I certainly never thought of living as far off the road as Green Gables,” sighed Mrs. Rachel to herself. “But really, Green Gables doesn’t seem as out of the world as it used to do ... Anne has lots of company and the twins make it real lively. And anyhow, I’d rather live at the bottom of a well than leave Avonlea.”

These two decisions being noised abroad speedily ousted the arrival of Mrs. Harrison in popular gossip. Sage heads were shaken over Marilla Cuthbert’s rash step in asking Mrs. Rachel to live with her. People opined that they wouldn’t get on together. They were both “too fond of their own way,” and many doleful predictions were made, none of which disturbed the parties in question at all. They had come to a clear and distinct understanding of the respective duties and rights of their new arrangements and meant to abide by them.

“I won’t meddle with you nor you with me,” Mrs. Rachel had said decidedly, “and as for the twins, I’ll be glad to do all I can for them; but I won’t undertake to answer Davy’s questions, that’s what. I’m not an encyclopedia, neither am I a Philadelphia lawyer. You’ll miss Anne for that.”

“Sometimes Anne’s answers were about as queer as Davy’s questions,” said Marilla drily. “The twins will miss her and no mistake; but her future can’t be sacrificed to Davy’s thirst for information. When he asks questions I can’t answer I’ll just tell him children should be seen and not heard. That was how I was brought up, and I don’t know but what it was just as good a way as all these new-fangled notions for training children.”

“Well, Anne’s methods seem to have worked fairly well with Davy,” said Mrs. Lynde smilingly. “He is a reformed character, that’s what.”

“He isn’t a bad little soul,” conceded Marilla. “I never expected to get as fond of those children as I have. Davy gets round you somehow ... and Dora is a lovely child, although she is ... kind of ... well, kind of ...”

“Monotonous? Exactly,” supplied Mrs. Rachel. “Like a book where every page is the same, that’s what. Dora will make a good, reliable woman but she’ll never set the pond on fire. Well, that sort of folks are comfortable to have round, even if they’re not as interesting as the other kind.”

Gilbert Blythe was probably the only person to whom the news of Anne’s resignation brought unmixed pleasure. Her pupils looked upon it as a sheer catastrophe. Annetta Bell had hysterics when she went home. Anthony Pye fought two pitched and unprovoked battles with other boys by way of relieving his feelings. Barbara Shaw cried all night. Paul Irving defiantly told his grandmother that she needn’t expect him to eat any porridge for a week.

“I can’t do it, Grandma,” he said. “I don’t really know if I can eat ANYTHING. I feel as if there was a dreadful lump in my throat. I’d have cried coming home from school if Jake Donnell hadn’t been watching me. I believe I will cry after I go to bed. It wouldn’t show on my eyes tomorrow, would it? And it would be such a relief. But anyway, I can’t eat porridge. I’m going to need all my strength of mind to bear up against this, Grandma, and I won’t have any left to grapple with porridge. Oh Grandma, I don’t know what I’ll do when my beautiful teacher goes away. Milty Boulter says he bets Jane Andrews will get the school. I suppose Miss Andrews is very nice. But I know she won’t understand things like Miss Shirley.”

Diana also took a very pessimistic view of affairs.

“It will be horribly lonesome here next winter,” she mourned, one twilight when the moonlight was raining “airy silver” through the cherry boughs and filling the east gable with a soft, dreamlike radiance in which the two girls sat and talked, Anne on her low rocker by the window, Diana sitting Turkfashion on the bed. “You and Gilbert will be gone ... and the Allans too. They are going to call Mr. Allan to Charlottetown and of course he’ll accept. It’s too mean. We’ll be vacant all winter, I suppose, and have to listen to a long string of candidates ... and half of them won’t be any good.”

“I hope they won’t call Mr. Baxter from East Grafton here, anyhow,” said Anne decidedly. “He wants the call but he does preach such gloomy sermons. Mr. Bell says he’s a minister of the old school, but Mrs. Lynde says there’s nothing whatever the matter with him but indigestion. His wife isn’t a very good cook, it seems, and Mrs. Lynde says that when a man has to eat sour bread two weeks out of three his theology is bound to get a kink in it somewhere. Mrs. Allan feels very badly about going away. She says everybody has been so kind to her since she came here as a bride that she feels as if she were leaving lifelong friends. And then, there’s the baby’s grave, you know. She says she doesn’t see how she can go away and leave that ... it was such a little mite of a thing and only three months old, and she says she is afraid it will miss its mother, although she knows better and wouldn’t say so to Mr. Allan for anything. She says she has slipped through the birch grove back of the manse nearly every night to the graveyard and sung a little lullaby to it. She told me all about it last evening when I was up putting some of those early wild roses on Matthew’s grave. I promised her that as long as I was in Avonlea I would put flowers on the baby’s grave and when I was away I felt sure that ...”

“That I would do it,” supplied Diana heartily. “Of course I will. And I’ll put them on Matthew’s grave too, for your sake, Anne.”

“Oh, thank you. I meant to ask you to if you would. And on little Hester Gray’s too? Please don’t forget hers. Do you know, I’ve thought and dreamed so much about little Hester Gray that she has become strangely real to me. I think of her, back there in her little garden in that cool, still, green corner; and I have a fancy that if I could steal back there some spring evening, just at the magic time ‘twixt light and dark, and tiptoe so softly up the beech hill that my footsteps could not frighten her, I would find the garden just as it used to be, all sweet with June lilies and early roses, with the tiny house beyond it all hung with vines; and little Hester Gray would be there, with her soft eyes, and the wind ruffling her dark hair, wandering about, putting her fingertips under the chins of the lilies and whispering secrets with the roses; and I would go forward, oh, so softly, and hold out my hands and say to her, ‘Little Hester Gray, won’t you let me be your playmate, for I love the roses too?’ And we would sit down on the old bench and talk a little and dream a little, or just be

beautifully silent together. And then the moon would rise and I would look around me ... and there would be no Hester Gray and no little vine-hung house, and no roses ... only an old waste garden starred with June lilies amid the grasses, and the wind sighing, oh, so sorrowfully in the cherry trees. And I would not know whether it had been real or if I had just imagined it all.” Diana crawled up and got her back against the headboard of the bed. When your companion of twilight hour said such spooky things it was just as well not to be able to fancy there was anything behind you.

“I’m afraid the Improvement Society will go down when you and Gilbert are both gone,” she remarked dolefully.

“Not a bit of fear of it,” said Anne briskly, coming back from dreamland to the affairs of practical life. “It is too firmly established for that, especially since the older people are becoming so enthusiastic about it. Look what they are doing this summer for their lawns and lanes. Besides, I’ll be watching for hints at Redmond and I’ll write a paper for it next winter and send it over. Don’t take such a gloomy view of things, Diana. And don’t grudge me my little hour of gladness and jubilation now. Later on, when I have to go away, I’ll feel anything but glad.”

“It’s all right for you to be glad ... you’re going to college and you’ll have a jolly time and make heaps of lovely new friends.”

“I hope I shall make new friends,” said Anne thoughtfully. “The possibilities of making new friends help to make life very fascinating. But no matter how many friends I make they’ll never be as dear to me as the old ones ... especially a certain girl with black eyes and dimples. Can you guess who she is, Diana?”

“But there’ll be so many clever girls at Redmond,” sighed Diana, “and I’m only a stupid little country girl who says ‘I seen’ sometimes... though I really know better when I stop to think. Well, of course these past two years have really been too pleasant to last. I know SOMEBODY who is glad you are going to Redmond anyhow. Anne, I’m going to ask you a question ... a serious question. Don’t be vexed and do answer seriously. Do you care anything for Gilbert?”

“Ever so much as a friend and not a bit in the way you mean,” said Anne calmly and decidedly; she also thought she was speaking sincerely.

Diana sighed. She wished, somehow, that Anne had answered differently.

“Don’t you mean EVER to be married, Anne?”

“Perhaps ... some day ... when I meet the right one,” said Anne, smiling dreamily up at the moonlight.

“But how can you be sure when you do meet the right one?” persisted Diana.

“Oh, I should know him ... SOMETHING would tell me. You know what my ideal is, Diana.”

“But people’s ideals change sometimes.”

“Mine won’t. And I COULDN’T care for any man who didn’t fulfill it.”

“What if you never meet him?”

“Then I shall die an old maid,” was the cheerful response. “I daresay it isn’t the hardest death by any means.”

“Oh, I suppose the dying would be easy enough; it’s the living an old maid I shouldn’t like,” said Diana, with no intention of being humorous.

“Although I wouldn’t mind being an old maid VERY much if I could be one like Miss Lavendar. But I never could be. When I’m forty-five I’ll be horribly fat. And while there might be some romance about a thin old maid there couldn’t possibly be any about a fat one. Oh, mind you, Nelson Atkins proposed to Ruby Gillis three weeks ago. Ruby told me all about it. She says she never had any intention of taking him, because any one who married him will have to go in with the old folks; but Ruby says that he made such a perfectly beautiful and romantic proposal that it simply swept her off her feet. But she didn’t want to do anything rash so she asked for a week to consider; and two days later she was at a meeting of the Sewing Circle at his mother’s and there was a book called ‘The Complete Guide to

Etiquette,' lying on the parlor table. Ruby said she simply couldn't describe her feelings when in a section of it headed, 'The Department of Courtship and Marriage,' she found the very proposal Nelson had made, word for word. She went home and wrote him a perfectly scathing refusal; and she says his father and mother have taken turns watching him ever since for fear he'll drown himself in the river; but Ruby says they needn't be afraid; for in the Department of Courtship and Marriage it told how a rejected lover should behave and there's nothing about drowning in THAT. And she says Wilbur Blair is literally pining away for her but she's perfectly helpless in the matter."

Anne made an impatient movement.

"I hate to say it ... it seems so disloyal ... but, well, I don't like Ruby Gillis now. I liked her when we went to school and Queen's together ... though not so well as you and Jane of course. But this last year at Carmody she seems so different ... so ... so ..."

"I know," nodded Diana. "It's the Gillis coming out in her ... she can't help it. Mrs. Lynde says that if ever a Gillis girl thought about anything but the boys she never showed it in her walk and conversation. She talks about nothing but boys and what compliments they pay her, and how crazy they all are about her at Carmody. And the strange thing is, they ARE, too ..." Diana admitted this somewhat resentfully. "Last night when I saw her in Mr. Blair's store she whispered to me that she'd just made a new 'mash.' I wouldn't ask her who it was, because I knew she was dying to BE asked. Well, it's what Ruby always wanted, I suppose. You remember even when she was little she always said she meant to have dozens of beaus when she grew up and have the very gayest time she could before she settled down. She's so different from Jane, isn't she? Jane is such a nice, sensible, ladylike girl."

"Dear old Jane is a jewel," agreed Anne, "but," she added, leaning forward to bestow a tender pat on the plump, dimpled little hand hanging over her pillow, "there's nobody like my own Diana after all. Do you remember that evening we first met, Diana, and 'swore' eternal friendship in your garden? We've kept that 'oath,' I think ... we've never had a quarrel nor even a coolness. I shall never forget the thrill that went over me the day

you told me you loved me. I had had such a lonely, starved heart all through my childhood. I'm just beginning to realize how starved and lonely it really was. Nobody cared anything for me or wanted to be bothered with me. I should have been miserable if it hadn't been for that strange little dream-life of mine, wherein I imagined all the friends and love I craved. But when I came to Green Gables everything was changed. And then I met you. You don't know what your friendship meant to me. I want to thank you here and now, dear, for the warm and true affection you've always given me."

"And always, always will," sobbed Diana. "I shall NEVER love anybody ... any GIRL ... half as well as I love you. And if I ever do marry and have a little girl of my own I'm going to name her ANNE."

XXVI I

An Afternoon at the Stone House

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“Where are you going, all dressed up, Anne?” Davy wanted to know. “You look bully in that dress.”

Anne had come down to dinner in a new dress of pale green muslin ... the first color she had worn since Matthew’s death. It became her perfectly, bringing out all the delicate, flowerlike tints of her face and the gloss and burnish of her hair.

“Davy, how many times have I told you that you mustn’t use that word,” she rebuked. “I’m going to Echo Lodge.”

“Take me with you,” entreated Davy.

“I would if I were driving. But I’m going to walk and it’s too far for your eight-year-old legs. Besides, Paul is going with me and I fear you don’t enjoy yourself in his company.”

“Oh, I like Paul lots better’n I did,” said Davy, beginning to make fearful inroads into his pudding. “Since I’ve got pretty good myself I don’t mind his being gooder so much. If I can keep on I’ll catch up with him some day, both in legs and goodness. ‘Sides, Paul’s real nice to us second primer boys in school. He won’t let the other big boys meddle with us and he shows us lots of games.”

“How came Paul to fall into the brook at noon hour yesterday?” asked Anne. “I met him on the playground, such a dripping figure that I sent him promptly home for clothes without waiting to find out what had happened.”

“Well, it was partly a zacksident,” explained Davy. “He stuck his head in on purpose but the rest of him fell in zacksidentally. We was all down at the brook and Prillie Rogerson got mad at Paul about something ... she’s

awful mean and horrid anyway, if she IS pretty ... and said that his grandmother put his hair up in curl rags every night. Paul wouldn't have minded what she said, I guess, but Gracie Andrews laughed, and Paul got awful red, 'cause Gracie's his girl, you know. He's CLEAN GONE on her ... brings her flowers and carries her books as far as the shore road. He got as red as a beet and said his grandmother didn't do any such thing and his hair was born curly. And then he laid down on the bank and stuck his head right into the spring to show them. Oh, it wasn't the spring we drink out of ..." seeing a horrified look on Marilla's face ... "it was the little one lower down. But the bank's awful slippery and Paul went right in. I tell you he made a bully splash. Oh, Anne, Anne, I didn't mean to say that ... it just slipped out before I thought. He made a SPLENDID splash. But he looked so funny when he crawled out, all wet and muddy. The girls laughed more'n ever, but Gracie didn't laugh. She looked sorry. Gracie's a nice girl but she's got a snub nose. When I get big enough to have a girl I won't have one with a snub nose ... I'll pick one with a pretty nose like yours, Anne."

"A boy who makes such a mess of syrup all over his face when he is eating his pudding will never get a girl to look at him," said Marilla severely.

"But I'll wash my face before I go courting," protested Davy, trying to improve matters by rubbing the back of his hand over the smears. "And I'll wash behind my ears too, without being told. I remembered to this morning, Marilla. I don't forget half as often as I did. But ..." and Davy sighed ... "there's so many corners about a fellow that it's awful hard to remember them all. Well, if I can't go to Miss Lavendar's I'll go over and see Mrs. Harrison. Mrs. Harrison's an awful nice woman, I tell you. She keeps a jar of cookies in her pantry a-purpose for little boys, and she always gives me the scrapings out of a pan she's mixed up a plum cake in. A good many plums stick to the sides, you see. Mr. Harrison was always a nice man, but he's twice as nice since he got married over again. I guess getting married makes folks nicer. Why don't YOU get married, Marilla? I want to know."

Marilla's state of single blessedness had never been a sore point with her, so she answered amiably, with an exchange of significant looks with Anne,

that she supposed it was because nobody would have her.

“But maybe you never asked anybody to have you,” protested Davy.

“Oh, Davy,” said Dora primly, shocked into speaking without being spoken to, “it’s the MEN that have to do the asking.”

“I don’t know why they have to do it ALWAYS,” grumbled Davy. “Seems to me everything’s put on the men in this world. Can I have some more pudding, Marilla?”

“You’ve had as much as was good for you,” said Marilla; but she gave him a moderate second helping.

“I wish people could live on pudding. Why can’t they, Marilla? I want to know.”

“Because they’d soon get tired of it.”

“I’d like to try that for myself,” said skeptical Davy. “But I guess it’s better to have pudding only on fish and company days than none at all. They never have any at Milty Boulter’s. Milty says when company comes his mother gives them cheese and cuts it herself ... one little bit apiece and one over for manners.”

“If Milty Boulter talks like that about his mother at least you needn’t repeat it,” said Marilla severely.

“Bless my soul,” ... Davy had picked this expression up from Mr. Harrison and used it with great gusto ... “Milty meant it as a compellent. He’s awful proud of his mother, cause folks say she could scratch a living on a rock.”

“I ... I suppose them pesky hens are in my pansy bed again,” said Marilla, rising and going out hurriedly.

The slandered hens were nowhere near the pansy bed and Marilla did not even glance at it. Instead, she sat down on the cellar hatch and laughed until she was ashamed of herself.

When Anne and Paul reached the stone house that afternoon they found Miss Lavendar and Charlotta the Fourth in the garden, weeding, raking, clipping, and trimming as if for dear life. Miss Lavendar herself, all gay and sweet in the frills and laces she loved, dropped her shears and ran joyously to meet her guests, while Charlotta the Fourth grinned cheerfully.

“Welcome, Anne. I thought you’d come today. You belong to the afternoon so it brought you. Things that belong together are sure to come together. What a lot of trouble that would save some people if they only knew it. But they don’t ... and so they waste beautiful energy moving heaven and earth to bring things together that DON’T belong. And you, Paul ... why, you’ve grown! You’re half a head taller than when you were here before.”

“Yes, I’ve begun to grow like pigweed in the night, as Mrs. Lynde says,” said Paul, in frank delight over the fact. “Grandma says it’s the porridge taking effect at last. Perhaps it is. Goodness knows ...” Paul sighed deeply ... “I’ve eaten enough to make anyone grow. I do hope, now that I’ve begun, I’ll keep on till I’m as tall as father. He is six feet, you know, Miss Lavendar.”

Yes, Miss Lavendar did know; the flush on her pretty cheeks deepened a little; she took Paul’s hand on one side and Anne’s on the other and walked to the house in silence.

“Is it a good day for the echoes, Miss Lavendar?” queried Paul anxiously. The day of his first visit had been too windy for echoes and Paul had been much disappointed.

“Yes, just the best kind of a day,” answered Miss Lavendar, rousing herself from her reverie. “But first we are all going to have something to eat. I know you two folks didn’t walk all the way back here through those beechwoods without getting hungry, and Charlotta the Fourth and I can eat any hour of the day ... we have such obliging appetites. So we’ll just make a raid on the pantry. Fortunately it’s lovely and full. I had a presentiment that I was going to have company today and Charlotta the Fourth and I prepared.”

“I think you are one of the people who always have nice things in their pantry,” declared Paul. “Grandma’s like that too. But she doesn’t approve of snacks between meals. I wonder,” he added meditatively, “if I OUGHT to eat them away from home when I know she doesn’t approve.”

“Oh, I don’t think she would disapprove after you have had a long walk. That makes a difference,” said Miss Lavendar, exchanging amused glances with Anne over Paul’s brown curls. “I suppose that snacks ARE extremely unwholesome. That is why we have them so often at Echo Lodge. We... Charlotta the Fourth and I ... live in defiance of every known law of diet. We eat all sorts of indigestible things whenever we happen to think of it, by day or night; and we flourish like green bay trees. We are always intending to reform. When we read any article in a paper warning us against something we like we cut it out and pin it up on the kitchen wall so that we’ll remember it. But we never can somehow ... until after we’ve gone and eaten that very thing. Nothing has ever killed us yet; but Charlotta the Fourth has been known to have bad dreams after we had eaten doughnuts and mince pie and fruit cake before we went to bed.”

“Grandma lets me have a glass of milk and a slice of bread and butter before I go to bed; and on Sunday nights she puts jam on the bread,” said Paul. “So I’m always glad when it’s Sunday night ... for more reasons than one. Sunday is a very long day on the shore road. Grandma says it’s all too short for her and that father never found Sundays tiresome when he was a little boy. It wouldn’t seem so long if I could talk to my rock people but I never do that because Grandma doesn’t approve of it on Sundays. I think a good deal; but I’m afraid my thoughts are worldly. Grandma says we should never think anything but religious thoughts on Sundays. But teacher here said once that every really beautiful thought was religious, no matter what it was about, or what day we thought it on. But I feel sure Grandma thinks that sermons and Sunday School lessons are the only things you can think truly religious thoughts about. And when it comes to a difference of opinion between Grandma and teacher I don’t know what to do. In my heart” ... Paul laid his hand on his breast and raised very serious blue eyes to Miss Lavendar’s immediately sympathetic face ... “I agree with teacher. But then, you see, Grandma has brought father up HER way and made a brilliant success of him; and teacher has never brought

anybody up yet, though she's helping with Davy and Dora. But you can't tell how they'll turn out till they ARE grown up. So sometimes I feel as if it might be safer to go by Grandma's opinions."

"I think it would," agreed Anne solemnly. "Anyway, I daresay that if your Grandma and I both got down to what we really do mean, under our different ways of expressing it, we'd find out we both meant much the same thing. You'd better go by her way of expressing it, since it's been the result of experience. We'll have to wait until we see how the twins do turn out before we can be sure that my way is equally good." After lunch they went back to the garden, where Paul made the acquaintance of the echoes, to his wonder and delight, while Anne and Miss Lavendar sat on the stone bench under the poplar and talked.

"So you are going away in the fall?" said Miss Lavendar wistfully. "I ought to be glad for your sake, Anne ... but I'm horribly, selfishly sorry. I shall miss you so much. Oh, sometimes, I think it is of no use to make friends. They only go out of your life after awhile and leave a hurt that is worse than the emptiness before they came."

"That sounds like something Miss Eliza Andrews might say but never Miss Lavendar," said Anne. "NOTHING is worse than emptiness ... and I'm not going out of your life. There are such things as letters and vacations. Dearest, I'm afraid you're looking a little pale and tired."

"Oh ... hoo ... hoo ... hoo," went Paul on the dyke, where he had been making noises diligently ... not all of them melodious in the making, but all coming back transmuted into the very gold and silver of sound by the fairy alchemists over the river. Miss Lavendar made an impatient movement with her pretty hands.

"I'm just tired of everything ... even of the echoes. There is nothing in my life but echoes ... echoes of lost hopes and dreams and joys. They're beautiful and mocking. Oh Anne, it's horrid of me to talk like this when I have company. It's just that I'm getting old and it doesn't agree with me. I know I'll be fearfully cranky by the time I'm sixty. But perhaps all I need is a course of blue pills." At this moment Charlotta the Fourth, who had disappeared after lunch, returned, and announced that the northeast corner

of Mr. John Kimball's pasture was red with early strawberries, and wouldn't Miss Shirley like to go and pick some.

"Early strawberries for tea!" exclaimed Miss Lavendar. "Oh, I'm not so old as I thought ... and I don't need a single blue pill! Girls, when you come back with your strawberries we'll have tea out here under the silver poplar. I'll have it all ready for you with home-grown cream."

Anne and Charlotta the Fourth accordingly betook themselves back to Mr. Kimball's pasture, a green remote place where the air was as soft as velvet and fragrant as a bed of violets and golden as amber.

"Oh, isn't it sweet and fresh back here?" breathed Anne. "I just feel as if I were drinking in the sunshine."

"Yes, ma'am, so do I. That's just exactly how I feel too, ma'am," agreed Charlotta the Fourth, who would have said precisely the same thing if Anne had remarked that she felt like a pelican of the wilderness. Always after Anne had visited Echo Lodge Charlotta the Fourth mounted to her little room over the kitchen and tried before her looking glass to speak and look and move like Anne. Charlotta could never flatter herself that she quite succeeded; but practice makes perfect, as Charlotta had learned at school, and she fondly hoped that in time she might catch the trick of that dainty uplift of chin, that quick, starry outflashing of eyes, that fashion of walking as if you were a bough swaying in the wind. It seemed so easy when you watched Anne. Charlotta the Fourth admired Anne wholeheartedly. It was not that she thought her so very handsome. Diana Barry's beauty of crimson cheek and black curls was much more to Charlotta the Fourth's taste than Anne's moonshine charm of luminous gray eyes and the pale, everchanging roses of her cheeks.

"But I'd rather look like you than be pretty," she told Anne sincerely.

Anne laughed, sipped the honey from the tribute, and cast away the sting. She was used to taking her compliments mixed. Public opinion never agreed on Anne's looks. People who had heard her called handsome met her and were disappointed. People who had heard her called plain saw her and wondered where other people's eyes were. Anne herself would never

believe that she had any claim to beauty. When she looked in the glass all she saw was a little pale face with seven freckles on the nose thereof. Her mirror never revealed to her the elusive, ever-varying play of feeling that came and went over her features like a rosy illuminating flame, or the charm of dream and laughter alternating in her big eyes.

While Anne was not beautiful in any strictly defined sense of the word she possessed a certain evasive charm and distinction of appearance that left beholders with a pleasurable sense of satisfaction in that softly rounded girlhood of hers, with all its strongly felt potentialities. Those who knew Anne best felt, without realizing that they felt it, that her greatest attraction was the aura of possibility surrounding her... the power of future development that was in her. She seemed to walk in an atmosphere of things about to happen.

As they picked, Charlotta the Fourth confided to Anne her fears regarding Miss Lavendar. The warmhearted little handmaiden was honestly worried over her adored mistress' condition.

“Miss Lavendar isn't well, Miss Shirley, ma'am. I'm sure she isn't, though she never complains. She hasn't seemed like herself this long while, ma'am ... not since that day you and Paul were here together before. I feel sure she caught cold that night, ma'am. After you and him had gone she went out and walked in the garden for long after dark with nothing but a little shawl on her. There was a lot of snow on the walks and I feel sure she got a chill, ma'am. Ever since then I've noticed her acting tired and lonesome like. She don't seem to take an interest in anything, ma'am. She never pretends company's coming, nor fixes up for it, nor nothing, ma'am. It's only when you come she seems to chirk up a bit. And the worst sign of all, Miss Shirley, ma'am ...” Charlotta the Fourth lowered her voice as if she were about to tell some exceedingly weird and awful symptom indeed ... “is that she never gets cross now when I breaks things. Why, Miss Shirley, ma'am, yesterday I bruk her green and yaller bowl that's always stood on the bookcase. Her grandmother brought it out from England and Miss Lavendar was awful choice of it. I was dusting it just as careful, Miss Shirley, ma'am, and it slipped out, so fashion, afore I could grab holt of it, and bruk into about forty millyun pieces. I tell you I was sorry and scared.

I thought Miss Lavendar would scold me awful, ma'am; and I'd rather she had than take it the way she did. She just come in and hardly looked at it and said, 'It's no matter, Charlotta. Take up the pieces and throw them away.' Just like that, Miss Shirley, ma'am ... 'take up the pieces and throw them away,' as if it wasn't her grandmother's bowl from England. Oh, she isn't well and I feel awful bad about it. She's got nobody to look after her but me."

Charlotta the Fourth's eyes brimmed up with tears. Anne patted the little brown paw holding the cracked pink cup sympathetically.

"I think Miss Lavendar needs a change, Charlotta. She stays here alone too much. Can't we induce her to go away for a little trip?"

Charlotta shook her head, with its rampant bows, disconsolately.

"I don't think so, Miss Shirley, ma'am. Miss Lavendar hates visiting. She's only got three relations she ever visits and she says she just goes to see them as a family duty. Last time when she come home she said she wasn't going to visit for family duty no more. 'I've come home in love with loneliness, Charlotta,' she says to me, 'and I never want to stray from my own vine and fig tree again. My relations try so hard to make an old lady of me and it has a bad effect on me.' Just like that, Miss Shirley, ma'am. 'It has a very bad effect on me.' So I don't think it would do any good to coax her to go visiting."

"We must see what can be done," said Anne decidedly, as she put the last possible berry in her pink cup. "Just as soon as I have my vacation I'll come through and spend a whole week with you. We'll have a picnic every day and pretend all sorts of interesting things, and see if we can't cheer Miss Lavendar up."

"That will be the very thing, Miss Shirley, ma'am," exclaimed Charlotta the Fourth in rapture. She was glad for Miss Lavendar's sake and for her own too. With a whole week in which to study Anne constantly she would surely be able to learn how to move and behave like her.

When the girls got back to Echo Lodge they found that Miss Lavendar and Paul had carried the little square table out of the kitchen to the garden and had everything ready for tea. Nothing ever tasted so delicious as those strawberries and cream, eaten under a great blue sky all curdled over with fluffy little white clouds, and in the long shadows of the wood with its lispings and its murmurings. After tea Anne helped Charlotta wash the dishes in the kitchen, while Miss Lavendar sat on the stone bench with Paul and heard all about his rock people. She was a good listener, this sweet Miss Lavendar, but just at the last it struck Paul that she had suddenly lost interest in the Twin Sailors.

“Miss Lavendar, why do you look at me like that?” he asked gravely.

“How do I look, Paul?”

“Just as if you were looking through me at somebody I put you in mind of,” said Paul, who had such occasional flashes of uncanny insight that it wasn’t quite safe to have secrets when he was about.

“You do put me in mind of somebody I knew long ago,” said Miss Lavendar dreamily.

“When you were young?”

“Yes, when I was young. Do I seem very old to you, Paul?”

“Do you know, I can’t make up my mind about that,” said Paul confidentially. “Your hair looks old ... I never knew a young person with white hair. But your eyes are as young as my beautiful teacher’s when you laugh. I tell you what, Miss Lavendar” ... Paul’s voice and face were as solemn as a judge’s ... “I think you would make a splendid mother. You have just the right look in your eyes ... the look my little mother always had. I think it’s a pity you haven’t any boys of your own.”

“I have a little dream boy, Paul.”

“Oh, have you really? How old is he?”

“About your age I think. He ought to be older because I dreamed him long before you were born. But I’ll never let him get any older than eleven or twelve; because if I did some day he might grow up altogether and then I’d lose him.”

“I know,” nodded Paul. “That’s the beauty of dream-people ... they stay any age you want them. You and my beautiful teacher and me myself are the only folks in the world that I know of that have dream-people. Isn’t it funny and nice we should all know each other? But I guess that kind of people always find each other out. Grandma never has dream-people and Mary Joe thinks I’m wrong in the upper story because I have them. But I think it’s splendid to have them. YOU know, Miss Lavendar. Tell me all about your little dream-boy.”

“He has blue eyes and curly hair. He steals in and wakens me with a kiss every morning. Then all day he plays here in the garden ... and I play with him. Such games as we have. We run races and talk with the echoes; and I tell him stories. And when twilight comes ...”

“I know,” interrupted Paul eagerly. “He comes and sits beside you ... SO ... because of course at twelve he’d be too big to climb into your lap ... and lays his head on your shoulder ... SO ... and you put your arms about him and hold him tight, tight, and rest your cheek on his head ... yes, that’s the very way. Oh, you DO know, Miss Lavendar.”

Anne found the two of them there when she came out of the stone house, and something in Miss Lavendar’s face made her hate to disturb them.

“I’m afraid we must go, Paul, if we want to get home before dark. Miss Lavendar, I’m going to invite myself to Echo Lodge for a whole week pretty soon.”

“If you come for a week I’ll keep you for two,” threatened Miss Lavendar.

XXVII I

The Prince Comes Back to the Enchanted Palace

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The last day of school came and went. A triumphant “semi-annual examination” was held and Anne’s pupils acquitted themselves splendidly. At the close they gave her an address and a writing desk. All the girls and ladies present cried, and some of the boys had it cast up to them later on that they cried too, although they always denied it.

Mrs. Harmon Andrews, Mrs. Peter Sloane, and Mrs. William Bell walked home together and talked things over.

“I do think it is such a pity Anne is leaving when the children seem so much attached to her,” sighed Mrs. Peter Sloane, who had a habit of sighing over everything and even finished off her jokes that way. “To be sure,” she added hastily, “we all know we’ll have a good teacher next year too.”

“Jane will do her duty, I’ve no doubt,” said Mrs. Andrews rather stiffly. “I don’t suppose she’ll tell the children quite so many fairy tales or spend so much time roaming about the woods with them. But she has her name on the Inspector’s Roll of Honor and the Newbridge people are in a terrible state over her leaving.”

“I’m real glad Anne is going to college,” said Mrs. Bell. “She has always wanted it and it will be a splendid thing for her.”

“Well, I don’t know.” Mrs. Andrews was determined not to agree fully with anybody that day. “I don’t see that Anne needs any more education. She’ll probably be marrying Gilbert Blythe, if his infatuation for her lasts till he gets through college, and what good will Latin and Greek do her then? If they taught you at college how to manage a man there might be some sense in her going.”

Mrs. Harmon Andrews, so Avonlea gossip whispered, had never learned how to manage her “man,” and as a result the Andrews household was not exactly a model of domestic happiness.

“I see that the Charlottetown call to Mr. Allan is up before the Presbytery,” said Mrs. Bell. “That means we’ll be losing him soon, I suppose.”

“They’re not going before September,” said Mrs. Sloane. “It will be a great loss to the community ... though I always did think that Mrs. Allan dressed rather too gay for a minister’s wife. But we are none of us perfect. Did you notice how neat and snug Mr. Harrison looked today? I never saw such a changed man. He goes to church every Sunday and has subscribed to the salary.”

“Hasn’t that Paul Irving grown to be a big boy?” said Mrs. Andrews. “He was such a mite for his age when he came here. I declare I hardly knew him today. He’s getting to look a lot like his father.”

“He’s a smart boy,” said Mrs. Bell.

“He’s smart enough, but” ... Mrs. Andrews lowered her voice ... “I believe he tells queer stories. Gracie came home from school one day last week with the greatest rigmarole he had told her about people who lived down at the shore ... stories there couldn’t be a word of truth in, you know. I told Gracie not to believe them, and she said Paul didn’t intend her to. But if he didn’t what did he tell them to her for?”

“Anne says Paul is a genius,” said Mrs. Sloane.

“He may be. You never know what to expect of them Americans,” said Mrs. Andrews. Mrs. Andrews’ only acquaintance with the word “genius” was derived from the colloquial fashion of calling any eccentric individual “a queer genius.” She probably thought, with Mary Joe, that it meant a person with something wrong in his upper story.

Back in the schoolroom Anne was sitting alone at her desk, as she had sat on the first day of school two years before, her face leaning on her hand, her dewy eyes looking wistfully out of the window to the Lake of Shining Waters. Her heart was so wrung over the parting with her pupils that for a moment college had lost all its charm. She still felt the clasp of Annetta Bell’s arms about her neck and heard the childish wail, “I’ll NEVER love any teacher as much as you, Miss Shirley, never, never.”

For two years she had worked earnestly and faithfully, making many mistakes and learning from them. She had had her reward. She had taught her scholars something, but she felt that they had taught her much more ... lessons of tenderness, self-control, innocent wisdom, lore of childish hearts. Perhaps she had not succeeded in “inspiring” any wonderful ambitions in her pupils, but she had taught them, more by her own sweet personality than by all her careful precepts, that it was good and necessary in the years that were before them to live their lives finely and graciously, holding fast to truth and courtesy and kindness, keeping aloof from all that savored of falsehood and meanness and vulgarity. They were, perhaps, all unconscious of having learned such lessons; but they would remember and practice them long after they had forgotten the capital of Afghanistan and the dates of the Wars of the Roses.

“Another chapter in my life is closed,” said Anne aloud, as she locked her desk. She really felt very sad over it; but the romance in the idea of that “closed chapter” did comfort her a little.

Anne spent a fortnight at Echo Lodge early in her vacation and everybody concerned had a good time.

She took Miss Lavendar on a shopping expedition to town and persuaded her to buy a new organdy dress; then came the excitement of cutting and making it together, while the happy Charlotta the Fourth basted and swept up clippings. Miss Lavendar had complained that she could not feel much interest in anything, but the sparkle came back to her eyes over her pretty dress.

“What a foolish, frivolous person I must be,” she sighed. “I’m wholesomely ashamed to think that a new dress ... even it is a forget-me-not organdy ... should exhilarate me so, when a good conscience and an extra contribution to Foreign Missions couldn’t do it.”

Midway in her visit Anne went home to Green Gables for a day to mend the twins’ stockings and settle up Davy’s accumulated store of questions. In the evening she went down to the shore road to see Paul Irving. As she passed by the low, square window of the Irving sitting room she caught a

glimpse of Paul on somebody's lap; but the next moment he came flying through the hall.

"Oh, Miss Shirley," he cried excitedly, "you can't think what has happened! Something so splendid. Father is here ... just think of that! Father is here! Come right in. Father, this is my beautiful teacher. YOU know, father."

Stephen Irving came forward to meet Anne with a smile. He was a tall, handsome man of middle age, with iron-gray hair, deep-set, dark blue eyes, and a strong, sad face, splendidly modeled about chin and brow. Just the face for a hero of romance, Anne thought with a thrill of intense satisfaction. It was so disappointing to meet someone who ought to be a hero and find him bald or stooped, or otherwise lacking in manly beauty. Anne would have thought it dreadful if the object of Miss Lavendar's romance had not looked the part.

"So this is my little son's 'beautiful teacher,' of whom I have heard so much," said Mr. Irving with a hearty handshake. "Paul's letters have been so full of you, Miss Shirley, that I feel as if I were pretty well acquainted with you already. I want to thank you for what you have done for Paul. I think that your influence has been just what he needed. Mother is one of the best and dearest of women; but her robust, matter-of-fact Scotch common sense could not always understand a temperament like my laddie's. What was lacking in her you have supplied. Between you, I think Paul's training in these two past years has been as nearly ideal as a motherless boy's could be."

Everybody likes to be appreciated. Under Mr. Irving's praise Anne's face "burst flower like into rosy bloom," and the busy, weary man of the world, looking at her, thought he had never seen a fairer, sweeter slip of girlhood than this little "down east" schoolteacher with her red hair and wonderful eyes.

Paul sat between them blissfully happy.

"I never dreamed father was coming," he said radiantly. "Even Grandma didn't know it. It was a great surprise. As a general thing ..." Paul shook

his brown curls gravely ... “I don’t like to be surprised. You lose all the fun of expecting things when you’re surprised. But in a case like this it is all right. Father came last night after I had gone to bed. And after Grandma and Mary Joe had stopped being surprised he and Grandma came upstairs to look at me, not meaning to wake me up till morning. But I woke right up and saw father. I tell you I just sprang at him.”

“With a hug like a bear’s,” said Mr. Irving, putting his arms around Paul’s shoulder smilingly. “I hardly knew my boy, he had grown so big and brown and sturdy.”

“I don’t know which was the most pleased to see father, Grandma or I,” continued Paul. “Grandma’s been in kitchen all day making the things father likes to eat. She wouldn’t trust them to Mary Joe, she says. That’s HER way of showing gladness. I like best just to sit and talk to father. But I’m going to leave you for a little while now if you’ll excuse me. I must get the cows for Mary Joe. That is one of my daily duties.”

When Paul had scampered away to do his “daily duty” Mr. Irving talked to Anne of various matters. But Anne felt that he was thinking of something else underneath all the time. Presently it came to the surface.

“In Paul’s last letter he spoke of going with you to visit an old ... friend of mine ... Miss Lewis at the stone house in Grafton. Do you know her well?”

“Yes, indeed, she is a very dear friend of mine,” was Anne’s demure reply, which gave no hint of the sudden thrill that tingled over her from head to foot at Mr. Irving’s question. Anne “felt instinctively” that romance was peeping at her around a corner.

Mr. Irving rose and went to the window, looking out on a great, golden, billowing sea where a wild wind was harping. For a few moments there was silence in the little dark-walled room. Then he turned and looked down into Anne’s sympathetic face with a smile, half-whimsical, half-tender.

“I wonder how much you know,” he said.

“I know all about it,” replied Anne promptly. “You see,” she explained hastily, “Miss Lavendar and I are very intimate. She wouldn’t tell things of such a sacred nature to everybody. We are kindred spirits.”

“Yes, I believe you are. Well, I am going to ask a favor of you. I would like to go and see Miss Lavendar if she will let me. Will you ask her if I may come?”

Would she not? Oh, indeed she would! Yes, this was romance, the very, the real thing, with all the charm of rhyme and story and dream. It was a little belated, perhaps, like a rose blooming in October which should have bloomed in June; but none the less a rose, all sweetness and fragrance, with the gleam of gold in its heart. Never did Anne’s feet bear her on a more willing errand than on that walk through the beechwoods to Grafton the next morning. She found Miss Lavendar in the garden. Anne was fearfully excited. Her hands grew cold and her voice trembled.

“Miss Lavendar, I have something to tell you ... something very important. Can you guess what it is?”

Anne never supposed that Miss Lavendar could GUESS; but Miss Lavendar’s face grew very pale and Miss Lavendar said in a quiet, still voice, from which all the color and sparkle that Miss Lavendar’s voice usually suggested had faded.

“Stephen Irving is home?”

“How did you know? Who told you?” cried Anne disappointedly, vexed that her great revelation had been anticipated.

“Nobody. I knew that must be it, just from the way you spoke.”

“He wants to come and see you,” said Anne. “May I send him word that he may?”

“Yes, of course,” fluttered Miss Lavendar. “There is no reason why he shouldn’t. He is only coming as any old friend might.”

Anne had her own opinion about that as she hastened into the house to write a note at Miss Lavendar's desk.

"Oh, it's delightful to be living in a storybook," she thought gaily. "It will come out all right of course ... it must ... and Paul will have a mother after his own heart and everybody will be happy. But Mr. Irving will take Miss Lavendar away ... and dear knows what will happen to the little stone house ... and so there are two sides to it, as there seems to be to everything in this world." The important note was written and Anne herself carried it to the Grafton post office, where she waylaid the mail carrier and asked him to leave it at the Avonlea office.

"It's so very important," Anne assured him anxiously. The mail carrier was a rather grumpy old personage who did not at all look the part of a messenger of Cupid; and Anne was none too certain that his memory was to be trusted. But he said he would do his best to remember and she had to be contented with that.

Charlotta the Fourth felt that some mystery pervaded the stone house that afternoon ... a mystery from which she was excluded. Miss Lavendar roamed about the garden in a distracted fashion. Anne, too, seemed possessed by a demon of unrest, and walked to and fro and went up and down. Charlotta the Fourth endured it till patience ceased to be a virtue; then she confronted Anne on the occasion of that romantic young person's third aimless peregrination through the kitchen.

"Please, Miss Shirley, ma'am," said Charlotta the Fourth, with an indignant toss of her very blue bows, "it's plain to be seen you and Miss Lavendar have got a secret and I think, begging your pardon if I'm too forward, Miss Shirley, ma'am, that it's real mean not to tell me when we've all been such chums."

"Oh, Charlotta dear, I'd have told you all about it if it were my secret ... but it's Miss Lavendar's, you see. However, I'll tell you this much ... and if nothing comes of it you must never breathe a word about it to a living soul. You see, Prince Charming is coming tonight. He came long ago, but in a foolish moment went away and wandered afar and forgot the secret of the magic pathway to the enchanted castle, where the princess was

weeping her faithful heart out for him. But at last he remembered it again and the princess is waiting still... because nobody but her own dear prince could carry her off."

"Oh, Miss Shirley, ma'am, what is that in prose?" gasped the mystified Charlotta.

Anne laughed.

"In prose, an old friend of Miss Lavendar's is coming to see her tonight."

"Do you mean an old beau of hers?" demanded the literal Charlotta.

"That is probably what I do mean ... in prose," answered Anne gravely. "It is Paul's father ... Stephen Irving. And goodness knows what will come of it, but let us hope for the best, Charlotta."

"I hope that he'll marry Miss Lavendar," was Charlotta's unequivocal response. "Some women's intended from the start to be old maids, and I'm afraid I'm one of them, Miss Shirley, ma'am, because I've awful little patience with the men. But Miss Lavendar never was. And I've been awful worried, thinking what on earth she'd do when I got so big I'd HAVE to go to Boston. There ain't any more girls in our family and dear knows what she'd do if she got some stranger that might laugh at her pretendings and leave things lying round out of their place and not be willing to be called Charlotta the Fifth. She might get someone who wouldn't be as unlucky as me in breaking dishes but she'd never get anyone who'd love her better."

And the faithful little handmaiden dashed to the oven door with a sniff.

They went through the form of having tea as usual that night at Echo Lodge; but nobody really ate anything. After tea Miss Lavendar went to her room and put on her new forget-me-not organdy, while Anne did her hair for her. Both were dreadfully excited; but Miss Lavendar pretended to be very calm and indifferent.

"I must really mend that rent in the curtain tomorrow," she said anxiously, inspecting it as if it were the only thing of any importance just then.

“Those curtains have not worn as well as they should, considering the price I paid. Dear me, Charlotta has forgotten to dust the stair railing AGAIN. I really MUST speak to her about it.”

Anne was sitting on the porch steps when Stephen Irving came down the lane and across the garden.

“This is the one place where time stands still,” he said, looking around him with delighted eyes. “There is nothing changed about this house or garden since I was here twenty-five years ago. It makes me feel young again.”

“You know time always does stand still in an enchanted palace,” said Anne seriously. “It is only when the prince comes that things begin to happen.”

Mr. Irving smiled a little sadly into her uplifted face, all astar with its youth and promise.

“Sometimes the prince comes too late,” he said. He did not ask Anne to translate her remark into prose. Like all kindred spirits he “understood.”

“Oh, no, not if he is the real prince coming to the true princess,” said Anne, shaking her red head decidedly, as she opened the parlor door. When he had gone in she shut it tightly behind him and turned to confront Charlotta the Fourth, who was in the hall, all “nods and becks and wreathed smiles.”

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” she breathed, “I peeked from the kitchen window ... and he’s awful handsome ... and just the right age for Miss Lavendar. And oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, do you think it would be much harm to listen at the door?”

“It would be dreadful, Charlotta,” said Anne firmly, “so just you come away with me out of the reach of temptation.”

“I can’t do anything, and it’s awful to hang round just waiting,” sighed Charlotta. “What if he don’t propose after all, Miss Shirley, ma’am? You can never be sure of them men. My older sister, Charlotta the First,

thought she was engaged to one once. But it turned out HE had a different opinion and she says she'll never trust one of them again. And I heard of another case where a man thought he wanted one girl awful bad when it was really her sister he wanted all the time. When a man don't know his own mind, Miss Shirley, ma'am, how's a poor woman going to be sure of it?"

"We'll go to the kitchen and clean the silver spoons," said Anne. "That's a task which won't require much thinking fortunately ... for I COULDN'T think tonight. And it will pass the time."

It passed an hour. Then, just as Anne laid down the last shining spoon, they heard the front door shut. Both sought comfort fearfully in each other's eyes.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, ma'am," gasped Charlotta, "if he's going away this early there's nothing into it and never will be." They flew to the window. Mr. Irving had no intention of going away. He and Miss Lavendar were strolling slowly down the middle path to the stone bench.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, ma'am, he's got his arm around her waist," whispered Charlotta the Fourth delightedly. "He must have proposed to her or she'd never allow it."

Anne caught Charlotta the Fourth by her own plump waist and danced her around the kitchen until they were both out of breath.

"Oh, Charlotta," she cried gaily, "I'm neither a prophetess nor the daughter of a prophetess but I'm going to make a prediction. There'll be a wedding in this old stone house before the maple leaves are red. Do you want that translated into prose, Charlotta?"

"No, I can understand that," said Charlotta. "A wedding ain't poetry. Why, Miss Shirley, ma'am, you're crying! What for?"

"Oh, because it's all so beautiful ... and story bookish ... and romantic ... and sad," said Anne, winking the tears out of her eyes. "It's all perfectly lovely ... but there's a little sadness mixed up in it too, somehow."

“Oh, of course there’s a resk in marrying anybody,” conceded Charlotta the Fourth, “but, when all’s said and done, Miss Shirley, ma’am, there’s many a worse thing than a husband.”

XXI X

Poetry and Prose

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For the next month Anne lived in what, for Avonlea, might be called a whirl of excitement. The preparation of her own modest outfit for Redmond was of secondary importance. Miss Lavendar was getting ready to be married and the stone house was the scene of endless consultations and plannings and discussions, with Charlotta the Fourth hovering on the outskirts of things in agitated delight and wonder. Then the dressmaker came, and there was the rapture and wretchedness of choosing fashions and being fitted. Anne and Diana spent half their time at Echo Lodge and there were nights when Anne could not sleep for wondering whether she had done right in advising Miss Lavendar to select brown rather than navy blue for her traveling dress, and to have her gray silk made princess.

Everybody concerned in Miss Lavendar's story was very happy. Paul Irving rushed to Green Gables to talk the news over with Anne as soon as his father had told him.

"I knew I could trust father to pick me out a nice little second mother," he said proudly. "It's a fine thing to have a father you can depend on, teacher. I just love Miss Lavendar. Grandma is pleased, too. She says she's real glad father didn't pick out an American for his second wife, because, although it turned out all right the first time, such a thing wouldn't be likely to happen twice. Mrs. Lynde says she thoroughly approves of the match and thinks its likely Miss Lavendar will give up her queer notions and be like other people, now that she's going to be married. But I hope she won't give her queer notions up, teacher, because I like them. And I don't want her to be like other people. There are too many other people around as it is. YOU know, teacher."

Charlotta the Fourth was another radiant person.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, it has all turned out so beautiful. When Mr. Irving and Miss Lavendar come back from their tower I’m to go up to Boston and live with them ... and me only fifteen, and the other girls never went till they were sixteen. Ain’t Mr. Irving splendid? He just worships the ground she treads on and it makes me feel so queer sometimes to see the look in his eyes when he’s watching her. It beggars description, Miss Shirley, ma’am. I’m awful thankful they’re so fond of each other. It’s the best way, when all’s said and done, though some folks can get along without it. I’ve got an aunt who has been married three times and says she married the first time for love and the last two times for strictly business, and was happy with all three except at the times of the funerals. But I think she took a resk, Miss Shirley, ma’am.”

“Oh, it’s all so romantic,” breathed Anne to Marilla that night. “If I hadn’t taken the wrong path that day we went to Mr. Kimball’s I’d never have known Miss Lavendar; and if I hadn’t met her I’d never have taken Paul there ... and he’d never have written to his father about visiting Miss Lavendar just as Mr. Irving was starting for San Francisco. Mr. Irving says whenever he got that letter he made up his mind to send his partner to San Francisco and come here instead. He hadn’t heard anything of Miss Lavendar for fifteen years. Somebody had told him then that she was to be married and he thought she was and never asked anybody anything about her. And now everything has come right. And I had a hand in bringing it about. Perhaps, as Mrs. Lynde says, everything is foreordained and it was bound to happen anyway. But even so, it’s nice to think one was an instrument used by predestination. Yes indeed, it’s very romantic.”

“I can’t see that it’s so terribly romantic at all,” said Marilla rather crisply. Marilla thought Anne was too worked up about it and had plenty to do with getting ready for college without “traipsing” to Echo Lodge two days out of three helping Miss Lavendar. “In the first place two young fools quarrel and turn sulky; then Steve Irving goes to the States and after a spell gets married up there and is perfectly happy from all accounts. Then his wife dies and after a decent interval he thinks he’ll come home and see if his first fancy’ll have him. Meanwhile, she’s been living single, probably because nobody nice enough came along to want her, and they

meet and agree to be married after all. Now, where is the romance in all that?"

"Oh, there isn't any, when you put it that way," gasped Anne, rather as if somebody had thrown cold water over her. "I suppose that's how it looks in prose. But it's very different if you look at it through poetry ... and I think it's nicer ..." Anne recovered herself and her eyes shone and her cheeks flushed ... "to look at it through poetry."

Marilla glanced at the radiant young face and refrained from further sarcastic comments. Perhaps some realization came to her that after all it was better to have, like Anne, "the vision and the faculty divine" ... that gift which the world cannot bestow or take away, of looking at life through some transfiguring ... or revealing? ... medium, whereby everything seemed apparelled in celestial light, wearing a glory and a freshness not visible to those who, like herself and Charlotta the Fourth, looked at things only through prose.

"When's the wedding to be?" she asked after a pause.

"The last Wednesday in August. They are to be married in the garden under the honeysuckle trellis ... the very spot where Mr. Irving proposed to her twenty-five years ago. Marilla, that IS romantic, even in prose. There's to be nobody there except Mrs. Irving and Paul and Gilbert and Diana and I, and Miss Lavendar's cousins. And they will leave on the six o'clock train for a trip to the Pacific coast. When they come back in the fall Paul and Charlotta the Fourth are to go up to Boston to live with them. But Echo Lodge is to be left just as it is... only of course they'll sell the hens and cow, and board up the windows ... and every summer they're coming down to live in it. I'm so glad. It would have hurt me dreadfully next winter at Redmond to think of that dear stone house all stripped and deserted, with empty rooms ... or far worse still, with other people living in it. But I can think of it now, just as I've always seen it, waiting happily for the summer to bring life and laughter back to it again."

There was more romance in the world than that which had fallen to the share of the middle-aged lovers of the stone house. Anne stumbled suddenly on it one evening when she went over to Orchard Slope by the

wood cut and came out into the Barry garden. Diana Barry and Fred Wright were standing together under the big willow. Diana was leaning against the gray trunk, her lashes cast down on very crimson cheeks. One hand was held by Fred, who stood with his face bent toward her, stammering something in low earnest tones. There were no other people in the world except their two selves at that magic moment; so neither of them saw Anne, who, after one dazed glance of comprehension, turned and sped noiselessly back through the spruce wood, never stopping till she gained her own gable room, where she sat breathlessly down by her window and tried to collect her scattered wits.

“Diana and Fred are in love with each other,” she gasped. “Oh, it does seem so ... so ... so HOPELESSLY grown up.”

Anne, of late, had not been without her suspicions that Diana was proving false to the melancholy Byronic hero of her early dreams. But as “things seen are mightier than things heard,” or suspected, the realization that it was actually so came to her with almost the shock of perfect surprise. This was succeeded by a queer, little lonely feeling ... as if, somehow, Diana had gone forward into a new world, shutting a gate behind her, leaving Anne on the outside.

“Things are changing so fast it almost frightens me,” Anne thought, a little sadly. “And I’m afraid that this can’t help making some difference between Diana and me. I’m sure I can’t tell her all my secrets after this ... she might tell Fred. And what CAN she see in Fred? He’s very nice and jolly ... but he’s just Fred Wright.”

It is always a very puzzling question ... what can somebody see in somebody else? But how fortunate after all that it is so, for if everybody saw alike ... well, in that case, as the old Indian said, “Everybody would want my squaw.” It was plain that Diana DID see something in Fred Wright, however Anne’s eyes might be holden. Diana came to Green Gables the next evening, a pensive, shy young lady, and told Anne the whole story in the dusky seclusion of the east gable. Both girls cried and kissed and laughed.

“I’m so happy,” said Diana, “but it does seem ridiculous to think of me being engaged.”

“What is it really like to be engaged?” asked Anne curiously.

“Well, that all depends on who you’re engaged to,” answered Diana, with that maddening air of superior wisdom always assumed by those who are engaged over those who are not. “It’s perfectly lovely to be engaged to Fred ... but I think it would be simply horrid to be engaged to anyone else.”

“There’s not much comfort for the rest of us in that, seeing that there is only one Fred,” laughed Anne.

“Oh, Anne, you don’t understand,” said Diana in vexation. “I didn’t mean THAT ... it’s so hard to explain. Never mind, you’ll understand sometime, when your own turn comes.”

“Bless you, dearest of Dianas, I understand now. What is an imagination for if not to enable you to peep at life through other people’s eyes?”

“You must be my bridesmaid, you know, Anne. Promise me that ... wherever you may be when I’m married.”

“I’ll come from the ends of the earth if necessary,” promised Anne solemnly.

“Of course, it won’t be for ever so long yet,” said Diana, blushing. “Three years at the very least ... for I’m only eighteen and mother says no daughter of hers shall be married before she’s twenty-one. Besides, Fred’s father is going to buy the Abraham Fletcher farm for him and he says he’s got to have it two thirds paid for before he’ll give it to him in his own name. But three years isn’t any too much time to get ready for housekeeping, for I haven’t a speck of fancy work made yet. But I’m going to begin crocheting doilies tomorrow. Myra Gillis had thirty-seven doilies when she was married and I’m determined I shall have as many as she had.”

“I suppose it would be perfectly impossible to keep house with only thirty-six doilies,” conceded Anne, with a solemn face but dancing eyes.

Diana looked hurt.

“I didn’t think you’d make fun of me, Anne,” she said reproachfully.

“Dearest, I wasn’t making fun of you,” cried Anne repentantly. “I was only teasing you a bit. I think you’ll make the sweetest little housekeeper in the world. And I think it’s perfectly lovely of you to be planning already for your home o’dreams.”

Anne had no sooner uttered the phrase, “home o’dreams,” than it captivated her fancy and she immediately began the erection of one of her own. It was, of course, tenanted by an ideal master, dark, proud, and melancholy; but oddly enough, Gilbert Blythe persisted in hanging about too, helping her arrange pictures, lay out gardens, and accomplish sundry other tasks which a proud and melancholy hero evidently considered beneath his dignity. Anne tried to banish Gilbert’s image from her castle in Spain but, somehow, he went on being there, so Anne, being in a hurry, gave up the attempt and pursued her aerial architecture with such success that her “home o’dreams” was built and furnished before Diana spoke again.

“I suppose, Anne, you must think it’s funny I should like Fred so well when he’s so different from the kind of man I’ve always said I would marry ... the tall, slender kind? But somehow I wouldn’t want Fred to be tall and slender ... because, don’t you see, he wouldn’t be Fred then. Of course,” added Diana rather dolefully, “we will be a dreadfully pudgy couple. But after all that’s better than one of us being short and fat and the other tall and lean, like Morgan Sloane and his wife. Mrs. Lynde says it always makes her think of the long and short of it when she sees them together.”

“Well,” said Anne to herself that night, as she brushed her hair before her gilt framed mirror, “I am glad Diana is so happy and satisfied. But when my turn comes ... if it ever does ... I do hope there’ll be something a little more thrilling about it. But then Diana thought so too, once. I’ve heard her

say time and again she'd never get engaged any poky commonplace way ... he'd HAVE to do something splendid to win her. But she has changed. Perhaps I'll change too. But I won't ... and I'm determined I won't. Oh, I think these engagements are dreadfully unsettling things when they happen to your intimate friends."

XX X

A Wedding at the Stone House

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The last week in August came. Miss Lavendar was to be married in it. Two weeks later Anne and Gilbert would leave for Redmond College. In a week's time Mrs. Rachel Lynde would move to Green Gables and set up her lares and penates in the erstwhile spare room, which was already prepared for her coming. She had sold all her superfluous household plenishings by auction and was at present reveling in the congenial occupation of helping the Allans pack up. Mr. Allan was to preach his farewell sermon the next Sunday. The old order was changing rapidly to give place to the new, as Anne felt with a little sadness threading all her excitement and happiness.

"Changes ain't totally pleasant but they're excellent things," said Mr. Harrison philosophically. "Two years is about long enough for things to stay exactly the same. If they stayed put any longer they might grow mossy."

Mr. Harrison was smoking on his veranda. His wife had self-sacrificingly told that he might smoke in the house if he took care to sit by an open window. Mr. Harrison rewarded this concession by going outdoors altogether to smoke in fine weather, and so mutual goodwill reigned.

Anne had come over to ask Mrs. Harrison for some of her yellow dahlias. She and Diana were going through to Echo Lodge that evening to help Miss Lavendar and Charlotta the Fourth with their final preparations for

the morrow's bridal. Miss Lavendar herself never had dahlias; she did not like them and they would not have suited the fine retirement of her old-fashioned garden. But flowers of any kind were rather scarce in Avonlea and the neighboring districts that summer, thanks to Uncle Abe's storm; and Anne and Diana thought that a certain old cream-colored stone jug, usually kept sacred to doughnuts, brimmed over with yellow dahlias, would be just the thing to set in a dim angle of the stone house stairs, against the dark background of red hall paper.

"I s'pose you'll be starting off for college in a fortnight's time?" continued Mr. Harrison. "Well, we're going to miss you an awful lot, Emily and me. To be sure, Mrs. Lynde'll be over there in your place. There ain't nobody but a substitute can be found for them."

The irony of Mr. Harrison's tone is quite untransferable to paper. In spite of his wife's intimacy with Mrs. Lynde, the best that could be said of the relationship between her and Mr. Harrison even under the new regime, was that they preserved an armed neutrality.

"Yes, I'm going," said Anne. "I'm very glad with my head ... and very sorry with my heart."

"I s'pose you'll be scooping up all the honors that are lying round loose at Redmond."

"I may try for one or two of them," confessed Anne, "but I don't care so much for things like that as I did two years ago. What I want to get out of my college course is some knowledge of the best way of living life and doing the most and best with it. I want to learn to understand and help other people and myself."

Mr. Harrison nodded.

"That's the idea exactly. That's what college ought to be for, instead of for turning out a lot of B.A.'s, so chock full of book-learning and vanity that there ain't room for anything else. You're all right. College won't be able to do you much harm, I reckon."

Diana and Anne drove over to Echo Lodge after tea, taking with them all the flowery spoil that several predatory expeditions in their own and their neighbors' gardens had yielded. They found the stone house agog with excitement. Charlotta the Fourth was flying around with such vim and briskness that her blue bows seemed really to possess the power of being everywhere at once. Like the helmet of Navarre, Charlotta's blue bows waved ever in the thickest of the fray.

"Praise be to goodness you've come," she said devoutly, "for there's heaps of things to do ... and the frosting on that cake WON'T harden ... and there's all the silver to be rubbed up yet ... and the horsehair trunk to be packed ... and the roosters for the chicken salad are running out there beyant the henhouse yet, crowing, Miss Shirley, ma'am. And Miss Lavendar ain't to be trusted to do a thing. I was thankful when Mr. Irving came a few minutes ago and took her off for a walk in the woods. Courting's all right in its place, Miss Shirley, ma'am, but if you try to mix it up with cooking and scouring everything's spoiled. That's MY opinion, Miss Shirley, ma'am."

Anne and Diana worked so heartily that by ten o'clock even Charlotta the Fourth was satisfied. She braided her hair in innumerable plaits and took her weary little bones off to bed.

"But I'm sure I shan't sleep a blessed wink, Miss Shirley, ma'am, for fear that something'll go wrong at the last minute ... the cream won't whip ... or Mr. Irving'll have a stroke and not be able to come."

"He isn't in the habit of having strokes, is he?" asked Diana, the dimpled corners of her mouth twitching. To Diana, Charlotta the Fourth was, if not exactly a thing of beauty, certainly a joy forever.

"They're not things that go by habit," said Charlotta the Fourth with dignity. "They just HAPPEN ... and there you are. ANYBODY can have a stroke. You don't have to learn how. Mr. Irving looks a lot like an uncle of mine that had one once just as he was sitting down to dinner one day. But maybe everything'll go all right. In this world you've just got to hope for the best and prepare for the worst and take whatever God sends."

“The only thing I’m worried about is that it won’t be fine tomorrow,” said Diana. “Uncle Abe predicted rain for the middle of the week, and ever since the big storm I can’t help believing there’s a good deal in what Uncle Abe says.”

Anne, who knew better than Diana just how much Uncle Abe had to do with the storm, was not much disturbed by this. She slept the sleep of the just and weary, and was roused at an unearthly hour by Charlotta the Fourth.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, it’s awful to call you so early,” came wailing through the keyhole, “but there’s so much to do yet ... and oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, I’m skeered it’s going to rain and I wish you’d get up and tell me you think it ain’t.” Anne flew to the window, hoping against hope that Charlotta the Fourth was saying this merely by way of rousing her effectually. But alas, the morning did look unpropitious. Below the window Miss Lavendar’s garden, which should have been a glory of pale virgin sunshine, lay dim and windless; and the sky over the firs was dark with moody clouds.

“Isn’t it too mean!” said Diana.

“We must hope for the best,” said Anne determinedly. “If it only doesn’t actually rain, a cool, pearly gray day like this would really be nicer than hot sunshine.”

“But it will rain,” mourned Charlotta, creeping into the room, a figure of fun, with her many braids wound about her head, the ends, tied up with white thread, sticking out in all directions. “It’ll hold off till the last minute and then pour cats and dogs. And all the folks will get sopping ... and track mud all over the house ... and they won’t be able to be married under the honeysuckle ... and it’s awful unlucky for no sun to shine on a bride, say what you will, Miss Shirley, ma’am. I knew things were going too well to last.”

Charlotta the Fourth seemed certainly to have borrowed a leaf out of Miss Eliza Andrews’ book.

It did not rain, though it kept on looking as if it meant to. By noon the rooms were decorated, the table beautifully laid; and upstairs was waiting a bride, “adorned for her husband.”

“You do look sweet,” said Anne rapturously.

“Lovely,” echoed Diana.

“Everything’s ready, Miss Shirley, ma’am, and nothing dreadful has happened YET,” was Charlotta’s cheerful statement as she betook herself to her little back room to dress. Out came all the braids; the resultant rampant crinkliness was plaited into two tails and tied, not with two bows alone, but with four, of brand-new ribbon, brightly blue. The two upper bows rather gave the impression of overgrown wings sprouting from Charlotta’s neck, somewhat after the fashion of Raphael’s cherubs. But Charlotta the Fourth thought them very beautiful, and after she had rustled into a white dress, so stiffly starched that it could stand alone, she surveyed herself in her glass with great satisfaction ... a satisfaction which lasted until she went out in the hall and caught a glimpse through the spare room door of a tall girl in some softly clinging gown, pinning white, starlike flowers on the smooth ripples of her ruddy hair.

“Oh, I’ll NEVER be able to look like Miss Shirley,” thought poor Charlotta despairingly. “You just have to be born so, I guess ... don’t seem’s if any amount of practice could give you that AIR.”

By one o’clock the guests had come, including Mr. and Mrs. Allan, for Mr. Allan was to perform the ceremony in the absence of the Grafton minister on his vacation. There was no formality about the marriage. Miss Lavendar came down the stairs to meet her bridegroom at the foot, and as he took her hand she lifted her big brown eyes to his with a look that made Charlotta the Fourth, who intercepted it, feel queerer than ever. They went out to the honeysuckle arbor, where Mr. Allan was awaiting them. The guests grouped themselves as they pleased. Anne and Diana stood by the old stone bench, with Charlotta the Fourth between them, desperately clutching their hands in her cold, tremulous little paws.

Mr. Allan opened his blue book and the ceremony proceeded. Just as Miss Lavendar and Stephen Irving were pronounced man and wife a very beautiful and symbolic thing happened. The sun suddenly burst through the gray and poured a flood of radiance on the happy bride. Instantly the garden was alive with dancing shadows and flickering lights.

“What a lovely omen,” thought Anne, as she ran to kiss the bride. Then the three girls left the rest of the guests laughing around the bridal pair while they flew into the house to see that all was in readiness for the feast.

“Thanks be to goodness, it’s over, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” breathed Charlotta the Fourth, “and they’re married safe and sound, no matter what happens now. The bags of rice are in the pantry, ma’am, and the old shoes are behind the door, and the cream for whipping is on the sallar steps.”

At half past two Mr. and Mrs. Irving left, and everybody went to Bright River to see them off on the afternoon train. As Miss Lavendar ... I beg her pardon, Mrs. Irving ... stepped from the door of her old home Gilbert and the girls threw the rice and Charlotta the Fourth hurled an old shoe with such excellent aim that she struck Mr. Allan squarely on the head. But it was reserved for Paul to give the prettiest send-off. He popped out of the porch ringing furiously a huge old brass dinner bell which had adorned the dining room mantel. Paul’s only motive was to make a joyful noise; but as the clangor died away, from point and curve and hill across the river came the chime of “fairy wedding bells,” ringing clearly, sweetly, faintly and more faint, as if Miss Lavendar’s beloved echoes were bidding her greeting and farewell. And so, amid this benediction of sweet sounds, Miss Lavendar drove away from the old life of dreams and make-believes to a fuller life of realities in the busy world beyond.

Two hours later Anne and Charlotta the Fourth came down the lane again. Gilbert had gone to West Grafton on an errand and Diana had to keep an engagement at home. Anne and Charlotta had come back to put things in order and lock up the little stone house. The garden was a pool of late golden sunshine, with butterflies hovering and bees booming; but the little house had already that indefinable air of desolation which always follows a festivity.

“Oh dear me, don’t it look lonesome?” sniffed Charlotta the Fourth, who had been crying all the way home from the station. “A wedding ain’t much cheerfuller than a funeral after all, when it’s all over, Miss Shirley, ma’am.”

A busy evening followed. The decorations had to be removed, the dishes washed, the uneaten delicacies packed into a basket for the delectation of Charlotta the Fourth’s young brothers at home. Anne would not rest until everything was in apple-pie order; after Charlotta had gone home with her plunder Anne went over the still rooms, feeling like one who trod alone some banquet hall deserted, and closed the blinds. Then she locked the door and sat down under the silver poplar to wait for Gilbert, feeling very tired but still unweariedly thinking “long, long thoughts.”

“What are you thinking of, Anne?” asked Gilbert, coming down the walk. He had left his horse and buggy out at the road.

“Of Miss Lavendar and Mr. Irving,” answered Anne dreamily. “Isn’t it beautiful to think how everything has turned out ... how they have come together again after all the years of separation and misunderstanding?”

“Yes, it’s beautiful,” said Gilbert, looking steadily down into Anne’s uplifted face, “but wouldn’t it have been more beautiful still, Anne, if there had been NO separation or misunderstanding ... if they had come hand in hand all the way through life, with no memories behind them but those which belonged to each other?”

For a moment Anne’s heart fluttered queerly and for the first time her eyes faltered under Gilbert’s gaze and a rosy flush stained the paleness of her face. It was as if a veil that had hung before her inner consciousness had been lifted, giving to her view a revelation of unsuspected feelings and realities. Perhaps, after all, romance did not come into one’s life with pomp and blare, like a gay knight riding down; perhaps it crept to one’s side like an old friend through quiet ways; perhaps it revealed itself in seeming prose, until some sudden shaft of illumination flung athwart its pages betrayed the rhythm and the music, perhaps ... perhaps ... love unfolded naturally out of a beautiful friendship, as a golden-hearted rose slipping from its green sheath.

Then the veil dropped again; but the Anne who walked up the dark lane was not quite the same Anne who had driven gaily down it the evening before. The page of girlhood had been turned, as by an unseen finger, and the page of womanhood was before her with all its charm and mystery, its pain and gladness.

Gilbert wisely said nothing more; but in his silence he read the history of the next four years in the light of Anne's remembered blush. Four years of earnest, happy work ... and then the guerdon of a useful knowledge gained and a sweet heart won.

Behind them in the garden the little stone house brooded among the shadows. It was lonely but not forsaken. It had not yet done with dreams and laughter and the joy of life; there were to be future summers for the little stone house; meanwhile, it could wait. And over the river in purple durance the echoes bided their time.

ANNE OF THE ISLAND (1915)

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Chapter I

The Shadow of Change

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“Harvest is ended and summer is gone,” quoted Anne Shirley, gazing across the shorn fields dreamily. She and Diana Barry had been picking apples in the Green Gables orchard, but were now resting from their labors in a sunny corner, where airy fleets of thistledown drifted by on the wings of a wind that was still summer-sweet with the incense of ferns in the Haunted Wood.

But everything in the landscape around them spoke of autumn. The sea was roaring hollowly in the distance, the fields were bare and sere, scarfed with golden rod, the brook valley below Green Gables overflowed with asters of ethereal purple, and the Lake of Shining Waters was blue — blue — blue; not the changeful blue of spring, nor the pale azure of summer, but a clear, steadfast, serene blue, as if the water were past all moods and tenses of emotion and had settled down to a tranquility unbroken by fickle dreams.

“It has been a nice summer,” said Diana, twisting the new ring on her left hand with a smile. “And Miss Lavendar’s wedding seemed to come as a sort of crown to it. I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Irving are on the Pacific coast now.”

“It seems to me they have been gone long enough to go around the world,” sighed Anne.

“I can’t believe it is only a week since they were married. Everything has changed. Miss Lavendar and Mr. and Mrs. Allan gone — how lonely the manse looks with the shutters all closed! I went past it last night, and it made me feel as if everybody in it had died.”

“We’ll never get another minister as nice as Mr. Allan,” said Diana, with gloomy conviction. “I suppose we’ll have all kinds of supplies this winter, and half the Sundays no preaching at all. And you and Gilbert gone — it will be awfully dull.”

“Fred will be here,” insinuated Anne slyly.

“When is Mrs. Lynde going to move up?” asked Diana, as if she had not heard Anne’s remark.

“Tomorrow. I’m glad she’s coming — but it will be another change. Marilla and I cleared everything out of the spare room yesterday. Do you know, I hated to do it? Of course, it was silly — but it did seem as if we were committing sacrilege. That old spare room has always seemed like a shrine to me. When I was a child I thought it the most wonderful apartment in the world. You remember what a consuming desire I had to sleep in a spare room bed — but not the Green Gables spare room. Oh, no, never there! It would have been too terrible — I couldn’t have slept a wink from awe. I never WALKED through that room when Marilla sent me in on an errand — no, indeed, I tiptoed through it and held my breath, as if I were in church, and felt relieved when I got out of it. The pictures of George Whitefield and the Duke of Wellington hung there, one on each side of the mirror, and frowned so sternly at me all the time I was in, especially if I dared peep in the mirror, which was the only one in the house that didn’t twist my face a little. I always wondered how Marilla dared houseclean that room. And now it’s not only cleaned but stripped bare. George Whitefield and the Duke have been relegated to the upstairs hall. ‘So passes the glory of this world,’” concluded Anne, with a laugh in which there was a little note of regret. It is never pleasant to have our old shrines desecrated, even when we have outgrown them.

“I’ll be so lonesome when you go,” moaned Diana for the hundredth time. “And to think you go next week!”

“But we’re together still,” said Anne cheerily. “We mustn’t let next week rob us of this week’s joy. I hate the thought of going myself — home and I are such good friends. Talk of being lonesome! It’s I who should groan.

YOU'LL be here with any number of your old friends — AND Fred! While I shall be alone among strangers, not knowing a soul!"

"EXCEPT Gilbert — AND Charlie Sloane," said Diana, imitating Anne's italics and slyness.

"Charlie Sloane will be a great comfort, of course," agreed Anne sarcastically; whereupon both those irresponsible damsels laughed. Diana knew exactly what Anne thought of Charlie Sloane; but, despite sundry confidential talks, she did not know just what Anne thought of Gilbert Blythe. To be sure, Anne herself did not know that.

"The boys may be boarding at the other end of Kingsport, for all I know," Anne went on. "I am glad I'm going to Redmond, and I am sure I shall like it after a while. But for the first few weeks I know I won't. I shan't even have the comfort of looking forward to the weekend visit home, as I had when I went to Queen's. Christmas will seem like a thousand years away."

"Everything is changing — or going to change," said Diana sadly. "I have a feeling that things will never be the same again, Anne."

"We have come to a parting of the ways, I suppose," said Anne thoughtfully. "We had to come to it. Do you think, Diana, that being grownup is really as nice as we used to imagine it would be when we were children?"

"I don't know — there are SOME nice things about it," answered Diana, again caressing her ring with that little smile which always had the effect of making Anne feel suddenly left out and inexperienced. "But there are so many puzzling things, too. Sometimes I feel as if being grownup just frightened me — and then I would give anything to be a little girl again."

"I suppose we'll get used to being grownup in time," said Anne cheerfully. "There won't be so many unexpected things about it by and by — though, after all, I fancy it's the unexpected things that give spice to life. We're eighteen, Diana. In two more years we'll be twenty. When I was ten I thought twenty was a green old age. In no time you'll be a staid, middle-aged matron, and I shall be nice, old maid Aunt Anne, coming to visit you

on vacations. You'll always keep a corner for me, won't you, Di darling? Not the spare room, of course — old maids can't aspire to spare rooms, and I shall be as 'umble as Uriah Heep, and quite content with a little over-the-porch or off-the-parlor cubby hole."

"What nonsense you do talk, Anne," laughed Diana. "You'll marry somebody splendid and handsome and rich — and no spare room in Avonlea will be half gorgeous enough for you — and you'll turn up your nose at all the friends of your youth."

"That would be a pity; my nose is quite nice, but I fear turning it up would spoil it," said Anne, patting that shapely organ. "I haven't so many good features that I could afford to spoil those I have; so, even if I should marry the King of the Cannibal Islands, I promise you I won't turn up my nose at you, Diana."

With another gay laugh the girls separated, Diana to return to Orchard Slope, Anne to walk to the Post Office. She found a letter awaiting her there, and when Gilbert Blythe overtook her on the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters she was sparkling with the excitement of it.

"Priscilla Grant is going to Redmond, too," she exclaimed. "Isn't that splendid? I hoped she would, but she didn't think her father would consent. He has, however, and we're to board together. I feel that I can face an army with banners — or all the professors of Redmond in one fell phalanx — with a chum like Priscilla by my side."

"I think we'll like Kingsport," said Gilbert. "It's a nice old burg, they tell me, and has the finest natural park in the world. I've heard that the scenery in it is magnificent."

"I wonder if it will be — can be — any more beautiful than this," murmured Anne, looking around her with the loving, enraptured eyes of those to whom "home" must always be the loveliest spot in the world, no matter what fairer lands may lie under alien stars.

They were leaning on the bridge of the old pond, drinking deep of the enchantment of the dusk, just at the spot where Anne had climbed from

her sinking Dory on the day Elaine floated down to Camelot. The fine, empurpling dye of sunset still stained the western skies, but the moon was rising and the water lay like a great, silver dream in her light. Remembrance wove a sweet and subtle spell over the two young creatures.

“You are very quiet, Anne,” said Gilbert at last.

“I’m afraid to speak or move for fear all this wonderful beauty will vanish just like a broken silence,” breathed Anne.

Gilbert suddenly laid his hand over the slender white one lying on the rail of the bridge. His hazel eyes deepened into darkness, his still boyish lips opened to say something of the dream and hope that thrilled his soul. But Anne snatched her hand away and turned quickly. The spell of the dusk was broken for her.

“I must go home,” she exclaimed, with a rather overdone carelessness. “Marilla had a headache this afternoon, and I’m sure the twins will be in some dreadful mischief by this time. I really shouldn’t have stayed away so long.”

She chattered ceaselessly and inconsequently until they reached the Green Gables lane. Poor Gilbert hardly had a chance to get a word in edgewise. Anne felt rather relieved when they parted. There had been a new, secret self-consciousness in her heart with regard to Gilbert, ever since that fleeting moment of revelation in the garden of Echo Lodge. Something alien had intruded into the old, perfect, schoolday comradeship — something that threatened to mar it.

“I never felt glad to see Gilbert go before,” she thought, half-resentfully, half-sorrowfully, as she walked alone up the lane. “Our friendship will be spoiled if he goes on with this nonsense. It mustn’t be spoiled — I won’t let it. Oh, WHY can’t boys be just sensible!”

Anne had an uneasy doubt that it was not strictly “sensible” that she should still feel on her hand the warm pressure of Gilbert’s, as distinctly as she had felt it for the swift second his had rested there; and still less sensible that the sensation was far from being an unpleasant one — very

different from that which had attended a similar demonstration on Charlie Sloane's part, when she had been sitting out a dance with him at a White Sands party three nights before. Anne shivered over the disagreeable recollection. But all problems connected with infatuated swains vanished from her mind when she entered the homely, unsentimental atmosphere of the Green Gables kitchen where an eight-year-old boy was crying grievously on the sofa.

"What is the matter, Davy?" asked Anne, taking him up in her arms. "Where are Marilla and Dora?"

"Marilla's putting Dora to bed," sobbed Davy, "and I'm crying 'cause Dora fell down the outside cellar steps, heels over head, and scraped all the skin off her nose, and—"

"Oh, well, don't cry about it, dear. Of course, you are sorry for her, but crying won't help her any. She'll be all right tomorrow. Crying never helps any one, Davy-boy, and—"

"I ain't crying 'cause Dora fell down cellar," said Davy, cutting short Anne's wellmeant preachment with increasing bitterness. "I'm crying, cause I wasn't there to see her fall. I'm always missing some fun or other, seems to me."

"Oh, Davy!" Anne choked back an unholy shriek of laughter. "Would you call it fun to see poor little Dora fall down the steps and get hurt?"

"She wasn't MUCH hurt," said Davy, defiantly. "'Course, if she'd been killed I'd have been real sorry, Anne. But the Keiths ain't so easy killed. They're like the Blewetts, I guess. Herb Blewett fell off the hayloft last Wednesday, and rolled right down through the turnip chute into the box stall, where they had a fearful wild, cross horse, and rolled right under his heels. And still he got out alive, with only three bones broke. Mrs. Lynde says there are some folks you can't kill with a meat-axe. Is Mrs. Lynde coming here tomorrow, Anne?"

"Yes, Davy, and I hope you'll be always very nice and good to her."

“I’ll be nice and good. But will she ever put me to bed at nights, Anne?”

“Perhaps. Why?”

“‘Cause,” said Davy very decidedly, “if she does I won’t say my prayers before her like I do before you, Anne.”

“Why not?”

“‘Cause I don’t think it would be nice to talk to God before strangers, Anne. Dora can say hers to Mrs. Lynde if she likes, but I won’t. I’ll wait till she’s gone and then say ‘em. Won’t that be all right, Anne?”

“Yes, if you are sure you won’t forget to say them, Davy-boy.”

“Oh, I won’t forget, you bet. I think saying my prayers is great fun. But it won’t be as good fun saying them alone as saying them to you. I wish you’d stay home, Anne. I don’t see what you want to go away and leave us for.”

“I don’t exactly WANT to, Davy, but I feel I ought to go.”

“If you don’t want to go you needn’t. You’re grown up. When I’m grown up I’m not going to do one single thing I don’t want to do, Anne.”

“All your life, Davy, you’ll find yourself doing things you don’t want to do.”

“I won’t,” said Davy flatly. “Catch me! I have to do things I don’t want to now ‘cause you and Marilla’ll send me to bed if I don’t. But when I grow up you can’t do that, and there’ll be nobody to tell me not to do things. Won’t I have the time! Say, Anne, Milty Boulter says his mother says you’re going to college to see if you can catch a man. Are you, Anne? I want to know.”

For a second Anne burned with resentment. Then she laughed, reminding herself that Mrs. Boulter’s crude vulgarity of thought and speech could not harm her.

“No, Davy, I’m not. I’m going to study and grow and learn about many things.”

“What things?”

““Shoes and ships and sealing wax

And cabbages and kings,””

quoted Anne.

“But if you DID want to catch a man how would you go about it? I want to know,” persisted Davy, for whom the subject evidently possessed a certain fascination.

“You’d better ask Mrs. Boulter,” said Anne thoughtlessly. “I think it’s likely she knows more about the process than I do.”

“I will, the next time I see her,” said Davy gravely.

“Davy! If you do!” cried Anne, realizing her mistake.

“But you just told me to,” protested Davy aggrieved.

“It’s time you went to bed,” decreed Anne, by way of getting out of the scrape.

After Davy had gone to bed Anne wandered down to Victoria Island and sat there alone, curtailed with fine-spun, moonlit gloom, while the water laughed around her in a duet of brook and wind. Anne had always loved that brook. Many a dream had she spun over its sparkling water in days gone by. She forgot lovelorn youths, and the cayenne speeches of malicious neighbors, and all the problems of her girlish existence. In imagination she sailed over storied seas that wash the distant shining shores of “faery lands forlorn,” where lost Atlantis and Elysium lie, with the evening star for pilot, to the land of Heart’s Desire. And she was richer in those dreams than in realities; for things seen pass away, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Chapter I I

Garlands of Autumn

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The following week sped swiftly, crowded with innumerable “last things,” as Anne called them. Goodbye calls had to be made and received, being pleasant or otherwise, according to whether callers and called-upon were heartily in sympathy with Anne’s hopes, or thought she was too much puffed-up over going to college and that it was their duty to “take her down a peg or two.”

The A.V.I.S. gave a farewell party in honor of Anne and Gilbert one evening at the home of Josie Pye, choosing that place, partly because Mr. Pye’s house was large and convenient, partly because it was strongly suspected that the Pye girls would have nothing to do with the affair if their offer of the house for the party was not accepted. It was a very pleasant little time, for the Pye girls were gracious, and said and did nothing to mar the harmony of the occasion — which was not according to their wont. Josie was unusually amiable — so much so that she even remarked condescendingly to Anne,

“Your new dress is rather becoming to you, Anne. Really, you look ALMOST PRETTY in it.”

“How kind of you to say so,” responded Anne, with dancing eyes. Her sense of humor was developing, and the speeches that would have hurt her at fourteen were becoming merely food for amusement now. Josie suspected that Anne was laughing at her behind those wicked eyes; but she contented herself with whispering to Gertie, as they went downstairs, that Anne Shirley would put on more airs than ever now that she was going to college — you’d see!

All the “old crowd” was there, full of mirth and zest and youthful lightheartedness. Diana Barry, rosy and dimpled, shadowed by the faithful Fred; Jane Andrews, neat and sensible and plain; Ruby Gillis, looking her handsomest and brightest in a cream silk blouse, with red geraniums in her golden hair; Gilbert Blythe and Charlie Sloane, both trying to keep as near the elusive Anne as possible; Carrie Sloane, looking pale and melancholy because, so it was reported, her father would not allow Oliver Kimball to come near the place; Moody Spurgeon MacPherson, whose round face and objectionable ears were as round and objectionable as ever; and Billy Andrews, who sat in a corner all the evening, chuckled when any one spoke to him, and watched Anne Shirley with a grin of pleasure on his broad, freckled countenance.

Anne had known beforehand of the party, but she had not known that she and Gilbert were, as the founders of the Society, to be presented with a very complimentary “address” and “tokens of respect” — in her case a volume of Shakespeare’s plays, in Gilbert’s a fountain pen. She was so taken by surprise and pleased by the nice things said in the address, read in Moody Spurgeon’s most solemn and ministerial tones, that the tears quite drowned the sparkle of her big gray eyes. She had worked hard and faithfully for the A.V.I.S., and it warmed the cockles of her heart that the members appreciated her efforts so sincerely. And they were all so nice and friendly and jolly — even the Pye girls had their merits; at that moment Anne loved all the world.

She enjoyed the evening tremendously, but the end of it rather spoiled all. Gilbert again made the mistake of saying something sentimental to her as they ate their supper on the moonlit verandah; and Anne, to punish him, was gracious to Charlie Sloane and allowed the latter to walk home with her. She found, however, that revenge hurts nobody quite so much as the one who tries to inflict it. Gilbert walked airily off with Ruby Gillis, and Anne could hear them laughing and talking gaily as they loitered along in the still, crisp autumn air. They were evidently having the best of good times, while she was horribly bored by Charlie Sloane, who talked unbrokenly on, and never, even by accident, said one thing that was worth listening to. Anne gave an occasional absent “yes” or “no,” and thought how beautiful Ruby had looked that night, how very goggly Charlie’s eyes

were in the moonlight — worse even than by daylight — and that the world, somehow, wasn't quite such a nice place as she had believed it to be earlier in the evening.

"I'm just tired out — that is what is the matter with me," she said, when she thankfully found herself alone in her own room. And she honestly believed it was. But a certain little gush of joy, as from some secret, unknown spring, bubbled up in her heart the next evening, when she saw Gilbert striding down through the Haunted Wood and crossing the old log bridge with that firm, quick step of his. So Gilbert was not going to spend this last evening with Ruby Gillis after all!

"You look tired, Anne," he said.

"I am tired, and, worse than that, I'm disgruntled. I'm tired because I've been packing my trunk and sewing all day. But I'm disgruntled because six women have been here to say goodbye to me, and every one of the six managed to say something that seemed to take the color right out of life and leave it as gray and dismal and cheerless as a November morning."

"Spiteful old cats!" was Gilbert's elegant comment.

"Oh, no, they weren't," said Anne seriously. "That is just the trouble. If they had been spiteful cats I wouldn't have minded them. But they are all nice, kind, motherly souls, who like me and whom I like, and that is why what they said, or hinted, had such undue weight with me. They let me see they thought I was crazy going to Redmond and trying to take a B.A., and ever since I've been wondering if I am. Mrs. Peter Sloane sighed and said she hoped my strength would hold out till I got through; and at once I saw myself a hopeless victim of nervous prostration at the end of my third year; Mrs. Eben Wright said it must cost an awful lot to put in four years at Redmond; and I felt all over me that it was unpardonable of me to squander Marilla's money and my own on such a folly. Mrs. Jasper Bell said she hoped I wouldn't let college spoil me, as it did some people; and I felt in my bones that the end of my four Redmond years would see me a most insufferable creature, thinking I knew it all, and looking down on everything and everybody in Avonlea; Mrs. Elisha Wright said she understood that Redmond girls, especially those who belonged to

Kingsport, were ‘dreadful dressy and stuck-up,’ and she guessed I wouldn’t feel much at home among them; and I saw myself, a snubbed, dowdy, humiliated country girl, shuffling through Redmond’s classic halls in coppertoned boots.”

Anne ended with a laugh and a sigh commingled. With her sensitive nature all disapproval had weight, even the disapproval of those for whose opinions she had scant respect. For the time being life was savorless, and ambition had gone out like a snuffed candle.

“You surely don’t care for what they said,” protested Gilbert. “You know exactly how narrow their outlook on life is, excellent creatures though they are. To do anything THEY have never done is anathema maranatha. You are the first Avonlea girl who has ever gone to college; and you know that all pioneers are considered to be afflicted with moonstruck madness.”

“Oh, I know. But FEELING is so different from KNOWING. My common sense tells me all you can say, but there are times when common sense has no power over me. Common nonsense takes possession of my soul. Really, after Mrs. Elisha went away I hardly had the heart to finish packing.”

“You’re just tired, Anne. Come, forget it all and take a walk with me — a ramble back through the woods beyond the marsh. There should be something there I want to show you.”

“Should be! Don’t you know if it is there?”

“No. I only know it should be, from something I saw there in spring. Come on. We’ll pretend we are two children again and we’ll go the way of the wind.”

They started gaily off. Anne, remembering the unpleasantness of the preceding evening, was very nice to Gilbert; and Gilbert, who was learning wisdom, took care to be nothing save the schoolboy comrade again. Mrs. Lynde and Marilla watched them from the kitchen window.

“That’ll be a match some day,” Mrs. Lynde said approvingly.

Marilla winced slightly. In her heart she hoped it would, but it went against her grain to hear the matter spoken of in Mrs. Lynde's gossip matter-of-fact way.

"They're only children yet," she said shortly.

Mrs. Lynde laughed goodnaturedly.

"Anne is eighteen; I was married when I was that age. We old folks, Marilla, are too much given to thinking children never grow up, that's what. Anne is a young woman and Gilbert's a man, and he worships the ground she walks on, as any one can see. He's a fine fellow, and Anne can't do better. I hope she won't get any romantic nonsense into her head at Redmond. I don't approve of them coeducational places and never did, that's what. I don't believe," concluded Mrs. Lynde solemnly, "that the students at such colleges ever do much else than flirt."

"They must study a little," said Marilla, with a smile.

"Precious little," sniffed Mrs. Rachel. "However, I think Anne will. She never was flirtatious. But she doesn't appreciate Gilbert at his full value, that's what. Oh, I know girls! Charlie Sloane is wild about her, too, but I'd never advise her to marry a Sloane. The Sloanes are good, honest, respectable people, of course. But when all's said and done, they're SLOANES."

Marilla nodded. To an outsider, the statement that Sloanes were Sloanes might not be very illuminating, but she understood. Every village has such a family; good, honest, respectable people they may be, but SLOANES they are and must ever remain, though they speak with the tongues of men and angels.

Gilbert and Anne, happily unconscious that their future was thus being settled by Mrs. Rachel, were sauntering through the shadows of the Haunted Wood. Beyond, the harvest hills were basking in an amber sunset radiance, under a pale, aerial sky of rose and blue. The distant spruce groves were burnished bronze, and their long shadows barred the upland

meadows. But around them a little wind sang among the fir tassels, and in it there was the note of autumn.

“This wood really is haunted now — by old memories,” said Anne, stooping to gather a spray of ferns, bleached to waxen whiteness by frost. “It seems to me that the little girls Diana and I used to be play here still, and sit by the Dryad’s Bubble in the twilights, trysting with the ghosts. Do you know, I can never go up this path in the dusk without feeling a bit of the old fright and shiver? There was one especially horrifying phantom which we created — the ghost of the murdered child that crept up behind you and laid cold fingers on yours. I confess that, to this day, I cannot help fancying its little, furtive footsteps behind me when I come here after nightfall. I’m not afraid of the White Lady or the headless man or the skeletons, but I wish I had never imagined that baby’s ghost into existence. How angry Marilla and Mrs. Barry were over that affair,” concluded Anne, with reminiscent laughter.

The woods around the head of the marsh were full of purple vistas, threaded with gossamers. Past a dour plantation of gnarled spruces and a maple-fringed, sunwarm valley they found the “something” Gilbert was looking for.

“Ah, here it is,” he said with satisfaction.

“An apple tree — and away back here!” exclaimed Anne delightedly.

“Yes, a veritable apple-bearing apple tree, too, here in the very midst of pines and beeches, a mile away from any orchard. I was here one day last spring and found it, all white with blossom. So I resolved I’d come again in the fall and see if it had been apples. See, it’s loaded. They look good, too — tawny as russets but with a dusky red cheek. Most wild seedlings are green and uninviting.”

“I suppose it sprang years ago from some chance-sown seed,” said Anne dreamily. “And how it has grown and flourished and held its own here all alone among aliens, the brave determined thing!”

“Here’s a fallen tree with a cushion of moss. Sit down, Anne — it will serve for a woodland throne. I’ll climb for some apples. They all grow high — the tree had to reach up to the sunlight.”

The apples proved to be delicious. Under the tawny skin was a white, white flesh, faintly veined with red; and, besides their own proper apple taste, they had a certain wild, delightful tang no orchard-grown apple ever possessed.

“The fatal apple of Eden couldn’t have had a rarer flavor,” commented Anne. “But it’s time we were going home. See, it was twilight three minutes ago and now it’s moonlight. What a pity we couldn’t have caught the moment of transformation. But such moments never are caught, I suppose.”

“Let’s go back around the marsh and home by way of Lover’s Lane. Do you feel as disgruntled now as when you started out, Anne?”

“Not I. Those apples have been as manna to a hungry soul. I feel that I shall love Redmond and have a splendid four years there.”

“And after those four years — what?”

“Oh, there’s another bend in the road at their end,” answered Anne lightly. “I’ve no idea what may be around it — I don’t want to have. It’s nicer not to know.”

Lover’s Lane was a dear place that night, still and mysteriously dim in the pale radiance of the moonlight. They loitered through it in a pleasant chummy silence, neither caring to talk.

“If Gilbert were always as he has been this evening how nice and simple everything would be,” reflected Anne.

Gilbert was looking at Anne, as she walked along. In her light dress, with her slender delicacy, she made him think of a white iris.

“I wonder if I can ever make her care for me,” he thought, with a pang of self-distrust.

Chapter II I

Greeting and Farewell

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Charlie Sloane, Gilbert Blythe and Anne Shirley left Avonlea the following Monday morning. Anne had hoped for a fine day. Diana was to drive her to the station and they wanted this, their last drive together for some time, to be a pleasant one. But when Anne went to bed Sunday night the east wind was moaning around Green Gables with an ominous prophecy which was fulfilled in the morning. Anne awoke to find raindrops pattering against her window and shadowing the pond's gray surface with widening rings; hills and sea were hidden in mist, and the whole world seemed dim and dreary. Anne dressed in the cheerless gray dawn, for an early start was necessary to catch the boat train; she struggled against the tears that WOULD well up in her eyes in spite of herself. She was leaving the home that was so dear to her, and something told her that she was leaving it forever, save as a holiday refuge. Things would never be the same again; coming back for vacations would not be living there. And oh, how dear and beloved everything was — that little white porch room, sacred to the dreams of girlhood, the old Snow Queen at the window, the brook in the hollow, the Dryad's Bubble, the Haunted Woods, and Lover's Lane — all the thousand and one dear spots where memories of the old years bided. Could she ever be really happy anywhere else?

Breakfast at Green Gables that morning was a rather doleful meal. Davy, for the first time in his life probably, could not eat, but blubbered shamelessly over his porridge. Nobody else seemed to have much appetite, save Dora, who tucked away her rations comfortably. Dora, like the immortal and most prudent Charlotte, who "went on cutting bread and butter" when her frenzied lover's body had been carried past on a shutter, was one of those fortunate creatures who are seldom disturbed by anything. Even at eight it took a great deal to ruffle Dora's placidity. She was sorry Anne was going away, of course, but was that any reason why

she should fail to appreciate a poached egg on toast? Not at all. And, seeing that Davy could not eat his, Dora ate it for him.

Promptly on time Diana appeared with horse and buggy, her rosy face glowing above her raincoat. The goodbyes had to be said then somehow. Mrs. Lynde came in from her quarters to give Anne a hearty embrace and warn her to be careful of her health, whatever she did. Marilla, brusque and tearless, pecked Anne's cheek and said she supposed they'd hear from her when she got settled. A casual observer might have concluded that Anne's going mattered very little to her — unless said observer had happened to get a good look in her eyes. Dora kissed Anne primly and squeezed out two decorous little tears; but Davy, who had been crying on the back porch step ever since they rose from the table, refused to say goodbye at all. When he saw Anne coming towards him he sprang to his feet, bolted up the back stairs, and hid in a clothes closet, out of which he would not come. His muffled howls were the last sounds Anne heard as she left Green Gables.

It rained heavily all the way to Bright River, to which station they had to go, since the branch line train from Carmody did not connect with the boat train. Charlie and Gilbert were on the station platform when they reached it, and the train was whistling. Anne had just time to get her ticket and trunk check, say a hurried farewell to Diana, and hasten on board. She wished she were going back with Diana to Avonlea; she knew she was going to die of homesickness. And oh, if only that dismal rain would stop pouring down as if the whole world were weeping over summer vanished and joys departed! Even Gilbert's presence brought her no comfort, for Charlie Sloane was there, too, and Sloanishness could be tolerated only in fine weather. It was absolutely insufferable in rain.

But when the boat steamed out of Charlottetown harbor things took a turn for the better. The rain ceased and the sun began to burst out goldenly now and again between the rents in the clouds, burnishing the gray seas with copper-hued radiance, and lighting up the mists that curtained the Island's red shores with gleams of gold foretoking a fine day after all. Besides, Charlie Sloane promptly became so seasick that he had to go below, and Anne and Gilbert were left alone on deck.

“I am very glad that all the Sloanes get seasick as soon as they go on water,” thought Anne mercilessly. “I am sure I couldn’t take my farewell look at the ‘ould sod’ with Charlie standing there pretending to look sentimentally at it, too.”

“Well, we’re off,” remarked Gilbert unsentimentally.

“Yes, I feel like Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’ — only it isn’t really my ‘native shore’ that I’m watching,” said Anne, winking her gray eyes vigorously. “Nova Scotia is that, I suppose. But one’s native shore is the land one loves the best, and that’s good old P.E.I. for me. I can’t believe I didn’t always live here. Those eleven years before I came seem like a bad dream. It’s seven years since I crossed on this boat — the evening Mrs. Spencer brought me over from Hopetown. I can see myself, in that dreadful old wincey dress and faded sailor hat, exploring decks and cabins with enraptured curiosity. It was a fine evening; and how those red Island shores did gleam in the sunshine. Now I’m crossing the strait again. Oh, Gilbert, I do hope I’ll like Redmond and Kingsport, but I’m sure I won’t!”

“Where’s all your philosophy gone, Anne?”

“It’s all submerged under a great, swamping wave of loneliness and homesickness. I’ve longed for three years to go to Redmond — and now I’m going — and I wish I weren’t! Never mind! I shall be cheerful and philosophical again after I have just one good cry. I MUST have that, ‘as a went’ — and I’ll have to wait until I get into my boardinghouse bed tonight, wherever it may be, before I can have it. Then Anne will be herself again. I wonder if Davy has come out of the closet yet.”

It was nine that night when their train reached Kingsport, and they found themselves in the blue-white glare of the crowded station. Anne felt horribly bewildered, but a moment later she was seized by Priscilla Grant, who had come to Kingsport on Saturday.

“Here you are, beloved! And I suppose you’re as tired as I was when I got here Saturday night.”

“Tired! Priscilla, don’t talk of it. I’m tired, and green, and provincial, and only about ten years old. For pity’s sake take your poor, broken-down chum to some place where she can hear herself think.”

“I’ll take you right up to our boardinghouse. I’ve a cab ready outside.”

“It’s such a blessing you’re here, Prissy. If you weren’t I think I should just sit down on my suitcase, here and now, and weep bitter tears. What a comfort one familiar face is in a howling wilderness of strangers!”

“Is that Gilbert Blythe over there, Anne? How he has grown up this past year! He was only a schoolboy when I taught in Carmody. And of course that’s Charlie Sloane. HE hasn’t changed — couldn’t! He looked just like that when he was born, and he’ll look like that when he’s eighty. This way, dear. We’ll be home in twenty minutes.”

“Home!” groaned Anne. “You mean we’ll be in some horrible boardinghouse, in a still more horrible hall bedroom, looking out on a dingy back yard.”

“It isn’t a horrible boardinghouse, Anne-girl. Here’s our cab. Hop in — the driver will get your trunk. Oh, yes, the boardinghouse — it’s really a very nice place of its kind, as you’ll admit tomorrow morning when a good night’s sleep has turned your blues rosy pink. It’s a big, old-fashioned, gray stone house on St. John Street, just a nice little constitutional from Redmond. It used to be the ‘residence’ of great folk, but fashion has deserted St. John Street and its houses only dream now of better days. They’re so big that people living in them have to take boarders just to fill up. At least, that is the reason our landladies are very anxious to impress on us. They’re delicious, Anne — our landladies, I mean.”

“How many are there?”

“Two. Miss Hannah Harvey and Miss Ada Harvey. They were born twins about fifty years ago.”

“I can’t get away from twins, it seems,” smiled Anne. “Wherever I go they confront me.”

“Oh, they’re not twins now, dear. After they reached the age of thirty they never were twins again. Miss Hannah has grown old, not too gracefully, and Miss Ada has stayed thirty, less gracefully still. I don’t know whether Miss Hannah can smile or not; I’ve never caught her at it so far, but Miss Ada smiles all the time and that’s worse. However, they’re nice, kind souls, and they take two boarders every year because Miss Hannah’s economical soul cannot bear to ‘waste room space’ — not because they need to or have to, as Miss Ada has told me seven times since Saturday night. As for our rooms, I admit they are hall bedrooms, and mine does look out on the back yard. Your room is a front one and looks out on Old St. John’s graveyard, which is just across the street.”

“That sounds gruesome,” shivered Anne. “I think I’d rather have the back yard view.”

“Oh, no, you wouldn’t. Wait and see. Old St. John’s is a darling place. It’s been a graveyard so long that it’s ceased to be one and has become one of the sights of Kingsport. I was all through it yesterday for a pleasure exertion. There’s a big stone wall and a row of enormous trees all around it, and rows of trees all through it, and the queerest old tombstones, with the queerest and quaintest inscriptions. You’ll go there to study, Anne, see if you don’t. Of course, nobody is ever buried there now. But a few years ago they put up a beautiful monument to the memory of Nova Scotian soldiers who fell in the Crimean War. It is just opposite the entrance gates and there’s ‘scope for imagination’ in it, as you used to say. Here’s your trunk at last — and the boys coming to say good night. Must I really shake hands with Charlie Sloane, Anne? His hands are always so cold and fishy-feeling. We must ask them to call occasionally. Miss Hannah gravely told me we could have ‘young gentlemen callers’ two evenings in the week, if they went away at a reasonable hour; and Miss Ada asked me, smiling, please to be sure they didn’t sit on her beautiful cushions. I promised to see to it; but goodness knows where else they CAN sit, unless they sit on the floor, for there are cushions on EVERYTHING. Miss Ada even has an elaborate Battenburg one on top of the piano.”

Anne was laughing by this time. Priscilla’s gay chatter had the intended effect of cheering her up; homesickness vanished for the time being, and

did not even return in full force when she finally found herself alone in her little bedroom. She went to her window and looked out. The street below was dim and quiet. Across it the moon was shining above the trees in Old St. John's, just behind the great dark head of the lion on the monument. Anne wondered if it could have been only that morning that she had left Green Gables. She had the sense of a long passage of time which one day of change and travel gives.

"I suppose that very moon is looking down on Green Gables now," she mused. "But I won't think about it — that way homesickness lies. I'm not even going to have my good cry. I'll put that off to a more convenient season, and just now I'll go calmly and sensibly to bed and to sleep."

Chapter I V

April's Lady

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Kingsport is a quaint old town, harking back to early Colonial days, and wrapped in its ancient atmosphere, as some fine old dame in garments fashioned like those of her youth. Here and there it sprouts out into modernity, but at heart it is still unspoiled; it is full of curious relics, and haloed by the romance of many legends of the past. Once it was a mere frontier station on the fringe of the wilderness, and those were the days when Indians kept life from being monotonous to the settlers. Then it grew to be a bone of contention between the British and the French, being occupied now by the one and now by the other, emerging from each occupation with some fresh scar of battling nations branded on it.

It has in its park a martello tower, autographed all over by tourists, a dismantled old French fort on the hills beyond the town, and several antiquated cannon in its public squares. It has other historic spots also, which may be hunted out by the curious, and none is more quaint and delightful than Old St. John's Cemetery at the very core of the town, with streets of quiet, old-time houses on two sides, and busy, bustling, modern thoroughfares on the others. Every citizen of Kingsport feels a thrill of possessive pride in Old St. John's, for, if he be of any pretensions at all, he has an ancestor buried there, with a queer, crooked slab at his head, or else sprawling protectively over the grave, on which all the main facts of his history are recorded. For the most part no great art or skill was lavished on those old tombstones. The larger number are of roughly chiselled brown or gray native stone, and only in a few cases is there any attempt at ornamentation. Some are adorned with skull and cross-bones, and this grizzly decoration is frequently coupled with a cherub's head. Many are prostrate and in ruins. Into almost all Time's tooth has been gnawing, until some inscriptions have been completely effaced, and others can only be deciphered with difficulty. The graveyard is very full and very bowery, for

it is surrounded and intersected by rows of elms and willows, beneath whose shade the sleepers must lie very dreamlessly, forever crooned to by the winds and leaves over them, and quite undisturbed by the clamor of traffic just beyond.

Anne took the first of many rambles in Old St. John's the next afternoon. She and Priscilla had gone to Redmond in the forenoon and registered as students, after which there was nothing more to do that day. The girls gladly made their escape, for it was not exhilarating to be surrounded by crowds of strangers, most of whom had a rather alien appearance, as if not quite sure where they belonged.

The "freshettes" stood about in detached groups of two or three, looking askance at each other; the "freshies," wiser in their day and generation, had banded themselves together on the big staircase of the entrance hall, where they were shouting out glees with all the vigor of youthful lungs, as a species of defiance to their traditional enemies, the Sophomores, a few of whom were prowling loftily about, looking properly disdainful of the "unlicked cubs" on the stairs. Gilbert and Charlie were nowhere to be seen.

"Little did I think the day would ever come when I'd be glad of the sight of a Sloane," said Priscilla, as they crossed the campus, "but I'd welcome Charlie's goggle eyes almost ecstatically. At least, they'd be familiar eyes."

"Oh," sighed Anne. "I can't describe how I felt when I was standing there, waiting my turn to be registered — as insignificant as the teeniest drop in a most enormous bucket. It's bad enough to feel insignificant, but it's unbearable to have it grained into your soul that you will never, can never, be anything but insignificant, and that is how I did feel — as if I were invisible to the naked eye and some of those Sophs might step on me. I knew I would go down to my grave unwept, unhonored and unsung."

"Wait till next year," comforted Priscilla. "Then we'll be able to look as bored and sophisticated as any Sophomore of them all. No doubt it is rather dreadful to feel insignificant; but I think it's better than to feel as big and awkward as I did — as if I were sprawled all over Redmond. That's how I felt — I suppose because I was a good two inches taller than

any one else in the crowd. I wasn't afraid a Soph might walk over me; I was afraid they'd take me for an elephant, or an overgrown sample of a potato-fed Islander."

"I suppose the trouble is we can't forgive big Redmond for not being little Queen's," said Anne, gathering about her the shreds of her old cheerful philosophy to cover her nakedness of spirit. "When we left Queen's we knew everybody and had a place of our own. I suppose we have been unconsciously expecting to take life up at Redmond just where we left off at Queen's, and now we feel as if the ground had slipped from under our feet. I'm thankful that neither Mrs. Lynde nor Mrs. Elisha Wright know, or ever will know, my state of mind at present. They would exult in saying 'I told you so,' and be convinced it was the beginning of the end. Whereas it is just the end of the beginning."

"Exactly. That sounds more Anneish. In a little while we'll be acclimated and acquainted, and all will be well. Anne, did you notice the girl who stood alone just outside the door of the coeds' dressing room all the morning — the pretty one with the brown eyes and crooked mouth?"

"Yes, I did. I noticed her particularly because she seemed the only creature there who LOOKED as lonely and friendless as I FELT. I had YOU, but she had no one."

"I think she felt pretty all-by-herselfish, too. Several times I saw her make a motion as if to cross over to us, but she never did it — too shy, I suppose. I wished she would come. If I hadn't felt so much like the aforesaid elephant I'd have gone to her. But I couldn't lumber across that big hall with all those boys howling on the stairs. She was the prettiest freshette I saw today, but probably favor is deceitful and even beauty is vain on your first day at Redmond," concluded Priscilla with a laugh.

"I'm going across to Old St. John's after lunch," said Anne. "I don't know that a graveyard is a very good place to go to get cheered up, but it seems the only get-at-able place where there are trees, and trees I must have. I'll sit on one of those old slabs and shut my eyes and imagine I'm in the Avonlea woods."

Anne did not do that, however, for she found enough of interest in Old St. John's to keep her eyes wide open. They went in by the entrance gates, past the simple, massive, stone arch surmounted by the great lion of England.

“And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,

And those bleak heights henceforth shall be famous in story,”

quoted Anne, looking at it with a thrill. They found themselves in a dim, cool, green place where winds were fond of purring. Up and down the long grassy aisles they wandered, reading the quaint, voluminous epitaphs, carved in an age that had more leisure than our own.

“Here lieth the body of Albert Crawford, Esq.,” read Anne from a worn, gray slab, “for many years Keeper of His Majesty's Ordnance at Kingsport. He served in the army till the peace of 1763, when he retired from bad health. He was a brave officer, the best of husbands, the best of fathers, the best of friends. He died October 29th, 1792, aged 84 years.’ There's an epitaph for you, Prissy. There is certainly some ‘scope for imagination’ in it. How full such a life must have been of adventure! And as for his personal qualities, I'm sure human eulogy couldn't go further. I wonder if they told him he was all those best things while he was alive.”

“Here's another,” said Priscilla. “Listen —

‘To the memory of Alexander Ross, who died on the 22nd of September, 1840, aged 43 years. This is raised as a tribute of affection by one whom he served so faithfully for 27 years that he was regarded as a friend, deserving the fullest confidence and attachment.’”

“A very good epitaph,” commented Anne thoughtfully. “I wouldn't wish a better. We are all servants of some sort, and if the fact that we are faithful can be truthfully inscribed on our tombstones nothing more need be added. Here's a sorrowful little gray stone, Prissy—‘to the memory of a favorite child.’ And here is another ‘erected to the memory of one who is buried elsewhere.’ I wonder where that unknown grave is. Really, Pris, the graveyards of today will never be as interesting as this. You were right — I

shall come here often. I love it already. I see we're not alone here — there's a girl down at the end of this avenue."

"Yes, and I believe it's the very girl we saw at Redmond this morning. I've been watching her for five minutes. She has started to come up the avenue exactly half a dozen times, and half a dozen times has she turned and gone back. Either she's dreadfully shy or she has got something on her conscience. Let's go and meet her. It's easier to get acquainted in a graveyard than at Redmond, I believe."

They walked down the long grassy arcade towards the stranger, who was sitting on a gray slab under an enormous willow. She was certainly very pretty, with a vivid, irregular, bewitching type of prettiness. There was a gloss as of brown nuts on her satin-smooth hair and a soft, ripe glow on her round cheeks. Her eyes were big and brown and velvety, under oddly-pointed black brows, and her crooked mouth was rose-red. She wore a smart brown suit, with two very modish little shoes peeping from beneath it; and her hat of dull pink straw, wreathed with golden-brown poppies, had the indefinable, unmistakable air which pertains to the "creation" of an artist in millinery. Priscilla had a sudden stinging consciousness that her own hat had been trimmed by her village store milliner, and Anne wondered uncomfortably if the blouse she had made herself, and which Mrs. Lynde had fitted, looked VERY countrified and homemade besides the stranger's smart attire. For a moment both girls felt like turning back.

But they had already stopped and turned towards the gray slab. It was too late to retreat, for the browneyed girl had evidently concluded that they were coming to speak to her. Instantly she sprang up and came forward with outstretched hand and a gay, friendly smile in which there seemed not a shadow of either shyness or burdened conscience.

"Oh, I want to know who you two girls are," she exclaimed eagerly. "I've been DYING to know. I saw you at Redmond this morning. Say, wasn't it AWFUL there? For the time I wished I had stayed home and got married."

Anne and Priscilla both broke into unconstrained laughter at this unexpected conclusion. The browneyed girl laughed, too.

“I really did. I COULD have, you know. Come, let’s all sit down on this gravestone and get acquainted. It won’t be hard. I know we’re going to adore each other — I knew it as soon as I saw you at Redmond this morning. I wanted so much to go right over and hug you both.”

“Why didn’t you?” asked Priscilla.

“Because I simply couldn’t make up my mind to do it. I never can make up my mind about anything myself — I’m always afflicted with indecision. Just as soon as I decide to do something I feel in my bones that another course would be the correct one. It’s a dreadful misfortune, but I was born that way, and there is no use in blaming me for it, as some people do. So I couldn’t make up my mind to go and speak to you, much as I wanted to.”

“We thought you were too shy,” said Anne.

“No, no, dear. Shyness isn’t among the many failings — or virtues — of Philippa Gordon — Phil for short. Do call me Phil right off. Now, what are your handles?”

“She’s Priscilla Grant,” said Anne, pointing.

“And SHE’S Anne Shirley,” said Priscilla, pointing in turn.

“And we’re from the Island,” said both together.

“I hail from Bolingbroke, Nova Scotia,” said Philippa.

“Bolingbroke!” exclaimed Anne. “Why, that is where I was born.”

“Do you really mean it? Why, that makes you a Bluenose after all.”

“No, it doesn’t,” retorted Anne. “Wasn’t it Dan O’Connell who said that if a man was born in a stable it didn’t make him a horse? I’m Island to the core.”

“Well, I’m glad you were born in Bolingbroke anyway. It makes us kind of neighbors, doesn’t it? And I like that, because when I tell you secrets it won’t be as if I were telling them to a stranger. I have to tell them. I can’t

keep secrets — it's no use to try. That's my worst failing — that, and indecision, as aforesaid. Would you believe it? — it took me half an hour to decide which hat to wear when I was coming here — HERE, to a graveyard! At first I inclined to my brown one with the feather; but as soon as I put it on I thought this pink one with the floppy brim would be more becoming. When I got IT pinned in place I liked the brown one better. At last I put them close together on the bed, shut my eyes, and jabbed with a hat pin. The pin speared the pink one, so I put it on. It is becoming, isn't it? Tell me, what do you think of my looks?"

At this naive demand, made in a perfectly serious tone, Priscilla laughed again. But Anne said, impulsively squeezing Philippa's hand,

"We thought this morning that you were the prettiest girl we saw at Redmond."

Philippa's crooked mouth flashed into a bewitching, crooked smile over very white little teeth.

"I thought that myself," was her next astounding statement, "but I wanted some one else's opinion to bolster mine up. I can't decide even on my own appearance. Just as soon as I've decided that I'm pretty I begin to feel miserably that I'm not. Besides, have a horrible old great-aunt who is always saying to me, with a mournful sigh, 'You were such a pretty baby. It's strange how children change when they grow up.' I adore aunts, but I detest great-aunts. Please tell me quite often that I am pretty, if you don't mind. I feel so much more comfortable when I can believe I'm pretty. And I'll be just as obliging to you if you want me to — I CAN be, with a clear conscience."

"Thanks," laughed Anne, "but Priscilla and I are so firmly convinced of our own good looks that we don't need any assurance about them, so you needn't trouble."

"Oh, you're laughing at me. I know you think I'm abominably vain, but I'm not. There really isn't one spark of vanity in me. And I'm never a bit grudging about paying compliments to other girls when they deserve them. I'm so glad I know you folks. I came up on Saturday and I've nearly died

of homesickness ever since. It's a horrible feeling, isn't it? In Bolingbroke I'm an important personage, and in Kingsport I'm just nobody! There were times when I could feel my soul turning a delicate blue. Where do you hang out?"

"Thirty-eight St. John's Street."

"Better and better. Why, I'm just around the corner on Wallace Street. I don't like my boardinghouse, though. It's bleak and lonesome, and my room looks out on such an unholy back yard. It's the ugliest place in the world. As for cats — well, surely ALL the Kingsport cats can't congregate there at night, but half of them must. I adore cats on hearth rugs, snoozing before nice, friendly fires, but cats in back yards at midnight are totally different animals. The first night I was here I cried all night, and so did the cats. You should have seen my nose in the morning. How I wished I had never left home!"

"I don't know how you managed to make up your mind to come to Redmond at all, if you are really such an undecided person," said amused Priscilla.

"Bless your heart, honey, I didn't. It was father who wanted me to come here. His heart was set on it — why, I don't know. It seems perfectly ridiculous to think of me studying for a B.A. degree, doesn't it? Not but what I can do it, all right. I have heaps of brains."

"Oh!" said Priscilla vaguely.

"Yes. But it's such hard work to use them. And B.A.'s are such learned, dignified, wise, solemn creatures — they must be. No, I didn't want to come to Redmond. I did it just to oblige father. He IS such a duck. Besides, I knew if I stayed home I'd have to get married. Mother wanted that — wanted it decidedly. Mother has plenty of decision. But I really hated the thought of being married for a few years yet. I want to have heaps of fun before I settle down. And, ridiculous as the idea of my being a B.A. is, the idea of my being an old married woman is still more absurd, isn't it? I'm only eighteen. No, I concluded I would rather come to

Redmond than be married. Besides, how could I ever have made up my mind which man to marry?"

"Were there so many?" laughed Anne.

"Heaps. The boys like me awfully — they really do. But there were only two that mattered. The rest were all too young and too poor. I must marry a rich man, you know."

"Why must you?"

"Honey, you couldn't imagine ME being a poor man's wife, could you? I can't do a single useful thing, and I am VERY extravagant. Oh, no, my husband must have heaps of money. So that narrowed them down to two. But I couldn't decide between two any easier than between two hundred. I knew perfectly well that whichever one I chose I'd regret all my life that I hadn't married the other."

"Didn't you — love — either of them?" asked Anne, a little hesitatingly. It was not easy for her to speak to a stranger of the great mystery and transformation of life.

"Goodness, no. I couldn't love anybody. It isn't in me. Besides I wouldn't want to. Being in love makes you a perfect slave, I think. And it would give a man such power to hurt you. I'd be afraid. No, no, Alec and Alonzo are two dear boys, and I like them both so much that I really don't know which I like the better. That is the trouble. Alec is the best looking, of course, and I simply couldn't marry a man who wasn't handsome. He is good-tempered too, and has lovely, curly, black hair. He's rather too perfect — I don't believe I'd like a perfect husband — somebody I could never find fault with."

"Then why not marry Alonzo?" asked Priscilla gravely.

"Think of marrying a name like Alonzo!" said Phil dolefully. "I don't believe I could endure it. But he has a classic nose, and it WOULD be a comfort to have a nose in the family that could be depended on. I can't depend on mine. So far, it takes after the Gordon pattern, but I'm so afraid

it will develop Byrne tendencies as I grow older. I examine it every day anxiously to make sure it's still Gordon. Mother was a Byrne and has the Byrne nose in the Byrnest degree. Wait till you see it. I adore nice noses. Your nose is awfully nice, Anne Shirley. Alonzo's nose nearly turned the balance in his favor. But ALONZO! No, I couldn't decide. If I could have done as I did with the hats — stood them both up together, shut my eyes, and jabbed with a hatpin — it would have been quite easy."

"What did Alec and Alonzo feel like when you came away?" queried Priscilla.

"Oh, they still have hope. I told them they'd have to wait till I could make up my mind. They're quite willing to wait. They both worship me, you know. Meanwhile, I intend to have a good time. I expect I shall have heaps of beaux at Redmond. I can't be happy unless I have, you know. But don't you think the freshmen are fearfully homely? I saw only one really handsome fellow among them. He went away before you came. I heard his chum call him Gilbert. His chum had eyes that stuck out THAT FAR. But you're not going yet, girls? Don't go yet."

"I think we must," said Anne, rather coldly. "It's getting late, and I've some work to do."

"But you'll both come to see me, won't you?" asked Philippa, getting up and putting an arm around each. "And let me come to see you. I want to be chummy with you. I've taken such a fancy to you both. And I haven't quite disgusted you with my frivolity, have I?"

"Not quite," laughed Anne, responding to Phil's squeeze, with a return of cordiality.

"Because I'm not half so silly as I seem on the surface, you know. You just accept Philippa Gordon, as the Lord made her, with all her faults, and I believe you'll come to like her. Isn't this graveyard a sweet place? I'd love to be buried here. Here's a grave I didn't see before — this one in the iron railing — oh, girls, look, see — the stone says it's the grave of a middy who was killed in the fight between the Shannon and the Chesapeake. Just fancy!"

Anne paused by the railing and looked at the worn stone, her pulses thrilling with sudden excitement. The old graveyard, with its overarching trees and long aisles of shadows, faded from her sight. Instead, she saw the Kingsport Harbor of nearly a century ago. Out of the mist came slowly a great frigate, brilliant with “the meteor flag of England.” Behind her was another, with a still, heroic form, wrapped in his own starry flag, lying on the quarter deck — the gallant Lawrence. Time’s finger had turned back his pages, and that was the Shannon sailing triumphant up the bay with the Chesapeake as her prize.

“Come back, Anne Shirley — come back,” laughed Philippa, pulling her arm. “You’re a hundred years away from us. Come back.”

Anne came back with a sigh; her eyes were shining softly.

“I’ve always loved that old story,” she said, “and although the English won that victory, I think it was because of the brave, defeated commander I love it. This grave seems to bring it so near and make it so real. This poor little middy was only eighteen. He ‘died of desperate wounds received in gallant action’ — so reads his epitaph. It is such as a soldier might wish for.”

Before she turned away, Anne unpinned the little cluster of purple pansies she wore and dropped it softly on the grave of the boy who had perished in the great sea-duel.

“Well, what do you think of our new friend?” asked Priscilla, when Phil had left them.

“I like her. There is something very lovable about her, in spite of all her nonsense. I believe, as she says herself, that she isn’t half as silly as she sounds. She’s a dear, kissable baby — and I don’t know that she’ll ever really grow up.”

“I like her, too,” said Priscilla, decidedly. “She talks as much about boys as Ruby Gillis does. But it always enrages or sickens me to hear Ruby, whereas I just wanted to laugh goodnaturedly at Phil. Now, what is the why of that?”

“There is a difference,” said Anne meditatively. “I think it’s because Ruby is really so CONSCIOUS of boys. She plays at love and lovemaking. Besides, you feel, when she is boasting of her beaux that she is doing it to rub it well into you that you haven’t half so many. Now, when Phil talks of her beaux it sounds as if she was just speaking of chums. She really looks upon boys as good comrades, and she is pleased when she has dozens of them tagging round, simply because she likes to be popular and to be thought popular. Even Alex and Alonzo — I’ll never be able to think of those two names separately after this — are to her just two playfellows who want her to play with them all their lives. I’m glad we met her, and I’m glad we went to Old St. John’s. I believe I’ve put forth a tiny soul-root into Kingsport soil this afternoon. I hope so. I hate to feel transplanted.”

Chapter V

Letters from Home

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For the next three weeks Anne and Priscilla continued to feel as strangers in a strange land. Then, suddenly, everything seemed to fall into focus — Redmond, professors, classes, students, studies, social doings. Life became homogeneous again, instead of being made up of detached fragments. The Freshmen, instead of being a collection of unrelated individuals, found themselves a class, with a class spirit, a class yell, class interests, class antipathies and class ambitions. They won the day in the annual “Arts Rush” against the Sophomores, and thereby gained the respect of all the classes, and an enormous, confidence-giving opinion of themselves. For three years the Sophomores had won in the “rush”; that the victory of this year perched upon the Freshmen’s banner was attributed to the strategic generalship of Gilbert Blythe, who marshalled the campaign and originated certain new tactics, which demoralized the Sophs and swept the Freshmen to triumph. As a reward of merit he was elected president of the Freshman Class, a position of honor and responsibility — from a Fresh point of view, at least — coveted by many. He was also invited to join the “Lambs” — Redmondese for Lambda Theta — a compliment rarely paid to a Freshman. As a preparatory initiation ordeal he had to parade the principal business streets of Kingsport for a whole day wearing a sunbonnet and a voluminous kitchen apron of gaudily flowered calico. This he did cheerfully, doffing his sunbonnet with courtly grace when he met ladies of his acquaintance. Charlie Sloane, who had not been asked to join the Lambs, told Anne he did not see how Blythe could do it, and HE, for his part, could never humiliate himself so.

“Fancy Charlie Sloane in a ‘caliker’ apron and a ‘sunbunnit,’” giggled Priscilla. “He’d look exactly like his old Grandmother Sloane. Gilbert, now, looked as much like a man in them as in his own proper habiliments.”

Anne and Priscilla found themselves in the thick of the social life of Redmond. That this came about so speedily was due in great measure to Philippa Gordon. Philippa was the daughter of a rich and well-known man, and belonged to an old and exclusive “Bluenose” family. This, combined with her beauty and charm — a charm acknowledged by all who met her — promptly opened the gates of all cliques, clubs and classes in Redmond to her; and where she went Anne and Priscilla went, too. Phil “adored” Anne and Priscilla, especially Anne. She was a loyal little soul, crystal-free from any form of snobbishness. “Love me, love my friends” seemed to be her unconscious motto. Without effort, she took them with her into her ever widening circle of acquaintanceship, and the two Avonlea girls found their social pathway at Redmond made very easy and pleasant for them, to the envy and wonderment of the other freshettes, who, lacking Philippa’s sponsorship, were doomed to remain rather on the fringe of things during their first college year.

To Anne and Priscilla, with their more serious views of life, Phil remained the amusing, lovable baby she had seemed on their first meeting. Yet, as she said herself, she had “heaps” of brains. When or where she found time to study was a mystery, for she seemed always in demand for some kind of “fun,” and her home evenings were crowded with callers. She had all the “beaux” that heart could desire, for nine-tenths of the Freshmen and a big fraction of all the other classes were rivals for her smiles. She was naively delighted over this, and gleefully recounted each new conquest to Anne and Priscilla, with comments that might have made the unlucky lover’s ears burn fiercely.

“Alec and Alonzo don’t seem to have any serious rival yet,” remarked Anne, teasingly.

“Not one,” agreed Philippa. “I write them both every week and tell them all about my young men here. I’m sure it must amuse them. But, of course, the one I like best I can’t get. Gilbert Blythe won’t take any notice of me, except to look at me as if I were a nice little kitten he’d like to pat. Too well I know the reason. I owe you a grudge, Queen Anne. I really ought to hate you and instead I love you madly, and I’m miserable if I don’t see you every day. You’re different from any girl I ever knew before. When you

look at me in a certain way I feel what an insignificant, frivolous little beast I am, and I long to be better and wiser and stronger. And then I make good resolutions; but the first nicelooking mannie who comes my way knocks them all out of my head. Isn't college life magnificent? It's so funny to think I hated it that first day. But if I hadn't I might never got really acquainted with you. Anne, please tell me over again that you like me a little bit. I yearn to hear it."

"I like you a big bit — and I think you're a dear, sweet, adorable, velvety, clawless, little — kitten," laughed Anne, "but I don't see when you ever get time to learn your lessons."

Phil must have found time for she held her own in every class of her year. Even the grumpy old professor of Mathematics, who detested coeds, and had bitterly opposed their admission to Redmond, couldn't floor her. She led the freshettes everywhere, except in English, where Anne Shirley left her far behind. Anne herself found the studies of her Freshman year very easy, thanks in great part to the steady work she and Gilbert had put in during those two past years in Avonlea. This left her more time for a social life which she thoroughly enjoyed. But never for a moment did she forget Avonlea and the friends there. To her, the happiest moments in each week were those in which letters came from home. It was not until she had got her first letters that she began to think she could ever like Kingsport or feel at home there. Before they came, Avonlea had seemed thousands of miles away; those letters brought it near and linked the old life to the new so closely that they began to seem one and the same, instead of two hopelessly segregated existences. The first batch contained six letters, from Jane Andrews, Ruby Gillis, Diana Barry, Marilla, Mrs. Lynde and Davy. Jane's was a copperplate production, with every "t" nicely crossed and every "i" precisely dotted, and not an interesting sentence in it. She never mentioned the school, concerning which Anne was avid to hear; she never answered one of the questions Anne had asked in her letter. But she told Anne how many yards of lace she had recently crocheted, and the kind of weather they were having in Avonlea, and how she intended to have her new dress made, and the way she felt when her head ached. Ruby Gillis wrote a gushing epistle deploring Anne's absence, assuring her she was horribly missed in everything, asking what the Redmond "fellows" were

like, and filling the rest with accounts of her own harrowing experiences with her numerous admirers. It was a silly, harmless letter, and Anne would have laughed over it had it not been for the postscript. “Gilbert seems to be enjoying Redmond, judging from his letters,” wrote Ruby. “I don’t think Charlie is so stuck on it.”

So Gilbert was writing to Ruby! Very well. He had a perfect right to, of course. Only — !! Anne did not know that Ruby had written the first letter and that Gilbert had answered it from mere courtesy. She tossed Ruby’s letter aside contemptuously. But it took all Diana’s breezy, newsy, delightful epistle to banish the sting of Ruby’s postscript. Diana’s letter contained a little too much Fred, but was otherwise crowded and crossed with items of interest, and Anne almost felt herself back in Avonlea while reading it. Marilla’s was a rather prim and colorless epistle, severely innocent of gossip or emotion. Yet somehow it conveyed to Anne a whiff of the wholesome, simple life at Green Gables, with its savor of ancient peace, and the steadfast abiding love that was there for her. Mrs. Lynde’s letter was full of church news. Having broken up housekeeping, Mrs. Lynde had more time than ever to devote to church affairs and had flung herself into them heart and soul. She was at present much worked up over the poor “supplies” they were having in the vacant Avonlea pulpit.

“I don’t believe any but fools enter the ministry nowadays,” she wrote bitterly. “Such candidates as they have sent us, and such stuff as they preach! Half of it ain’t true, and, what’s worse, it ain’t sound doctrine. The one we have now is the worst of the lot. He mostly takes a text and preaches about something else. And he says he doesn’t believe all the heathen will be eternally lost. The idea! If they won’t all the money we’ve been giving to Foreign Missions will be clean wasted, that’s what! Last Sunday night he announced that next Sunday he’d preach on the axe-head that swam. I think he’d better confine himself to the Bible and leave sensational subjects alone. Things have come to a pretty pass if a minister can’t find enough in Holy Writ to preach about, that’s what. What church do you attend, Anne? I hope you go regularly. People are apt to get so careless about churchgoing away from home, and I understand college students are great sinners in this respect. I’m told many of them actually study their lessons on Sunday. I hope you’ll never sink that low, Anne.

Remember how you were brought up. And be very careful what friends you make. You never know what sort of creatures are in them colleges. Outwardly they may be as whited sepulchers and inwardly as ravening wolves, that's what. You'd better not have anything to say to any young man who isn't from the Island.

"I forgot to tell you what happened the day the minister called here. It was the funniest thing I ever saw. I said to Marilla, 'If Anne had been here wouldn't she have had a laugh?' Even Marilla laughed. You know he's a very short, fat little man with bow legs. Well, that old pig of Mr. Harrison's — the big, tall one — had wandered over here that day again and broke into the yard, and it got into the back porch, unbeknowns to us, and it was there when the minister appeared in the doorway. It made one wild bolt to get out, but there was nowhere to bolt to except between them bow legs. So there it went, and, being as it was so big and the minister so little, it took him clean off his feet and carried him away. His hat went one way and his cane another, just as Marilla and I got to the door. I'll never forget the look of him. And that poor pig was near scared to death. I'll never be able to read that account in the Bible of the swine that rushed madly down the steep place into the sea without seeing Mr. Harrison's pig careering down the hill with that minister. I guess the pig thought he had the Old Boy on his back instead of inside of him. I was thankful the twins weren't about. It wouldn't have been the right thing for them to have seen a minister in such an undignified predicament. Just before they got to the brook the minister jumped off or fell off. The pig rushed through the brook like mad and up through the woods. Marilla and I run down and helped the minister get up and brush his coat. He wasn't hurt, but he was mad. He seemed to hold Marilla and me responsible for it all, though we told him the pig didn't belong to us, and had been pestering us all summer. Besides, what did he come to the back door for? You'd never have caught Mr. Allan doing that. It'll be a long time before we get a man like Mr. Allan. But it's an ill wind that blows no good. We've never seen hoof or hair of that pig since, and it's my belief we never will.

"Things is pretty quiet in Avonlea. I don't find Green Gables as lonesome as I expected. I think I'll start another cotton warp quilt this winter. Mrs. Silas Sloane has a handsome new apple-leaf pattern.

“When I feel that I must have some excitement I read the murder trials in that Boston paper my niece sends me. I never used to do it, but they’re real interesting. The States must be an awful place. I hope you’ll never go there, Anne. But the way girls roam over the earth now is something terrible. It always makes me think of Satan in the Book of Job, going to and fro and walking up and down. I don’t believe the Lord ever intended it, that’s what.

“Davy has been pretty good since you went away. One day he was bad and Marilla punished him by making him wear Dora’s apron all day, and then he went and cut all Dora’s aprons up. I spanked him for that and then he went and chased my rooster to death.

“The MacPhersons have moved down to my place. She’s a great housekeeper and very particular. She’s rooted all my June lilies up because she says they make a garden look so untidy. Thomas set them lilies out when we were married. Her husband seems a nice sort of a man, but she can’t get over being an old maid, that’s what.

“Don’t study too hard, and be sure and put your winter underclothes on as soon as the weather gets cool. Marilla worries a lot about you, but I tell her you’ve got a lot more sense than I ever thought you would have at one time, and that you’ll be all right.”

Davy’s letter plunged into a grievance at the start.

“Dear anne, please write and tell marilla not to tie me to the rale of the bridge when I go fishing the boys make fun of me when she does. Its awful lonesome here without you but grate fun in school. Jane andrews is crosser than you. I scared mrs. lynde with a jacky lantern last nite. She was offel mad and she was mad cause I chased her old rooster round the yard till he fell down ded. I didn’t mean to make him fall down ded. What made him die, anne, I want to know. mrs. lynde threw him into the pig pen she mite of sold him to mr. blair. mr. blair is giving 50 sense apeace for good ded roosters now. I herd mrs. lynde asking the minister to pray for her. What did she do that was so bad, anne, I want to know. I’ve got a kite with a magnificent tail, anne. Milty bolter told me a grate story in school yesterday. it is troo. old Joe Mosey and Leon were playing cards one nite

last week in the woods. The cards were on a stump and a big black man bigger than the trees come along and grabbed the cards and the stump and disapered with a noys like thunder. Ill bet they were skared. Milty says the black man was the old harry. was he, anne, I want to know. Mr. kimball over at spenservale is very sick and will have to go to the hospitable. please excuse me while I ask marilla if thats spelled rite. Marilla says its the silem he has to go to not the other place. He thinks he has a snake inside of him. whats it like to have a snake inside of you, anne. I want to know. mrs. lawrence bell is sick to. mrs. lynde says that all that is the matter with her is that she thinks too much about her insides.”

“I wonder,” said Anne, as she folded up her letters, “what Mrs. Lynde would think of Philippa.”

Chapter V I

In the Park

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“What are you going to do with yourselves today, girls?” asked Philippa, popping into Anne’s room one Saturday afternoon.

“We are going for a walk in the park,” answered Anne. “I ought to stay in and finish my blouse. But I couldn’t sew on a day like this. There’s something in the air that gets into my blood and makes a sort of glory in my soul. My fingers would twitch and I’d sew a crooked seam. So it’s ho for the park and the pines.”

“Does ‘we’ include any one but yourself and Priscilla?”

“Yes, it includes Gilbert and Charlie, and we’ll be very glad if it will include you, also.”

“But,” said Philippa dolefully, “if I go I’ll have to be gooseberry, and that will be a new experience for Philippa Gordon.”

“Well, new experiences are broadening. Come along, and you’ll be able to sympathize with all poor souls who have to play gooseberry often. But where are all the victims?”

“Oh, I was tired of them all and simply couldn’t be bothered with any of them today. Besides, I’ve been feeling a little blue — just a pale, elusive azure. It isn’t serious enough for anything darker. I wrote Alec and Alonzo last week. I put the letters into envelopes and addressed them, but I didn’t seal them up. That evening something funny happened. That is, Alec would think it funny, but Alonzo wouldn’t be likely to. I was in a hurry, so I snatched Alec’s letter — as I thought — out of the envelope and scribbled down a postscript. Then I mailed both letters. I got Alonzo’s

reply this morning. Girls, I had put that postscript to his letter and he was furious. Of course he'll get over it — and I don't care if he doesn't — but it spoiled my day. So I thought I'd come to you darlings to get cheered up. After the football season opens I won't have any spare Saturday afternoons. I adore football. I've got the most gorgeous cap and sweater striped in Redmond colors to wear to the games. To be sure, a little way off I'll look like a walking barber's pole. Do you know that that Gilbert of yours has been elected Captain of the Freshman football team?"

"Yes, he told us so last evening," said Priscilla, seeing that outraged Anne would not answer. "He and Charlie were down. We knew they were coming, so we painstakingly put out of sight or out of reach all Miss Ada's cushions. That very elaborate one with the raised embroidery I dropped on the floor in the corner behind the chair it was on. I thought it would be safe there. But would you believe it? Charlie Sloane made for that chair, noticed the cushion behind it, solemnly fished it up, and sat on it the whole evening. Such a wreck of a cushion as it was! Poor Miss Ada asked me today, still smiling, but oh, so reproachfully, why I had allowed it to be sat upon. I told her I hadn't — that it was a matter of predestination coupled with inveterate Sloanishness and I wasn't a match for both combined."

"Miss Ada's cushions are really getting on my nerves," said Anne. "She finished two new ones last week, stuffed and embroidered within an inch of their lives. There being absolutely no other cushionless place to put them she stood them up against the wall on the stair landing. They topple over half the time and if we come up or down the stairs in the dark we fall over them. Last Sunday, when Dr. Davis prayed for all those exposed to the perils of the sea, I added in thought 'and for all those who live in houses where cushions are loved not wisely but too well!' There! we're ready, and I see the boys coming through Old St. John's. Do you cast in your lot with us, Phil?"

"I'll go, if I can walk with Priscilla and Charlie. That will be a bearable degree of gooseberry. That Gilbert of yours is a darling, Anne, but why does he go around so much with Goggle-eyes?"

Anne stiffened. She had no great liking for Charlie Sloane; but he was of Avonlea, so no outsider had any business to laugh at him.

“Charlie and Gilbert have always been friends,” she said coldly. “Charlie is a nice boy. He’s not to blame for his eyes.”

“Don’t tell me that! He is! He must have done something dreadful in a previous existence to be punished with such eyes. Pris and I are going to have such sport with him this afternoon. We’ll make fun of him to his face and he’ll never know it.”

Doubtless, “the abandoned P’s,” as Anne called them, did carry out their amiable intentions. But Sloane was blissfully ignorant; he thought he was quite a fine fellow to be walking with two such coeds, especially Philippa Gordon, the class beauty and belle. It must surely impress Anne. She would see that some people appreciated him at his real value.

Gilbert and Anne loitered a little behind the others, enjoying the calm, still beauty of the autumn afternoon under the pines of the park, on the road that climbed and twisted round the harbor shore.

“The silence here is like a prayer, isn’t it?” said Anne, her face upturned to the shining sky. “How I love the pines! They seem to strike their roots deep into the romance of all the ages. It is so comforting to creep away now and then for a good talk with them. I always feel so happy out here.”

““And so in mountain solitudes o’ertaken

As by some spell divine,

Their cares drop from them like the needles shaken

From out the gusty pine,””

quoted Gilbert.

“They make our little ambitions seem rather petty, don’t they, Anne?”

“I think, if ever any great sorrow came to me, I would come to the pines for comfort,” said Anne dreamily.

“I hope no great sorrow ever will come to you, Anne,” said Gilbert, who could not connect the idea of sorrow with the vivid, joyous creature beside him, unwitting that those who can soar to the highest heights can also plunge to the deepest depths, and that the natures which enjoy most keenly are those which also suffer most sharply.

“But there must — sometime,” mused Anne. “Life seems like a cup of glory held to my lips just now. But there must be some bitterness in it — there is in every cup. I shall taste mine some day. Well, I hope I shall be strong and brave to meet it. And I hope it won’t be through my own fault that it will come. Do you remember what Dr. Davis said last Sunday evening — that the sorrows God sent us brought comfort and strength with them, while the sorrows we brought on ourselves, through folly or wickedness, were by far the hardest to bear? But we mustn’t talk of sorrow on an afternoon like this. It’s meant for the sheer joy of living, isn’t it?”

“If I had my way I’d shut everything out of your life but happiness and pleasure, Anne,” said Gilbert in the tone that meant “danger ahead.”

“Then you would be very unwise,” rejoined Anne hastily. “I’m sure no life can be properly developed and rounded out without some trial and sorrow — though I suppose it is only when we are pretty comfortable that we admit it. Come — the others have got to the pavilion and are beckoning to us.”

They all sat down in the little pavilion to watch an autumn sunset of deep red fire and pallid gold. To their left lay Kingsport, its roofs and spires dim in their shroud of violet smoke. To their right lay the harbor, taking on tints of rose and copper as it stretched out into the sunset. Before them the water shimmered, satin smooth and silver gray, and beyond, clean shaven William’s Island loomed out of the mist, guarding the town like a sturdy bulldog. Its lighthouse beacon flared through the mist like a baleful star, and was answered by another in the far horizon.

“Did you ever see such a strong-looking place?” asked Philippa. “I don’t want William’s Island especially, but I’m sure I couldn’t get it if I did. Look at that sentry on the summit of the fort, right beside the flag. Doesn’t he look as if he had stepped out of a romance?”

“Speaking of romance,” said Priscilla, “we’ve been looking for heather — but, of course, we couldn’t find any. It’s too late in the season, I suppose.”

“Heather!” exclaimed Anne. “Heather doesn’t grow in America, does it?”

“There are just two patches of it in the whole continent,” said Phil, “one right here in the park, and one somewhere else in Nova Scotia, I forget where. The famous Highland Regiment, the Black Watch, camped here one year, and, when the men shook out the straw of their beds in the spring, some seeds of heather took root.”

“Oh, how delightful!” said enchanted Anne.

“Let’s go home around by Spofford Avenue,” suggested Gilbert. “We can see all ‘the handsome houses where the wealthy nobles dwell.’ Spofford Avenue is the finest residential street in Kingsport. Nobody can build on it unless he’s a millionaire.”

“Oh, do,” said Phil. “There’s a perfectly killing little place I want to show you, Anne. IT wasn’t built by a millionaire. It’s the first place after you leave the park, and must have grown while Spofford Avenue was still a country road. It DID grow — it wasn’t built! I don’t care for the houses on the Avenue. They’re too brand new and plateglassy. But this little spot is a dream — and its name — but wait till you see it.”

They saw it as they walked up the pine-fringed hill from the park. Just on the crest, where Spofford Avenue petered out into a plain road, was a little white frame house with groups of pines on either side of it, stretching their arms protectingly over its low roof. It was covered with red and gold vines, through which its green-shuttered windows peeped. Before it was a tiny garden, surrounded by a low stone wall. October though it was, the garden was still very sweet with dear, old-fashioned, unworldly flowers and shrubs — sweet may, southernwood, lemon verbena, alyssum, petunias, marigolds and chrysanthemums. A tiny brick wall, in herringbone pattern, led from the gate to the front porch. The whole place might have been transplanted from some remote country village; yet there was something about it that made its nearest neighbor, the big lawn-encircled palace of a tobacco king, look exceedingly crude and showy and

illbred by contrast. As Phil said, it was the difference between being born and being made.

“It’s the dearest place I ever saw,” said Anne delightedly. “It gives me one of my old, delightful funny aches. It’s dearer and quainter than even Miss Lavendar’s stone house.”

“It’s the name I want you to notice especially,” said Phil. “Look — in white letters, around the archway over the gate. ‘Patty’s Place.’ Isn’t that killing? Especially on this Avenue of Pinehursts and Elmwolds and Cedarcrofts? ‘Patty’s Place,’ if you please! I adore it.”

“Have you any idea who Patty is?” asked Priscilla.

“Patty Spofford is the name of the old lady who owns it, I’ve discovered. She lives there with her niece, and they’ve lived there for hundreds of years, more or less — maybe a little less, Anne. Exaggeration is merely a flight of poetic fancy. I understand that wealthy folk have tried to buy the lot time and again — it’s really worth a small fortune now, you know — but ‘Patty’ won’t sell upon any consideration. And there’s an apple orchard behind the house in place of a back yard — you’ll see it when we get a little past — a real apple orchard on Spofford Avenue!”

“I’m going to dream about ‘Patty’s Place’ tonight,” said Anne. “Why, I feel as if I belonged to it. I wonder if, by any chance, we’ll ever see the inside of it.”

“It isn’t likely,” said Priscilla.

Anne smiled mysteriously.

“No, it isn’t likely. But I believe it will happen. I have a queer, creepy, crawly feeling — you can call it a presentiment, if you like — that ‘Patty’s Place’ and I are going to be better acquainted yet.”

Chapter VI I

Home Again

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Those first three weeks at Redmond had seemed long; but the rest of the term flew by on wings of wind. Before they realized it the Redmond students found themselves in the grind of Christmas examinations, emerging therefrom more or less triumphantly. The honor of leading in the Freshman classes fluctuated between Anne, Gilbert and Philippa; Priscilla did very well; Charlie Sloane scraped through respectably, and comported himself as complacently as if he had led in everything.

“I can’t really believe that this time tomorrow I’ll be in Green Gables,” said Anne on the night before departure. “But I shall be. And you, Phil, will be in Bolingbroke with Alec and Alonzo.”

“I’m longing to see them,” admitted Phil, between the chocolate she was nibbling. “They really are such dear boys, you know. There’s to be no end of dances and drives and general jamborees. I shall never forgive you, Queen Anne, for not coming home with me for the holidays.”

“‘Never’ means three days with you, Phil. It was dear of you to ask me — and I’d love to go to Bolingbroke some day. But I can’t go this year — I MUST go home. You don’t know how my heart longs for it.”

“You won’t have much of a time,” said Phil scornfully. “There’ll be one or two quilting parties, I suppose; and all the old gossips will talk you over to your face and behind your back. You’ll die of lonesomeness, child.”

“In Avonlea?” said Anne, highly amused.

“Now, if you’d come with me you’d have a perfectly gorgeous time. Bolingbroke would go wild over you, Queen Anne — your hair and your

style and, oh, everything! You're so DIFFERENT. You'd be such a success — and I would bask in reflected glory—'not the rose but near the rose.' Do come, after all, Anne."

"Your picture of social triumphs is quite fascinating, Phil, but I'll paint one to offset it. I'm going home to an old country farmhouse, once green, rather faded now, set among leafless apple orchards. There is a brook below and a December fir wood beyond, where I've heard harps swept by the fingers of rain and wind. There is a pond nearby that will be gray and brooding now. There will be two oldish ladies in the house, one tall and thin, one short and fat; and there will be two twins, one a perfect model, the other what Mrs. Lynde calls a 'holy terror.' There will be a little room upstairs over the porch, where old dreams hang thick, and a big, fat, glorious feather bed which will almost seem the height of luxury after a boardinghouse mattress. How do you like my picture, Phil?"

"It seems a very dull one," said Phil, with a grimace.

"Oh, but I've left out the transforming thing," said Anne softly. "There'll be love there, Phil — faithful, tender love, such as I'll never find anywhere else in the world — love that's waiting for me. That makes my picture a masterpiece, doesn't it, even if the colors are not very brilliant?"

Phil silently got up, tossed her box of chocolates away, went up to Anne, and put her arms about her.

"Anne, I wish I was like you," she said soberly.

Diana met Anne at the Carmody station the next night, and they drove home together under silent, star-sown depths of sky. Green Gables had a very festal appearance as they drove up the lane. There was a light in every window, the glow breaking out through the darkness like flame-red blossoms swung against the dark background of the Haunted Wood. And in the yard was a brave bonfire with two gay little figures dancing around it, one of which gave an unearthly yell as the buggy turned in under the poplars.

“Davy means that for an Indian war-whoop,” said Diana. “Mr. Harrison’s hired boy taught it to him, and he’s been practicing it up to welcome you with. Mrs. Lynde says it has worn her nerves to a frazzle. He creeps up behind her, you know, and then lets go. He was determined to have a bonfire for you, too. He’s been piling up branches for a fortnight and pestering Marilla to be let pour some kerosene oil over it before setting it on fire. I guess she did, by the smell, though Mrs. Lynde said up to the last that Davy would blow himself and everybody else up if he was let.”

Anne was out of the buggy by this time, and Davy was rapturously hugging her knees, while even Dora was clinging to her hand.

“Isn’t that a bully bonfire, Anne? Just let me show you how to poke it — see the sparks? I did it for you, Anne, ‘cause I was so glad you were coming home.”

The kitchen door opened and Marilla’s spare form darkened against the inner light. She preferred to meet Anne in the shadows, for she was horribly afraid that she was going to cry with joy — she, stern, repressed Marilla, who thought all display of deep emotion unseemly. Mrs. Lynde was behind her, sonsy, kindly, matronly, as of yore. The love that Anne had told Phil was waiting for her surrounded her and enfolded her with its blessing and its sweetness. Nothing, after all, could compare with old ties, old friends, and old Green Gables! How starry Anne’s eyes were as they sat down to the loaded supper table, how pink her cheeks, how silver-clear her laughter! And Diana was going to stay all night, too. How like the dear old times it was! And the rosebud tea-set graced the table! With Marilla the force of nature could no further go.

“I suppose you and Diana will now proceed to talk all night,” said Marilla sarcastically, as the girls went upstairs. Marilla was always sarcastic after any self-betrayal.

“Yes,” agreed Anne gaily, “but I’m going to put Davy to bed first. He insists on that.”

“You bet,” said Davy, as they went along the hall. “I want somebody to say my prayers to again. It’s no fun saying them alone.”

“You don’t say them alone, Davy. God is always with you to hear you.”

“Well, I can’t see Him,” objected Davy. “I want to pray to somebody I can see, but I WON’T say them to Mrs. Lynde or Marilla, there now!”

Nevertheless, when Davy was garbed in his gray flannel nighty, he did not seem in a hurry to begin. He stood before Anne, shuffling one bare foot over the other, and looked undecided.

“Come, dear, kneel down,” said Anne.

Davy came and buried his head in Anne’s lap, but he did not kneel down.

“Anne,” he said in a muffled voice. “I don’t feel like praying after all. I haven’t felt like it for a week now. I — I DIDN’T pray last night nor the night before.”

“Why not, Davy?” asked Anne gently.

“You — you won’t be mad if I tell you?” implored Davy.

Anne lifted the little gray-flannelled body on her knee and cuddled his head on her arm.

“Do I ever get ‘mad’ when you tell me things, Davy?”

“No-o-o, you never do. But you get sorry, and that’s worse. You’ll be awful sorry when I tell you this, Anne — and you’ll be ‘shamed of me, I s’pose.”

“Have you done something naughty, Davy, and is that why you can’t say your prayers?”

“No, I haven’t done anything naughty — yet. But I want to do it.”

“What is it, Davy?”

“I — I want to say a bad word, Anne,” blurted out Davy, with a desperate effort. “I heard Mr. Harrison’s hired boy say it one day last week, and ever

since I've been wanting to say it ALL the time — even when I'm saying my prayers."

"Say it then, Davy."

Davy lifted his flushed face in amazement.

"But, Anne, it's an AWFUL bad word."

"SAY IT!"

Davy gave her another incredulous look, then in a low voice he said the dreadful word. The next minute his face was burrowing against her.

"Oh, Anne, I'll never say it again — never. I'll never WANT to say it again. I knew it was bad, but I didn't s'pose it was so — so — I didn't s'pose it was like THAT."

"No, I don't think you'll ever want to say it again, Davy — or think it, either. And I wouldn't go about much with Mr. Harrison's hired boy if I were you."

"He can make bully war-whoops," said Davy a little regretfully.

"But you don't want your mind filled with bad words, do you, Davy — words that will poison it and drive out all that is good and manly?"

"No," said Davy, owleyed with introspection.

"Then don't go with those people who use them. And now do you feel as if you could say your prayers, Davy?"

"Oh, yes," said Davy, eagerly wriggling down on his knees, "I can say them now all right. I ain't scared now to say 'if I should die before I wake,' like I was when I was wanting to say that word."

Probably Anne and Diana did empty out their souls to each other that night, but no record of their confidences has been preserved. They both looked as fresh and bright-eyed at breakfast as only youth can look after

unlawful hours of revelry and confession. There had been no snow up to this time, but as Diana crossed the old log bridge on her homeward way the white flakes were beginning to flutter down over the fields and woods, russet and gray in their dreamless sleep. Soon the faraway slopes and hills were dim and wraithlike through their gauzy scarfing, as if pale autumn had flung a misty bridal veil over her hair and was waiting for her wintry bridegroom. So they had a white Christmas after all, and a very pleasant day it was. In the forenoon letters and gifts came from Miss Lavendar and Paul; Anne opened them in the cheerful Green Gables kitchen, which was filled with what Davy, sniffing in ecstasy, called “pretty smells.”

“Miss Lavendar and Mr. Irving are settled in their new home now,” reported Anne. “I am sure Miss Lavendar is perfectly happy — I know it by the general tone of her letter — but there’s a note from Charlotta the Fourth. She doesn’t like Boston at all, and she is fearfully homesick. Miss Lavendar wants me to go through to Echo Lodge some day while I’m home and light a fire to air it, and see that the cushions aren’t getting moldy. I think I’ll get Diana to go over with me next week, and we can spend the evening with Theodora Dix. I want to see Theodora. By the way, is Ludovic Speed still going to see her?”

“They say so,” said Marilla, “and he’s likely to continue it. Folks have given up expecting that that courtship will ever arrive anywhere.”

“I’d hurry him up a bit, if I was Theodora, that’s what,” said Mrs. Lynde. And there is not the slightest doubt but that she would.

There was also a characteristic scrawl from Philippa, full of Alec and Alonzo, what they said and what they did, and how they looked when they saw her.

“But I can’t make up my mind yet which to marry,” wrote Phil. “I do wish you had come with me to decide for me. Some one will have to. When I saw Alec my heart gave a great thump and I thought, ‘He might be the right one.’ And then, when Alonzo came, thump went my heart again. So that’s no guide, though it should be, according to all the novels I’ve ever read. Now, Anne, YOUR heart wouldn’t thump for anybody but the genuine Prince Charming, would it? There must be something radically

wrong with mine. But I'm having a perfectly gorgeous time. How I wish you were here! It's snowing today, and I'm rapturous. I was so afraid we'd have a green Christmas and I loathe them. You know, when Christmas is a dirty grayey-browney affair, looking as if it had been left over a hundred years ago and had been in soak ever since, it is called a GREEN Christmas! Don't ask me why. As Lord Dundreary says, 'there are thome thingth no fellow can underthtand.'

"Anne, did you ever get on a street car and then discover that you hadn't any money with you to pay your fare? I did, the other day. It's quite awful. I had a nickel with me when I got on the car. I thought it was in the left pocket of my coat. When I got settled down comfortably I felt for it. It wasn't there. I had a cold chill. I felt in the other pocket. Not there. I had another chill. Then I felt in a little inside pocket. All in vain. I had two chills at once.

"I took off my gloves, laid them on the seat, and went over all my pockets again. It was not there. I stood up and shook myself, and then looked on the floor. The car was full of people, who were going home from the opera, and they all stared at me, but I was past caring for a little thing like that.

"But I could not find my fare. I concluded I must have put it in my mouth and swallowed it inadvertently.

"I didn't know what to do. Would the conductor, I wondered, stop the car and put me off in ignominy and shame? Was it possible that I could convince him that I was merely the victim of my own absentmindedness, and not an unprincipled creature trying to obtain a ride upon false pretenses? How I wished that Alec or Alonzo were there. But they weren't because I wanted them. If I HADN'T wanted them they would have been there by the dozen. And I couldn't decide what to say to the conductor when he came around. As soon as I got one sentence of explanation mapped out in my mind I felt nobody could believe it and I must compose another. It seemed there was nothing to do but trust in Providence, and for all the comfort that gave me I might as well have been the old lady who, when told by the captain during a storm that she must put her trust in the Almighty exclaimed, 'Oh, Captain, is it as bad as that?'

“Just at the conventional moment, when all hope had fled, and the conductor was holding out his box to the passenger next to me, I suddenly remembered where I had put that wretched coin of the realm. I hadn’t swallowed it after all. I meekly fished it out of the index finger of my glove and poked it in the box. I smiled at everybody and felt that it was a beautiful world.”

The visit to Echo Lodge was not the least pleasant of many pleasant holiday outings. Anne and Diana went back to it by the old way of the beech woods, carrying a lunch basket with them. Echo Lodge, which had been closed ever since Miss Lavendar’s wedding, was briefly thrown open to wind and sunshine once more, and firelight glimmered again in the little rooms. The perfume of Miss Lavendar’s rose bowl still filled the air. It was hardly possible to believe that Miss Lavendar would not come tripping in presently, with her brown eyes a-star with welcome, and that Charlotta the Fourth, blue of bow and wide of smile, would not pop through the door. Paul, too, seemed hovering around, with his fairy fancies.

“It really makes me feel a little bit like a ghost revisiting the old time glimpses of the moon,” laughed Anne. “Let’s go out and see if the echoes are at home. Bring the old horn. It is still behind the kitchen door.”

The echoes were at home, over the white river, as silver-clear and multitudinous as ever; and when they had ceased to answer the girls locked up Echo Lodge again and went away in the perfect half hour that follows the rose and saffron of a winter sunset.

Chapter VII I

Anne's First Proposal

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The old year did not slip away in a green twilight, with a pinky-yellow sunset. Instead, it went out with a wild, white bluster and blow. It was one of the nights when the storm-wind hurtles over the frozen meadows and black hollows, and moans around the eaves like a lost creature, and drives the snow sharply against the shaking panes.

“Just the sort of night people like to cuddle down between their blankets and count their mercies,” said Anne to Jane Andrews, who had come up to spend the afternoon and stay all night. But when they were cuddled between their blankets, in Anne’s little porch room, it was not her mercies of which Jane was thinking.

“Anne,” she said very solemnly, “I want to tell you something. May I”

Anne was feeling rather sleepy after the party Ruby Gillis had given the night before. She would much rather have gone to sleep than listen to Jane’s confidences, which she was sure would bore her. She had no prophetic inkling of what was coming. Probably Jane was engaged, too; rumor averred that Ruby Gillis was engaged to the Spencervale schoolteacher, about whom all the girls were said to be quite wild.

“I’ll soon be the only fancy-free maiden of our old quartet,” thought Anne, drowsily. Aloud she said, “Of course.”

“Anne,” said Jane, still more solemnly, “what do you think of my brother Billy?”

Anne gasped over this unexpected question, and floundered helplessly in her thoughts. Goodness, what DID she think of Billy Andrews? She had

never thought ANYTHING about him — round-faced, stupid, perpetually smiling, goodnatured Billy Andrews. Did ANYBODY ever think about Billy Andrews?

“I — I don’t understand, Jane,” she stammered. “What do you mean — exactly?”

“Do you like Billy?” asked Jane bluntly.

“Why — why — yes, I like him, of course,” gasped Anne, wondering if she were telling the literal truth. Certainly she did not DISlike Billy. But could the indifferent tolerance with which she regarded him, when he happened to be in her range of vision, be considered positive enough for liking? WHAT was Jane trying to elucidate?

“Would you like him for a husband?” asked Jane calmly.

“A husband!” Anne had been sitting up in bed, the better to wrestle with the problem of her exact opinion of Billy Andrews. Now she fell flatly back on her pillows, the very breath gone out of her. “Whose husband?”

“Yours, of course,” answered Jane. “Billy wants to marry you. He’s always been crazy about you — and now father has given him the upper farm in his own name and there’s nothing to prevent him from getting married. But he’s so shy he couldn’t ask you himself if you’d have him, so he got me to do it. I’d rather not have, but he gave me no peace till I said I would, if I got a good chance. What do you think about it, Anne?”

Was it a dream? Was it one of those nightmare things in which you find yourself engaged or married to some one you hate or don’t know, without the slightest idea how it ever came about? No, she, Anne Shirley, was lying there, wide awake, in her own bed, and Jane Andrews was beside her, calmly proposing for her brother Billy. Anne did not know whether she wanted to writhe or laugh; but she could do neither, for Jane’s feelings must not be hurt.

“I — I couldn’t marry Bill, you know, Jane,” she managed to gasp. “Why, such an idea never occurred to me — never!”

“I don’t suppose it did,” agreed Jane. “Billy has always been far too shy to think of courting. But you might think it over, Anne. Billy is a good fellow. I must say that, if he is my brother. He has no bad habits and he’s a great worker, and you can depend on him. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’ He told me to tell you he’d be quite willing to wait till you got through college, if you insisted, though he’d RATHER get married this spring before the planting begins. He’d always be very good to you, I’m sure, and you know, Anne, I’d love to have you for a sister.”

“I can’t marry Billy,” said Anne decidedly. She had recovered her wits, and was even feeling a little angry. It was all so ridiculous. “There is no use thinking of it, Jane. I don’t care anything for him in that way, and you must tell him so.”

“Well, I didn’t suppose you would,” said Jane with a resigned sigh, feeling that she had done her best. “I told Billy I didn’t believe it was a bit of use to ask you, but he insisted. Well, you’ve made your decision, Anne, and I hope you won’t regret it.”

Jane spoke rather coldly. She had been perfectly sure that the enamored Billy had no chance at all of inducing Anne to marry him. Nevertheless, she felt a little resentment that Anne Shirley, who was, after all, merely an adopted orphan, without kith or kin, should refuse her brother — one of the Avonlea Andrews. Well, pride sometimes goes before a fall, Jane reflected ominously.

Anne permitted herself to smile in the darkness over the idea that she might ever regret not marrying Billy Andrews.

“I hope Billy won’t feel very badly over it,” she said nicely.

Jane made a movement as if she were tossing her head on her pillow.

“Oh, he won’t break his heart. Billy has too much good sense for that. He likes Nettie Blewett pretty well, too, and mother would rather he married her than any one. She’s such a good manager and saver. I think, when Billy is once sure you won’t have him, he’ll take Nettie. Please don’t mention this to any one, will you, Anne?”

“Certainly not,” said Anne, who had no desire whatever to publish abroad the fact that Billy Andrews wanted to marry her, preferring her, when all was said and done, to Nettie Blewett. Nettie Blewett!

“And now I suppose we’d better go to sleep,” suggested Jane.

To sleep went Jane easily and speedily; but, though very unlike MacBeth in most respects, she had certainly contrived to murder sleep for Anne. That proposed-to damsel lay on a wakeful pillow until the wee sma’s, but her meditations were far from being romantic. It was not, however, until the next morning that she had an opportunity to indulge in a good laugh over the whole affair. When Jane had gone home — still with a hint of frost in voice and manner because Anne had declined so ungratefully and decidedly the honor of an alliance with the House of Andrews — Anne retreated to the porch room, shut the door, and had her laugh out at last.

“If I could only share the joke with some one!” she thought. “But I can’t. Diana is the only one I’d want to tell, and, even if I hadn’t sworn secrecy to Jane, I can’t tell Diana things now. She tells everything to Fred — I know she does. Well, I’ve had my first proposal. I supposed it would come some day — but I certainly never thought it would be by proxy. It’s awfully funny — and yet there’s a sting in it, too, somehow.”

Anne knew quite well wherein the sting consisted, though she did not put it into words. She had had her secret dreams of the first time some one should ask her the great question. And it had, in those dreams, always been very romantic and beautiful: and the “some one” was to be very handsome and dark-eyed and distinguished-looking and eloquent, whether he were Prince Charming to be enraptured with “yes,” or one to whom a regretful, beautifully worded, but hopeless refusal must be given. If the latter, the refusal was to be expressed so delicately that it would be next best thing to acceptance, and he would go away, after kissing her hand, assuring her of his unalterable, lifelong devotion. And it would always be a beautiful memory, to be proud of and a little sad about, also.

And now, this thrilling experience had turned out to be merely grotesque. Billy Andrews had got his sister to propose for him because his father had given him the upper farm; and if Anne wouldn’t “have him” Nettie

Blewett would. There was romance for you, with a vengeance! Anne laughed — and then sighed. The bloom had been brushed from one little maiden dream. Would the painful process go on until everything became prosaic and humdrum?

Chapter IX

An Unwelcome Lover and a Welcome Friend

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The second term at Redmond sped as quickly as had the first—"actually whizzed away," Philippa said. Anne enjoyed it thoroughly in all its phases — the stimulating class rivalry, the making and deepening of new and helpful friendships, the gay little social stunts, the doings of the various societies of which she was a member, the widening of horizons and interests. She studied hard, for she had made up her mind to win the Thorburn Scholarship in English. This being won, meant that she could come back to Redmond the next year without trenching on Marilla's small savings — something Anne was determined she would not do.

Gilbert, too, was in full chase after a scholarship, but found plenty of time for frequent calls at Thirty-eight, St. John's. He was Anne's escort at nearly all the college affairs, and she knew that their names were coupled in Redmond gossip. Anne raged over this but was helpless; she could not cast an old friend like Gilbert aside, especially when he had grown suddenly wise and wary, as behooved him in the dangerous proximity of more than one Redmond youth who would gladly have taken his place by the side of the slender, redhaired coed, whose gray eyes were as alluring as stars of evening. Anne was never attended by the crowd of willing victims who hovered around Philippa's conquering march through her Freshman year; but there was a lanky, brainy Freshie, a jolly, little, round Sophomore, and a tall, learned Junior who all liked to call at Thirty-eight, St. John's, and talk over 'ologies and 'isms, as well as lighter subjects, with Anne, in the becushioned parlor of that domicile. Gilbert did not love any of them, and he was exceedingly careful to give none of them the advantage over him by any untimely display of his real feelings Anne-ward. To her he had become again the boy-comrade of Avonlea days, and

as such could hold his own against any smitten swain who had so far entered the lists against him. As a companion, Anne honestly acknowledged nobody could be so satisfactory as Gilbert; she was very glad, so she told herself, that he had evidently dropped all nonsensical ideas — though she spent considerable time secretly wondering why.

Only one disagreeable incident marred that winter. Charlie Sloane, sitting bolt upright on Miss Ada's most dearly beloved cushion, asked Anne one night if she would promise "to become Mrs. Charlie Sloane some day." Coming after Billy Andrews' proxy effort, this was not quite the shock to Anne's romantic sensibilities that it would otherwise have been; but it was certainly another heartrending disillusion. She was angry, too, for she felt that she had never given Charlie the slightest encouragement to suppose such a thing possible. But what could you expect of a Sloane, as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would ask scornfully? Charlie's whole attitude, tone, air, words, fairly reeked with Sloanishness. "He was conferring a great honor — no doubt whatever about that. And when Anne, utterly insensible to the honor, refused him, as delicately and considerately as she could — for even a Sloane had feelings which ought not to be unduly lacerated — Sloanishness still further betrayed itself. Charlie certainly did not take his dismissal as Anne's imaginary rejected suitors did. Instead, he became angry, and showed it; he said two or three quite nasty things; Anne's temper flashed up mutinously and she retorted with a cutting little speech whose keenness pierced even Charlie's protective Sloanishness and reached the quick; he caught up his hat and flung himself out of the house with a very red face; Anne rushed upstairs, falling twice over Miss Ada's cushions on the way, and threw herself on her bed, in tears of humiliation and rage. Had she actually stooped to quarrel with a Sloane? Was it possible anything Charlie Sloane could say had power to make her angry? Oh, this was degradation, indeed — worse even than being the rival of Nettie Blewett!

"I wish I need never see the horrible creature again," she sobbed vindictively into her pillows.

She could not avoid seeing him again, but the outraged Charlie took care that it should not be at very close quarters. Miss Ada's cushions were

henceforth safe from his depredations, and when he met Anne on the street, or in Redmond's halls, his bow was icy in the extreme. Relations between these two old schoolmates continued to be thus strained for nearly a year! Then Charlie transferred his blighted affections to a round, rosy, snub-nosed, blue-eyed, little Sophomore who appreciated them as they deserved, whereupon he forgave Anne and condescended to be civil to her again; in a patronizing manner intended to show her just what she had lost.

One day Anne scurried excitedly into Priscilla's room.

"Read that," she cried, tossing Priscilla a letter. "It's from Stella — and she's coming to Redmond next year — and what do you think of her idea? I think it's a perfectly splendid one, if we can only carry it out. Do you suppose we can, Pris?"

"I'll be better able to tell you when I find out what it is," said Priscilla, casting aside a Greek lexicon and taking up Stella's letter. Stella Maynard had been one of their chums at Queen's Academy and had been teaching school ever since.

"But I'm going to give it up, Anne dear," she wrote, "and go to college next year. As I took the third year at Queen's I can enter the Sophomore year. I'm tired of teaching in a back country school. Some day I'm going to write a treatise on 'The Trials of a Country Schoolmarm.' It will be a harrowing bit of realism. It seems to be the prevailing impression that we live in clover, and have nothing to do but draw our quarter's salary. My treatise shall tell the truth about us. Why, if a week should pass without some one telling me that I am doing easy work for big pay I would conclude that I might as well order my ascension robe 'immediately and to onct.' 'Well, you get your money easy,' some ratepayer will tell me, condescendingly. 'All you have to do is to sit there and hear lessons.' I used to argue the matter at first, but I'm wiser now. Facts are stubborn things, but as some one has wisely said, not half so stubborn as fallacies. So I only smile loftily now in eloquent silence. Why, I have nine grades in my school and I have to teach a little of everything, from investigating the interiors of earthworms to the study of the solar system. My youngest pupil is four — his mother sends him to school to 'get him out of the way' — and my oldest twenty — it 'suddenly struck him' that it would be easier

to go to school and get an education than follow the plough any longer. In the wild effort to cram all sorts of research into six hours a day I don't wonder if the children feel like the little boy who was taken to see the biograph. 'I have to look for what's coming next before I know what went last,' he complained. I feel like that myself.

"And the letters I get, Anne! Tommy's mother writes me that Tommy is not coming on in arithmetic as fast as she would like. He is only in simple reduction yet, and Johnny Johnson is in fractions, and Johnny isn't half as smart as her Tommy, and she can't understand it. And Susy's father wants to know why Susy can't write a letter without misspelling half the words, and Dick's aunt wants me to change his seat, because that bad Brown boy he is sitting with is teaching him to say naughty words.

"As to the financial part — but I'll not begin on that. Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make country schoolmarms!

"There, I feel better, after that growl. After all, I've enjoyed these past two years. But I'm coming to Redmond.

"And now, Anne, I've a little plan. You know how I loathe boarding. I've boarded for four years and I'm so tired of it. I don't feel like enduring three years more of it.

"Now, why can't you and Priscilla and I club together, rent a little house somewhere in Kingsport, and board ourselves? It would be cheaper than any other way. Of course, we would have to have a housekeeper and I have one ready on the spot. You've heard me speak of Aunt Jamesina? She's the sweetest aunt that ever lived, in spite of her name. She can't help that! She was called Jamesina because her father, whose name was James, was drowned at sea a month before she was born. I always call her Aunt Jimsie. Well, her only daughter has recently married and gone to the foreign mission field. Aunt Jamesina is left alone in a great big house, and she is horribly lonesome. She will come to Kingsport and keep house for us if we want her, and I know you'll both love her. The more I think of the plan the more I like it. We could have such good, independent times.

“Now, if you and Priscilla agree to it, wouldn’t it be a good idea for you, who are on the spot, to look around and see if you can find a suitable house this spring? That would be better than leaving it till the fall. If you could get a furnished one so much the better, but if not, we can scare up a few sticks of finiture between us and old family friends with attics. Anyhow, decide as soon as you can and write me, so that Aunt Jamesina will know what plans to make for next year.”

“I think it’s a good idea,” said Priscilla.

“So do I,” agreed Anne delightedly. “Of course, we have a nice boardinghouse here, but, when all’s said and done, a boardinghouse isn’t home. So let’s go house-hunting at once, before exams come on.”

“I’m afraid it will be hard enough to get a really suitable house,” warned Priscilla. “Don’t expect too much, Anne. Nice houses in nice localities will probably be away beyond our means. We’ll likely have to content ourselves with a shabby little place on some street whereon live people whom to know is to be unknown, and make life inside compensate for the outside.”

Accordingly they went house-hunting, but to find just what they wanted proved even harder than Priscilla had feared. Houses there were galore, furnished and unfurnished; but one was too big, another too small; this one too expensive, that one too far from Redmond. Exams were on and over; the last week of the term came and still their “house o’dreams,” as Anne called it, remained a castle in the air.

“We shall have to give up and wait till the fall, I suppose,” said Priscilla wearily, as they rambled through the park on one of April’s darling days of breeze and blue, when the harbor was creaming and shimmering beneath the pearl-hued mists floating over it. “We may find some shack to shelter us then; and if not, boardinghouses we shall have always with us.”

“I’m not going to worry about it just now, anyway, and spoil this lovely afternoon,” said Anne, gazing around her with delight. The fresh chill air was faintly charged with the aroma of pine balsam, and the sky above was crystal clear and blue — a great inverted cup of blessing. “Spring is

singing in my blood today, and the lure of April is abroad on the air. I'm seeing visions and dreaming dreams, Pris. That's because the wind is from the west. I do love the west wind. It sings of hope and gladness, doesn't it? When the east wind blows I always think of sorrowful rain on the eaves and sad waves on a gray shore. When I get old I shall have rheumatism when the wind is east."

"And isn't it jolly when you discard furs and winter garments for the first time and sally forth, like this, in spring attire?" laughed Priscilla. "Don't you feel as if you had been made over new?"

"Everything is new in the spring," said Anne. "Springs themselves are always so new, too. No spring is ever just like any other spring. It always has something of its own to be its own peculiar sweetness. See how green the grass is around that little pond, and how the willow buds are bursting."

"And exams are over and gone — the time of Convocation will come soon — next Wednesday. This day next week we'll be home."

"I'm glad," said Anne dreamily. "There are so many things I want to do. I want to sit on the back porch steps and feel the breeze blowing down over Mr. Harrison's fields. I want to hunt ferns in the Haunted Wood and gather violets in Violet Vale. Do you remember the day of our golden picnic, Priscilla? I want to hear the frogs singing and the poplars whispering. But I've learned to love Kingsport, too, and I'm glad I'm coming back next fall. If I hadn't won the Thorburn I don't believe I could have. I COULDN'T take any of Marilla's little hoard."

"If we could only find a house!" sighed Priscilla. "Look over there at Kingsport, Anne — houses, houses everywhere, and not one for us."

"Stop it, Pris. 'The best is yet to be.' Like the old Roman, we'll find a house or build one. On a day like this there's no such word as fail in my bright lexicon."

They lingered in the park until sunset, living in the amazing miracle and glory and wonder of the springtide; and they went home as usual, by way

of Spofford Avenue, that they might have the delight of looking at Patty's Place.

"I feel as if something mysterious were going to happen right away—'by the pricking of my thumbs,'" said Anne, as they went up the slope. "It's a nice story-bookish feeling. Why — why — why! Priscilla Grant, look over there and tell me if it's true, or am I seein' things?"

Priscilla looked. Anne's thumbs and eyes had not deceived her. Over the arched gateway of Patty's Place dangled a little, modest sign. It said "To Let, Furnished. Inquire Within."

"Priscilla," said Anne, in a whisper, "do you suppose it's possible that we could rent Patty's Place?"

"No, I don't," averred Priscilla. "It would be too good to be true. Fairy tales don't happen nowadays. I won't hope, Anne. The disappointment would be too awful to bear. They're sure to want more for it than we can afford. Remember, it's on Spofford Avenue."

"We must find out anyhow," said Anne resolutely. "It's too late to call this evening, but we'll come tomorrow. Oh, Pris, if we can get this darling spot! I've always felt that my fortunes were linked with Patty's Place, ever since I saw it first."

Chapter X

Patty's Place

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The next evening found them treading resolutely the herringbone walk through the tiny garden. The April wind was filling the pine trees with its roundelay, and the grove was alive with robins — great, plump, saucy fellows, strutting along the paths. The girls rang rather timidly, and were admitted by a grim and ancient handmaiden. The door opened directly into a large livingroom, where by a cheery little fire sat two other ladies, both of whom were also grim and ancient. Except that one looked to be about seventy and the other fifty, there seemed little difference between them. Each had amazingly big, light-blue eyes behind steel-rimmed spectacles; each wore a cap and a gray shawl; each was knitting without haste and without rest; each rocked placidly and looked at the girls without speaking; and just behind each sat a large white china dog, with round green spots all over it, a green nose and green ears. Those dogs captured Anne's fancy on the spot; they seemed like the twin guardian deities of Patty's Place.

For a few minutes nobody spoke. The girls were too nervous to find words, and neither the ancient ladies nor the china dogs seemed conversationally inclined. Anne glanced about the room. What a dear place it was! Another door opened out of it directly into the pine grove and the robins came boldly up on the very step. The floor was spotted with round, braided mats, such as Marilla made at Green Gables, but which were considered out of date everywhere else, even in Avonlea. And yet here they were on Spofford Avenue! A big, polished grandfather's clock ticked loudly and solemnly in a corner. There were delightful little cupboards over the mantelpiece, behind whose glass doors gleamed quaint bits of china. The walls were hung with old prints and silhouettes. In one corner the stairs went up, and at the first low turn was a long window with an inviting seat. It was all just as Anne had known it must be.

By this time the silence had grown too dreadful, and Priscilla nudged Anne to intimate that she must speak.

“We — we — saw by your sign that this house is to let,” said Anne faintly, addressing the older lady, who was evidently Miss Patty Spofford.

“Oh, yes,” said Miss Patty. “I intended to take that sign down today.”

“Then — then we are too late,” said Anne sorrowfully. “You’ve let it to some one else?”

“No, but we have decided not to let it at all.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” exclaimed Anne impulsively. “I love this place so. I did hope we could have got it.”

Then did Miss Patty lay down her knitting, take off her specs, rub them, put them on again, and for the first time look at Anne as at a human being. The other lady followed her example so perfectly that she might as well have been a reflection in a mirror.

“You LOVE it,” said Miss Patty with emphasis. “Does that mean that you really LOVE it? Or that you merely like the looks of it? The girls nowadays indulge in such exaggerated statements that one never can tell what they DO mean. It wasn’t so in my young days. THEN a girl did not say she LOVED turnips, in just the same tone as she might have said she loved her mother or her Savior.”

Anne’s conscience bore her up.

“I really do love it,” she said gently. “I’ve loved it ever since I saw it last fall. My two college chums and I want to keep house next year instead of boarding, so we are looking for a little place to rent; and when I saw that this house was to let I was so happy.”

“If you love it, you can have it,” said Miss Patty. “Maria and I decided today that we would not let it after all, because we did not like any of the people who have wanted it. We don’t HAVE to let it. We can afford to go to Europe even if we don’t let it. It would help us out, but not for gold will I let my home pass into the possession of such people as have come here and looked at it. YOU are different. I believe you do love it and will be good to it. You can have it.”

“If — if we can afford to pay what you ask for it,” hesitated Anne.

Miss Patty named the amount required. Anne and Priscilla looked at each other. Priscilla shook her head.

“I’m afraid we can’t afford quite so much,” said Anne, choking back her disappointment. “You see, we are only college girls and we are poor.”

“What were you thinking you could afford?” demanded Miss Patty, ceasing not to knit.

Anne named her amount. Miss Patty nodded gravely.

“That will do. As I told you, it is not strictly necessary that we should let it at all. We are not rich, but we have enough to go to Europe on. I have never been in Europe in my life, and never expected or wanted to go. But my niece there, Maria Spofford, has taken a fancy to go. Now, you know a young person like Maria can’t go globetrotting alone.”

“No — I — I suppose not,” murmured Anne, seeing that Miss Patty was quite solemnly in earnest.

“Of course not. So I have to go along to look after her. I expect to enjoy it, too; I’m seventy years old, but I’m not tired of living yet. I daresay I’d

have gone to Europe before if the idea had occurred to me. We shall be away for two years, perhaps three. We sail in June and we shall send you the key, and leave all in order for you to take possession when you choose. We shall pack away a few things we prize especially, but all the rest will be left."

"Will you leave the china dogs?" asked Anne timidly.

"Would you like me to?"

"Oh, indeed, yes. They are delightful."

A pleased expression came into Miss Patty's face.

"I think a great deal of those dogs," she said proudly. "They are over a hundred years old, and they have sat on either side of this fireplace ever since my brother Aaron brought them from London fifty years ago. Spofford Avenue was called after my brother Aaron."

"A fine man he was," said Miss Maria, speaking for the first time. "Ah, you don't see the like of him nowadays."

"He was a good uncle to you, Maria," said Miss Patty, with evident emotion. "You do well to remember him."

"I shall always remember him," said Miss Maria solemnly. "I can see him, this minute, standing there before that fire, with his hands under his coat-tails, beaming on us."

Miss Maria took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes; but Miss Patty came resolutely back from the regions of sentiment to those of business.

"I shall leave the dogs where they are, if you will promise to be very careful of them," she said. "Their names are Gog and Magog. Gog looks to the right and Magog to the left. And there's just one thing more. You don't object, I hope, to this house being called Patty's Place?"

"No, indeed. We think that is one of the nicest things about it."

“You have sense, I see,” said Miss Patty in a tone of great satisfaction. “Would you believe it? All the people who came here to rent the house wanted to know if they couldn’t take the name off the gate during their occupation of it. I told them roundly that the name went with the house. This has been Patty’s Place ever since my brother Aaron left it to me in his will, and Patty’s Place it shall remain until I die and Maria dies. After that happens the next possessor can call it any fool name he likes,” concluded Miss Patty, much as she might have said, “After that — the deluge.” “And now, wouldn’t you like to go over the house and see it all before we consider the bargain made?”

Further exploration still further delighted the girls. Besides the big livingroom, there was a kitchen and a small bedroom downstairs. Upstairs were three rooms, one large and two small. Anne took an especial fancy to one of the small ones, looking out into the big pines, and hoped it would be hers. It was papered in pale blue and had a little, old-timey toilet table with sconces for candles. There was a diamond-paned window with a seat under the blue muslin frills that would be a satisfying spot for studying or dreaming.

“It’s all so delicious that I know we are going to wake up and find it a fleeting vision of the night,” said Priscilla as they went away.

“Miss Patty and Miss Maria are hardly such stuff as dreams are made of,” laughed Anne. “Can you fancy them ‘globetrotting’ — especially in those shawls and caps?”

“I suppose they’ll take them off when they really begin to trot,” said Priscilla, “but I know they’ll take their knitting with them everywhere. They simply couldn’t be parted from it. They will walk about Westminster Abbey and knit, I feel sure. Meanwhile, Anne, we shall be living in Patty’s Place — and on Spofford Avenue. I feel like a millionairess even now.”

“I feel like one of the morning stars that sang for joy,” said Anne.

Phil Gordon crept into Thirty-eight, St. John’s, that night and flung herself on Anne’s bed.

“Girls, dear, I’m tired to death. I feel like the man without a country — or was it without a shadow? I forget which. Anyway, I’ve been packing up.”

“And I suppose you are worn out because you couldn’t decide which things to pack first, or where to put them,” laughed Priscilla.

“Ezackly. And when I had got everything jammed in somehow, and my landlady and her maid had both sat on it while I locked it, I discovered I had packed a whole lot of things I wanted for Convocation at the very bottom. I had to unlock the old thing and poke and dive into it for an hour before I fished out what I wanted. I would get hold of something that felt like what I was looking for, and I’d yank it up, and it would be something else. No, Anne, I did NOT swear.”

“I didn’t say you did.”

“Well, you looked it. But I admit my thoughts verged on the profane. And I have such a cold in the head — I can do nothing but sniffle, sigh and sneeze. Isn’t that alliterative agony for you? Queen Anne, do say something to cheer me up.”

“Remember that next Thursday night, you’ll be back in the land of Alec and Alonzo,” suggested Anne.

Phil shook her head dolefully.

“More alliteration. No, I don’t want Alec and Alonzo when I have a cold in the head. But what has happened you two? Now that I look at you closely you seem all lighted up with an internal iridescence. Why, you’re actually SHINING! What’s up?”

“We are going to live in Patty’s Place next winter,” said Anne triumphantly. “Live, mark you, not board! We’ve rented it, and Stella Maynard is coming, and her aunt is going to keep house for us.”

Phil bounced up, wiped her nose, and fell on her knees before Anne.

“Girls — girls — let me come, too. Oh, I’ll be so good. If there’s no room for me I’ll sleep in the little doghouse in the orchard — I’ve seen it. Only let me come.”

“Get up, you goose.”

“I won’t stir off my marrow bones till you tell me I can live with you next winter.”

Anne and Priscilla looked at each other. Then Anne said slowly, “Phil dear, we’d love to have you. But we may as well speak plainly. I’m poor — Pris is poor — Stella Maynard is poor — our housekeeping will have to be very simple and our table plain. You’d have to live as we would. Now, you are rich and your boardinghouse fare attests the fact.”

“Oh, what do I care for that?” demanded Phil tragically. “Better a dinner of herbs where your chums are than a stalled ox in a lonely boardinghouse. Don’t think I’m ALL stomach, girls. I’ll be willing to live on bread and water — with just a LEETLE jam — if you’ll let me come.”

“And then,” continued Anne, “there will be a good deal of work to be done. Stella’s aunt can’t do it all. We all expect to have our chores to do. Now, you—”

“Toil not, neither do I spin,” finished Philippa. “But I’ll learn to do things. You’ll only have to show me once. I CAN make my own bed to begin with. And remember that, though I can’t cook, I CAN keep my temper. That’s something. And I NEVER growl about the weather. That’s more. Oh, please, please! I never wanted anything so much in my life — and this floor is awfully hard.”

“There’s just one more thing,” said Priscilla resolutely. “You, Phil, as all Redmond knows, entertain callers almost every evening. Now, at Patty’s Place we can’t do that. We have decided that we shall be at home to our friends on Friday evenings only. If you come with us you’ll have to abide by that rule.”

“Well, you don’t think I’ll mind that, do you? Why, I’m glad of it. I knew I should have had some such rule myself, but I hadn’t enough decision to make it or stick to it. When I can shuffle off the responsibility on you it will be a real relief. If you won’t let me cast in my lot with you I’ll die of the disappointment and then I’ll come back and haunt you. I’ll camp on the very doorstep of Patty’s Place and you won’t be able to go out or come in without falling over my spook.”

Again Anne and Priscilla exchanged eloquent looks.

“Well,” said Anne, “of course we can’t promise to take you until we’ve consulted with Stella; but I don’t think she’ll object, and, as far as we are concerned, you may come and glad welcome.”

“If you get tired of our simple life you can leave us, and no questions asked,” added Priscilla.

Phil sprang up, hugged them both jubilantly, and went on her way rejoicing.

“I hope things will go right,” said Priscilla soberly.

“We must MAKE them go right,” avowed Anne. “I think Phil will fit into our ‘appy little ‘ome very well.”

“Oh, Phil’s a dear to rattle round with and be chums. And, of course, the more there are of us the easier it will be on our slim purses. But how will she be to live with? You have to summer and winter with any one before you know if she’s LIVABLE or not.”

“Oh, well, we’ll all be put to the test, as far as that goes. And we must quit us like sensible folk, living and let live. Phil isn’t selfish, though she’s a little thoughtless, and I believe we will all get on beautifully in Patty’s Place.”

Chapter X I

The Round of Life

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Anne was back in Avonlea with the luster of the Thorburn Scholarship on her brow. People told her she hadn't changed much, in a tone which hinted they were surprised and a little disappointed she hadn't. Avonlea had not changed, either. At least, so it seemed at first. But as Anne sat in the Green Gables pew, on the first Sunday after her return, and looked over the congregation, she saw several little changes which, all coming home to her at once, made her realize that time did not quite stand still, even in Avonlea. A new minister was in the pulpit. In the pews more than one familiar face was missing forever. Old "Uncle Abe," his prophesying over and done with, Mrs. Peter Sloane, who had sighed, it was to be hoped, for the last time, Timothy Cotton, who, as Mrs. Rachel Lynde said "had actually managed to die at last after practicing at it for twenty years," and old Josiah Sloane, whom nobody knew in his coffin because he had his whiskers neatly trimmed, were all sleeping in the little graveyard behind the church. And Billy Andrews was married to Nettie Blewett! They "appeared out" that Sunday. When Billy, beaming with pride and happiness, showed his beplumed and be-silked bride into the Harmon Andrews' pew, Anne dropped her lids to hide her dancing eyes. She recalled the stormy winter night of the Christmas holidays when Jane had proposed for Billy. He certainly had not broken his heart over his rejection. Anne wondered if Jane had also proposed to Nettie for him, or if he had mustered enough spunk to ask the fateful question himself. All the Andrews family seemed to share in his pride and pleasure, from Mrs. Harmon in the pew to Jane in the choir. Jane had resigned from the Avonlea school and intended to go West in the fall.

"Can't get a beau in Avonlea, that's what," said Mrs. Rachel Lynde scornfully. "SAYS she thinks she'll have better health out West. I never heard her health was poor before."

“Jane is a nice girl,” Anne had said loyally. “She never tried to attract attention, as some did.”

“Oh, she never chased the boys, if that’s what you mean,” said Mrs. Rachel. “But she’d like to be married, just as much as anybody, that’s what. What else would take her out West to some forsaken place whose only recommendation is that men are plenty and women scarce? Don’t you tell me!”

But it was not at Jane, Anne gazed that day in dismay and surprise. It was at Ruby Gillis, who sat beside her in the choir. What had happened to Ruby? She was even handsomer than ever; but her blue eyes were too bright and lustrous, and the color of her cheeks was hectically brilliant; besides, she was very thin; the hands that held her hymnbook were almost transparent in their delicacy.

“Is Ruby Gillis ill?” Anne asked of Mrs. Lynde, as they went home from church.

“Ruby Gillis is dying of galloping consumption,” said Mrs. Lynde bluntly. “Everybody knows it except herself and her FAMILY. They won’t give in. If you ask THEM, she’s perfectly well. She hasn’t been able to teach since she had that attack of congestion in the winter, but she says she’s going to teach again in the fall, and she’s after the White Sands school. She’ll be in her grave, poor girl, when White Sands school opens, that’s what.”

Anne listened in shocked silence. Ruby Gillis, her old school-chum, dying? Could it be possible? Of late years they had grown apart; but the old tie of schoolgirl intimacy was there, and made itself felt sharply in the tug the news gave at Anne’s heartstrings. Ruby, the brilliant, the merry, the coquettish! It was impossible to associate the thought of her with anything like death. She had greeted Anne with gay cordiality after church, and urged her to come up the next evening.

“I’ll be away Tuesday and Wednesday evenings,” she had whispered triumphantly. “There’s a concert at Carmody and a party at White Sands. Herb Spencer’s going to take me. He’s my LATEST. Be sure to come up

tomorrow. I'm dying for a good talk with you. I want to hear all about your doings at Redmond."

Anne knew that Ruby meant that she wanted to tell Anne all about her own recent flirtations, but she promised to go, and Diana offered to go with her.

"I've been wanting to go to see Ruby for a long while," she told Anne, when they left Green Gables the next evening, "but I really couldn't go alone. It's so awful to hear Ruby rattling on as she does, and pretending there is nothing the matter with her, even when she can hardly speak for coughing. She's fighting so hard for her life, and yet she hasn't any chance at all, they say."

The girls walked silently down the red, twilit road. The robins were singing vespers in the high treetops, filling the golden air with their jubilant voices. The silver fluting of the frogs came from marshes and ponds, over fields where seeds were beginning to stir with life and thrill to the sunshine and rain that had drifted over them. The air was fragrant with the wild, sweet, wholesome smell of young raspberry copses. White mists were hovering in the silent hollows and violet stars were shining blueely on the brooklands.

"What a beautiful sunset," said Diana. "Look, Anne, it's just like a land in itself, isn't it? That long, low back of purple cloud is the shore, and the clear sky further on is like a golden sea."

"If we could sail to it in the moonshine boat Paul wrote of in his old composition — you remember? — how nice it would be," said Anne, rousing from her reverie. "Do you think we could find all our yesterdays there, Diana — all our old springs and blossoms? The beds of flowers that Paul saw there are the roses that have bloomed for us in the past?"

"Don't!" said Diana. "You make me feel as if we were old women with everything in life behind us."

"I think I've almost felt as if we were since I heard about poor Ruby," said Anne. "If it is true that she is dying any other sad thing might be true, too."

“You don’t mind calling in at Elisha Wright’s for a moment, do you?” asked Diana. “Mother asked me to leave this little dish of jelly for Aunt Atossa.”

“Who is Aunt Atossa?”

“Oh, haven’t you heard? She’s Mrs. Samson Coates of Spencervale — Mrs. Elisha Wright’s aunt. She’s father’s aunt, too. Her husband died last winter and she was left very poor and lonely, so the Wrights took her to live with them. Mother thought we ought to take her, but father put his foot down. Live with Aunt Atossa he would not.”

“Is she so terrible?” asked Anne absently.

“You’ll probably see what she’s like before we can get away,” said Diana significantly. “Father says she has a face like a hatchet — it cuts the air. But her tongue is sharper still.”

Late as it was Aunt Atossa was cutting potato sets in the Wright kitchen. She wore a faded old wrapper, and her gray hair was decidedly untidy. Aunt Atossa did not like being “caught in a kilter,” so she went out of her way to be disagreeable.

“Oh, so you’re Anne Shirley?” she said, when Diana introduced Anne. “I’ve heard of you.” Her tone implied that she had heard nothing good. “Mrs. Andrews was telling me you were home. She said you had improved a good deal.”

There was no doubt Aunt Atossa thought there was plenty of room for further improvement. She ceased not from cutting sets with much energy.

“Is it any use to ask you to sit down?” she inquired sarcastically. “Of course, there’s nothing very entertaining here for you. The rest are all away.”

“Mother sent you this little pot of rhubarb jelly,” said Diana pleasantly. “She made it today and thought you might like some.”

“Oh, thanks,” said Aunt Atossa sourly. “I never fancy your mother’s jelly — she always makes it too sweet. However, I’ll try to worry some down. My appetite’s been dreadful poor this spring. I’m far from well,” continued Aunt Atossa solemnly, “but still I keep a-doing. People who can’t work aren’t wanted here. If it isn’t too much trouble will you be condescending enough to set the jelly in the pantry? I’m in a hurry to get these spuds done tonight. I suppose you two LADIES never do anything like this. You’d be afraid of spoiling your hands.”

“I used to cut potato sets before we rented the farm,” smiled Anne.

“I do it yet,” laughed Diana. “I cut sets three days last week. Of course,” she added teasingly, “I did my hands up in lemon juice and kid gloves every night after it.”

Aunt Atossa sniffed.

“I suppose you got that notion out of some of those silly magazines you read so many of. I wonder your mother allows you. But she always spoiled you. We all thought when George married her she wouldn’t be a suitable wife for him.”

Aunt Atossa sighed heavily, as if all forebodings upon the occasion of George Barry’s marriage had been amply and darkly fulfilled.

“Going, are you?” she inquired, as the girls rose. “Well, I suppose you can’t find much amusement talking to an old woman like me. It’s such a pity the boys ain’t home.”

“We want to run in and see Ruby Gillis a little while,” explained Diana.

“Oh, anything does for an excuse, of course,” said Aunt Atossa, amiably. “Just whip in and whip out before you have time to say how-do decently. It’s college airs, I s’pose. You’d be wiser to keep away from Ruby Gillis. The doctors say consumption’s catching. I always knew Ruby’d get something, gadding off to Boston last fall for a visit. People who ain’t content to stay home always catch something.”

“People who don’t go visiting catch things, too. Sometimes they even die,” said Diana solemnly.

“Then they don’t have themselves to blame for it,” retorted Aunt Atossa triumphantly. “I hear you are to be married in June, Diana.”

“There is no truth in that report,” said Diana, blushing.

“Well, don’t put it off too long,” said Aunt Atossa significantly. “You’ll fade soon — you’re all complexion and hair. And the Wrights are terrible fickle. You ought to wear a hat, MISS SHIRLEY. Your nose is freckling scandalous. My, but you ARE redheaded! Well, I s’pose we’re all as the Lord made us! Give Marilla Cuthbert my respects. She’s never been to see me since I come to Avonlea, but I s’pose I oughtn’t to complain. The Cuthberts always did think themselves a cut higher than any one else round here.”

“Oh, isn’t she dreadful?” gasped Diana, as they escaped down the lane.

“She’s worse than Miss Eliza Andrews,” said Anne. “But then think of living all your life with a name like Atossa! Wouldn’t it sour almost any one? She should have tried to imagine her name was Cordelia. It might have helped her a great deal. It certainly helped me in the days when I didn’t like ANNE.”

“Josie Pye will be just like her when she grows up,” said Diana. “Josie’s mother and Aunt Atossa are cousins, you know. Oh, dear, I’m glad that’s over. She’s so malicious — she seems to put a bad flavor in everything. Father tells such a funny story about her. One time they had a minister in Spencervale who was a very good, spiritual man but very deaf. He couldn’t hear any ordinary conversation at all. Well, they used to have a prayer meeting on Sunday evenings, and all the church members present would get up and pray in turn, or say a few words on some Bible verse. But one evening Aunt Atossa bounced up. She didn’t either pray or preach. Instead, she lit into everybody else in the church and gave them a fearful raking down, calling them right out by name and telling them how they all had behaved, and casting up all the quarrels and scandals of the past ten years. Finally she wound up by saying that she was disgusted with Spencervale

church and she never meant to darken its door again, and she hoped a fearful judgment would come upon it. Then she sat down out of breath, and the minister, who hadn't heard a word she said, immediately remarked, in a very devout voice, 'amen! The Lord grant our dear sister's prayer!' You ought to hear father tell the story."

"Speaking of stories, Diana," remarked Anne, in a significant, confidential tone, "do you know that lately I have been wondering if I could write a short story — a story that would be good enough to be published?"

"Why, of course you could," said Diana, after she had grasped the amazing suggestion. "You used to write perfectly thrilling stories years ago in our old Story Club."

"Well, I hardly meant one of that kind of stories," smiled Anne. "I've been thinking about it a little of late, but I'm almost afraid to try, for, if I should fail, it would be too humiliating."

"I heard Priscilla say once that all Mrs. Morgan's first stories were rejected. But I'm sure yours wouldn't be, Anne, for it's likely editors have more sense nowadays."

"Margaret Burton, one of the Junior girls at Redmond, wrote a story last winter and it was published in the Canadian Woman. I really do think I could write one at least as good."

"And will you have it published in the Canadian Woman?"

"I might try one of the bigger magazines first. It all depends on what kind of a story I write."

"What is it to be about?"

"I don't know yet. I want to get hold of a good plot. I believe this is very necessary from an editor's point of view. The only thing I've settled on is the heroine's name. It is to be AVERIL LESTER. Rather pretty, don't you think? Don't mention this to any one, Diana. I haven't told anybody but you and Mr. Harrison. HE wasn't very encouraging — he said there was

far too much trash written nowadays as it was, and he'd expected something better of me, after a year at college."

"What does Mr. Harrison know about it?" demanded Diana scornfully.

They found the Gillis home gay with lights and callers. Leonard Kimball, of Spencervale, and Morgan Bell, of Carmody, were glaring at each other across the parlor. Several merry girls had dropped in. Ruby was dressed in white and her eyes and cheeks were very brilliant. She laughed and chattered incessantly, and after the other girls had gone she took Anne upstairs to display her new summer dresses.

"I've a blue silk to make up yet, but it's a little heavy for summer wear. I think I'll leave it until the fall. I'm going to teach in White Sands, you know. How do you like my hat? That one you had on in church yesterday was real dinky. But I like something brighter for myself. Did you notice those two ridiculous boys downstairs? They've both come determined to sit each other out. I don't care a single bit about either of them, you know. Herb Spencer is the one I like. Sometimes I really do think he's MR. RIGHT. At Christmas I thought the Spencervale schoolmaster was that. But I found out something about him that turned me against him. He nearly went insane when I turned him down. I wish those two boys hadn't come tonight. I wanted to have a nice good talk with you, Anne, and tell you such heaps of things. You and I were always good chums, weren't we?"

Ruby slipped her arm about Anne's waist with a shallow little laugh. But just for a moment their eyes met, and, behind all the luster of Ruby's, Anne saw something that made her heart ache.

"Come up often, won't you, Anne?" whispered Ruby. "Come alone — I want you."

"Are you feeling quite well, Ruby?"

"Me! Why, I'm perfectly well. I never felt better in my life. Of course, that congestion last winter pulled me down a little. But just see my color. I don't look much like an invalid, I'm sure."

Ruby's voice was almost sharp. She pulled her arm away from Anne, as if in resentment, and ran downstairs, where she was gayer than ever, apparently so much absorbed in bantering her two swains that Diana and Anne felt rather out of it and soon went away.

Chapter XI I

“Averil’s Atonement”

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“What are you dreaming of, Anne?”

The two girls were loitering one evening in a fairy hollow of the brook. Ferns nodded in it, and little grasses were green, and wild pears hung finely-scented, white curtains around it.

Anne roused herself from her reverie with a happy sigh.

“I was thinking out my story, Diana.”

“Oh, have you really begun it?” cried Diana, all alight with eager interest in a moment.

“Yes, I have only a few pages written, but I have it all pretty well thought out. I’ve had such a time to get a suitable plot. None of the plots that suggested themselves suited a girl named AVERIL.”

“Couldn’t you have changed her name?”

“No, the thing was impossible. I tried to, but I couldn’t do it, any more than I could change yours. AVERIL was so real to me that no matter what other name I tried to give her I just thought of her as AVERIL behind it all. But finally I got a plot that matched her. Then came the excitement of choosing names for all my characters. You have no idea how fascinating that is. I’ve lain awake for hours thinking over those names. The hero’s name is PERCEVAL DALRYMPLE.”

“Have you named ALL the characters?” asked Diana wistfully. “If you hadn’t I was going to ask you to let me name one — just some

unimportant person. I'd feel as if I had a share in the story then."

"You may name the little hired boy who lived with the LESTERS," conceded Anne. "He is not very important, but he is the only one left unnamed."

"Call him RAYMOND FITZOSBORNE," suggested Diana, who had a store of such names laid away in her memory, relics of the old "Story Club," which she and Anne and Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis had had in their schooldays.

Anne shook her head doubtfully.

"I'm afraid that is too aristocratic a name for a chore boy, Diana. I couldn't imagine a Fitzosborne feeding pigs and picking up chips, could you?"

Diana didn't see why, if you had an imagination at all, you couldn't stretch it to that extent; but probably Anne knew best, and the chore boy was finally christened ROBERT RAY, to be called BOBBY should occasion require.

"How much do you suppose you'll get for it?" asked Diana.

But Anne had not thought about this at all. She was in pursuit of fame, not filthy lucre, and her literary dreams were as yet untainted by mercenary considerations.

"You'll let me read it, won't you?" pleaded Diana.

"When it is finished I'll read it to you and Mr. Harrison, and I shall want you to criticize it SEVERELY. No one else shall see it until it is published."

"How are you going to end it — happily or unhappily?"

"I'm not sure. I'd like it to end unhappily, because that would be so much more romantic. But I understand editors have a prejudice against sad endings. I heard Professor Hamilton say once that nobody but a genius

should try to write an unhappy ending. And,” concluded Anne modestly, “I’m anything but a genius.”

“Oh I like happy endings best. You’d better let him marry her,” said Diana, who, especially since her engagement to Fred, thought this was how every story should end.

“But you like to cry over stories?”

“Oh, yes, in the middle of them. But I like everything to come right at last.”

“I must have one pathetic scene in it,” said Anne thoughtfully. “I might let ROBERT RAY be injured in an accident and have a death scene.”

“No, you mustn’t kill BOBBY off,” declared Diana, laughing. “He belongs to me and I want him to live and flourish. Kill somebody else if you have to.”

For the next fortnight Anne writhed or reveled, according to mood, in her literary pursuits. Now she would be jubilant over a brilliant idea, now despairing because some contrary character would NOT behave properly. Diana could not understand this.

“MAKE them do as you want them to,” she said.

“I can’t,” mourned Anne. “Averil is such an unmanageable heroine. She WILL do and say things I never meant her to. Then that spoils everything that went before and I have to write it all over again.”

Finally, however, the story was finished, and Anne read it to Diana in the seclusion of the porch gable. She had achieved her “pathetic scene” without sacrificing ROBERT RAY, and she kept a watchful eye on Diana as she read it. Diana rose to the occasion and cried properly; but, when the end came, she looked a little disappointed.

“Why did you kill MAURICE LENNOX?” she asked reproachfully.

“He was the villain,” protested Anne. “He had to be punished.”

“I like him best of them all,” said unreasonable Diana.

“Well, he’s dead, and he’ll have to stay dead,” said Anne, rather resentfully. “If I had let him live he’d have gone on persecuting AVERIL and PERCEVAL.”

“Yes — unless you had reformed him.”

“That wouldn’t have been romantic, and, besides, it would have made the story too long.”

“Well, anyway, it’s a perfectly elegant story, Anne, and will make you famous, of that I’m sure. Have you got a title for it?”

“Oh, I decided on the title long ago. I call it AVERIL’S ATONEMENT. Doesn’t that sound nice and alliterative? Now, Diana, tell me candidly, do you see any faults in my story?”

“Well,” hesitated Diana, “that part where AVERIL makes the cake doesn’t seem to me quite romantic enough to match the rest. It’s just what anybody might do. Heroines shouldn’t do cooking, I think.”

“Why, that is where the humor comes in, and it’s one of the best parts of the whole story,” said Anne. And it may be stated that in this she was quite right.

Diana prudently refrained from any further criticism, but Mr. Harrison was much harder to please. First he told her there was entirely too much description in the story.

“Cut out all those flowery passages,” he said unfeelingly.

Anne had an uncomfortable conviction that Mr. Harrison was right, and she forced herself to expunge most of her beloved descriptions, though it took three rewritings before the story could be pruned down to please the fastidious Mr. Harrison.

“I’ve left out ALL the descriptions but the sunset,” she said at last. “I simply COULDN’T let it go. It was the best of them all.”

“It hasn’t anything to do with the story,” said Mr. Harrison, “and you shouldn’t have laid the scene among rich city people. What do you know of them? Why didn’t you lay it right here in Avonlea — changing the name, of course, or else Mrs. Rachel Lynde would probably think she was the heroine.”

“Oh, that would never have done,” protested Anne. “Avonlea is the dearest place in the world, but it isn’t quite romantic enough for the scene of a story.”

“I daresay there’s been many a romance in Avonlea — and many a tragedy, too,” said Mr. Harrison drily. “But your folks ain’t like real folks anywhere. They talk too much and use too high-flown language. There’s one place where that DALRYMPLE chap talks even on for two pages, and never lets the girl get a word in edgewise. If he’d done that in real life she’d have pitched him.”

“I don’t believe it,” said Anne flatly. In her secret soul she thought that the beautiful, poetical things said to AVERIL would win any girl’s heart completely. Besides, it was gruesome to hear of AVERIL, the stately, queen-like AVERIL, “pitching” any one. AVERIL “declined her suitors.”

“Anyhow,” resumed the merciless Mr. Harrison, “I don’t see why MAURICE LENNOX didn’t get her. He was twice the man the other is. He did bad things, but he did them. Perceval hadn’t time for anything but mooning.”

“Mooning.” That was even worse than “pitching!”

“MAURICE LENNOX was the villain,” said Anne indignantly. “I don’t see why every one likes him better than PERCEVAL.”

“Perceval is too good. He’s aggravating. Next time you write about a hero put a little spice of human nature in him.”

“AVERIL couldn’t have married MAURICE. He was bad.”

“She’d have reformed him. You can reform a man; you can’t reform a jellyfish, of course. Your story isn’t bad — it’s kind of interesting, I’ll admit. But you’re too young to write a story that would be worth while. Wait ten years.”

Anne made up her mind that the next time she wrote a story she wouldn’t ask anybody to criticize it. It was too discouraging. She would not read the story to Gilbert, although she told him about it.

“If it is a success you’ll see it when it is published, Gilbert, but if it is a failure nobody shall ever see it.”

Marilla knew nothing about the venture. In imagination Anne saw herself reading a story out of a magazine to Marilla, entrapping her into praise of it — for in imagination all things are possible — and then triumphantly announcing herself the author.

One day Anne took to the Post Office a long, bulky envelope, addressed, with the delightful confidence of youth and inexperience, to the very biggest of the “big” magazines. Diana was as excited over it as Anne herself.

“How long do you suppose it will be before you hear from it?” she asked.

“It shouldn’t be longer than a fortnight. Oh, how happy and proud I shall be if it is accepted!”

“Of course it will be accepted, and they will likely ask you to send them more. You may be as famous as Mrs. Morgan some day, Anne, and then how proud I’ll be of knowing you,” said Diana, who possessed, at least, the striking merit of an unselfish admiration of the gifts and graces of her friends.

A week of delightful dreaming followed, and then came a bitter awakening. One evening Diana found Anne in the porch gable, with suspicious-looking eyes. On the table lay a long envelope and a crumpled manuscript.

“Anne, your story hasn’t come back?” cried Diana incredulously.

“Yes, it has,” said Anne shortly.

“Well, that editor must be crazy. What reason did he give?”

“No reason at all. There is just a printed slip saying that it wasn’t found acceptable.”

“I never thought much of that magazine, anyway,” said Diana hotly. “The stories in it are not half as interesting as those in the Canadian Woman, although it costs so much more. I suppose the editor is prejudiced against any one who isn’t a Yankee. Don’t be discouraged, Anne. Remember how Mrs. Morgan’s stories came back. Send yours to the Canadian Woman.”

“I believe I will,” said Anne, plucking up heart. “And if it is published I’ll send that American editor a marked copy. But I’ll cut the sunset out. I believe Mr. Harrison was right.”

Out came the sunset; but in spite of this heroic mutilation the editor of the Canadian Woman sent Averil’s Atonement back so promptly that the indignant Diana declared that it couldn’t have been read at all, and vowed she was going to stop her subscription immediately. Anne took this second rejection with the calmness of despair. She locked the story away in the garret trunk where the old Story Club tales reposed; but first she yielded to Diana’s entreaties and gave her a copy.

“This is the end of my literary ambitions,” she said bitterly.

She never mentioned the matter to Mr. Harrison, but one evening he asked her bluntly if her story had been accepted.

“No, the editor wouldn’t take it,” she answered briefly.

Mr. Harrison looked sidewise at the flushed, delicate profile.

“Well, I suppose you’ll keep on writing them,” he said encouragingly.

“No, I shall never try to write a story again,” declared Anne, with the hopeless finality of nineteen when a door is shut in its face.

“I wouldn’t give up altogether,” said Mr. Harrison reflectively. “I’d write a story once in a while, but I wouldn’t pester editors with it. I’d write of people and places like I knew, and I’d make my characters talk everyday English; and I’d let the sun rise and set in the usual quiet way without much fuss over the fact. If I had to have villains at all, I’d give them a chance, Anne — I’d give them a chance. There are some terrible bad men in the world, I suppose, but you’d have to go a long piece to find them — though Mrs. Lynde believes we’re all bad. But most of us have got a little decency somewhere in us. Keep on writing, Anne.”

“No. It was very foolish of me to attempt it. When I’m through Redmond I’ll stick to teaching. I can teach. I can’t write stories.”

“It’ll be time for you to be getting a husband when you’re through Redmond,” said Mr. Harrison. “I don’t believe in putting marrying off too long — like I did.”

Anne got up and marched home. There were times when Mr. Harrison was really intolerable. “Pitching,” “mooning,” and “getting a husband.” Ow!!

Chapter XII I

The Way of Transgressors

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Davy and Dora were ready for Sunday School. They were going alone, which did not often happen, for Mrs. Lynde always attended Sunday School. But Mrs. Lynde had twisted her ankle and was lame, so she was staying home this morning. The twins were also to represent the family at church, for Anne had gone away the evening before to spend Sunday with friends in Carmody, and Marilla had one of her headaches.

Davy came downstairs slowly. Dora was waiting in the hall for him, having been made ready by Mrs. Lynde. Davy had attended to his own preparations. He had a cent in his pocket for the Sunday School collection, and a five-cent piece for the church collection; he carried his Bible in one hand and his Sunday School quarterly in the other; he knew his lesson and his Golden Text and his catechism question perfectly. Had he not studied them — perforce — in Mrs. Lynde's kitchen, all last Sunday afternoon? Davy, therefore, should have been in a placid frame of mind. As a matter of fact, despite text and catechism, he was inwardly as a ravening wolf.

Mrs. Lynde limped out of her kitchen as he joined Dora.

“Are you clean?” she demanded severely.

“Yes — all of me that shows,” Davy answered with a defiant scowl.

Mrs. Rachel sighed. She had her suspicions about Davy's neck and ears. But she knew that if she attempted to make a personal examination Davy would likely take to his heels and she could not pursue him today.

“Well, be sure you behave yourselves,” she warned them. “Don't walk in the dust. Don't stop in the porch to talk to the other children. Don't squirm

or wriggle in your places. Don't forget the Golden Text. Don't lose your collection or forget to put it in. Don't whisper at prayer time, and don't forget to pay attention to the sermon."

Davy deigned no response. He marched away down the lane, followed by the meek Dora. But his soul seethed within. Davy had suffered, or thought he had suffered, many things at the hands and tongue of Mrs. Rachel Lynde since she had come to Green Gables, for Mrs. Lynde could not live with anybody, whether they were nine or ninety, without trying to bring them up properly. And it was only the preceding afternoon that she had interfered to influence Marilla against allowing Davy to go fishing with the Timothy Cottons. Davy was still boiling over this.

As soon as he was out of the lane Davy stopped and twisted his countenance into such an unearthly and terrific contortion that Dora, although she knew his gifts in that respect, was honestly alarmed lest he should never in the world be able to get it straightened out again.

"Darn her," exploded Davy.

"Oh, Davy, don't swear," gasped Dora in dismay.

"'Darn' isn't swearing — not real swearing. And I don't care if it is," retorted Davy recklessly.

"Well, if you MUST say dreadful words don't say them on Sunday," pleaded Dora.

Davy was as yet far from repentance, but in his secret soul he felt that, perhaps, he had gone a little too far.

"I'm going to invent a swear word of my own," he declared.

"God will punish you if you do," said Dora solemnly.

"Then I think God is a mean old scamp," retorted Davy. "Doesn't He know a fellow must have some way of 'spressing his feelings?"

“Davy!!!” said Dora. She expected that Davy would be struck down dead on the spot. But nothing happened.

“Anyway, I ain’t going to stand any more of Mrs. Lynde’s bossing,” spluttered Davy. “Anne and Marilla may have the right to boss me, but SHE hasn’t. I’m going to do every single thing she told me not to do. You watch me.”

In grim, deliberate silence, while Dora watched him with the fascination of horror, Davy stepped off the green grass of the roadside, ankle deep into the fine dust which four weeks of rainless weather had made on the road, and marched along in it, shuffling his feet viciously until he was enveloped in a hazy cloud.

“That’s the beginning,” he announced triumphantly. “And I’m going to stop in the porch and talk as long as there’s anybody there to talk to. I’m going to squirm and wriggle and whisper, and I’m going to say I don’t know the Golden Text. And I’m going to throw away both of my collections RIGHT NOW.”

And Davy hurled cent and nickel over Mr. Barry’s fence with fierce delight.

“Satan made you do that,” said Dora reproachfully.

“He didn’t,” cried Davy indignantly. “I just thought it out for myself. And I’ve thought of something else. I’m not going to Sunday School or church at all. I’m going up to play with the Cottons. They told me yesterday they weren’t going to Sunday School today, ‘cause their mother was away and there was nobody to make them. Come along, Dora, we’ll have a great time.”

“I don’t want to go,” protested Dora.

“You’ve got to,” said Davy. “If you don’t come I’ll tell Marilla that Frank Bell kissed you in school last Monday.”

“I couldn’t help it. I didn’t know he was going to,” cried Dora, blushing scarlet.

“Well, you didn’t slap him or seem a bit cross,” retorted Davy. “I’ll tell her THAT, too, if you don’t come. We’ll take the short cut up this field.”

“I’m afraid of those cows,” protested poor Dora, seeing a prospect of escape.

“The very idea of your being scared of those cows,” scoffed Davy. “Why, they’re both younger than you.”

“They’re bigger,” said Dora.

“They won’t hurt you. Come along, now. This is great. When I grow up I ain’t going to bother going to church at all. I believe I can get to heaven by myself.”

“You’ll go to the other place if you break the Sabbath day,” said unhappy Dora, following him sorely against her will.

But Davy was not scared — yet. Hell was very far off, and the delights of a fishing expedition with the Cottons were very near. He wished Dora had more spunk. She kept looking back as if she were going to cry every minute, and that spoiled a fellow’s fun. Hang girls, anyway. Davy did not say “darn” this time, even in thought. He was not sorry — yet — that he had said it once, but it might be as well not to tempt the Unknown Powers too far on one day.

The small Cottons were playing in their back yard, and hailed Davy’s appearance with whoops of delight. Pete, Tommy, Adolphus, and Mirabel Cotton were all alone. Their mother and older sisters were away. Dora was thankful Mirabel was there, at least. She had been afraid she would be alone in a crowd of boys. Mirabel was almost as bad as a boy — she was so noisy and sunburned and reckless. But at least she wore dresses.

“We’ve come to go fishing,” announced Davy.

“Whoop,” yelled the Cottons. They rushed away to dig worms at once, Mirabel leading the van with a tin can. Dora could have sat down and cried. Oh, if only that hateful Frank Bell had never kissed her! Then she could have defied Davy, and gone to her beloved Sunday School.

They dared not, of course, go fishing on the pond, where they would be seen by people going to church. They had to resort to the brook in the woods behind the Cotton house. But it was full of trout, and they had a glorious time that morning — at least the Cottons certainly had, and Davy seemed to have it. Not being entirely bereft of prudence, he had discarded boots and stockings and borrowed Tommy Cotton’s overalls. Thus accoutered, bog and marsh and undergrowth had no terrors for him. Dora was frankly and manifestly miserable. She followed the others in their peregrinations from pool to pool, clasping her Bible and quarterly tightly and thinking with bitterness of soul of her beloved class where she should be sitting that very moment, before a teacher she adored. Instead, here she was roaming the woods with those half-wild Cottons, trying to keep her boots clean and her pretty white dress free from rents and stains. Mirabel had offered the loan of an apron but Dora had scornfully refused.

The trout bit as they always do on Sundays. In an hour the transgressors had all the fish they wanted, so they returned to the house, much to Dora’s relief. She sat primly on a hencoop in the yard while the others played an uproarious game of tag; and then they all climbed to the top of the pighouse roof and cut their initials on the saddleboard. The flat-roofed henhouse and a pile of straw beneath gave Davy another inspiration. They spent a splendid half hour climbing on the roof and diving off into the straw with whoops and yells.

But even unlawful pleasures must come to an end. When the rumble of wheels over the pond bridge told that people were going home from church Davy knew they must go. He discarded Tommy’s overalls, resumed his own rightful attire, and turned away from his string of trout with a sigh. No use to think of taking them home.

“Well, hadn’t we a splendid time?” he demanded defiantly, as they went down the hill field.

“I hadn’t,” said Dora flatly. “And I don’t believe you had — really — either,” she added, with a flash of insight that was not to be expected of her.

“I had so,” cried Davy, but in the voice of one who doth protest too much. “No wonder you hadn’t — just sitting there like a — like a mule.”

“I ain’t going to, ‘sociate with the Cottons,” said Dora loftily.

“The Cottons are all right,” retorted Davy. “And they have far better times than we have. They do just as they please and say just what they like before everybody. I’m going to do that, too, after this.”

“There are lots of things you wouldn’t dare say before everybody,” averred Dora.

“No, there isn’t.”

“There is, too. Would you,” demanded Dora gravely, “would you say ‘tomcat’ before the minister?”

This was a staggerer. Davy was not prepared for such a concrete example of the freedom of speech. But one did not have to be consistent with Dora.

“Of course not,” he admitted sulkily.

“‘Tomcat’ isn’t a holy word. I wouldn’t mention such an animal before a minister at all.”

“But if you had to?” persisted Dora.

“I’d call it a Thomas pussy,” said Davy.

“I think ‘gentleman cat’ would be more polite,” reflected Dora.

“YOU thinking!” retorted Davy with withering scorn.

Davy was not feeling comfortable, though he would have died before he admitted it to Dora. Now that the exhilaration of truant delights had died

away, his conscience was beginning to give him salutary twinges. After all, perhaps it would have been better to have gone to Sunday School and church. Mrs. Lynde might be bossy; but there was always a box of cookies in her kitchen cupboard and she was not stingy. At this inconvenient moment Davy remembered that when he had torn his new school pants the week before, Mrs. Lynde had mended them beautifully and never said a word to Marilla about them.

But Davy's cup of iniquity was not yet full. He was to discover that one sin demands another to cover it. They had dinner with Mrs. Lynde that day, and the first thing she asked Davy was,

"Were all your class in Sunday School today?"

"Yes'm," said Davy with a gulp. "All were there—'cept one."

"Did you say your Golden Text and catechism?"

"Yes'm."

"Did you put your collection in?"

"Yes'm."

"Was Mrs. Malcolm MacPherson in church?"

"I don't know." This, at least, was the truth, thought wretched Davy.

"Was the Ladies' Aid announced for next week?"

"Yes'm" — quakingly.

"Was prayer-meeting?"

"I — I don't know."

"YOU should know. You should listen more attentively to the announcements. What was Mr. Harvey's text?"

Davy took a frantic gulp of water and swallowed it and the last protest of conscience together. He glibly recited an old Golden Text learned several weeks ago. Fortunately Mrs. Lynde now stopped questioning him; but Davy did not enjoy his dinner.

He could only eat one helping of pudding.

“What’s the matter with you?” demanded justly astonished Mrs. Lynde.
“Are you sick?”

“No,” muttered Davy.

“You look pale. You’d better keep out of the sun this afternoon,” admonished Mrs. Lynde.

“Do you know how many lies you told Mrs. Lynde?” asked Dora reproachfully, as soon as they were alone after dinner.

Davy, goaded to desperation, turned fiercely.

“I don’t know and I don’t care,” he said. “You just shut up, Dora Keith.”

Then poor Davy betook himself to a secluded retreat behind the woodpile to think over the way of transgressors.

Green Gables was wrapped in darkness and silence when Anne reached home. She lost no time going to bed, for she was very tired and sleepy. There had been several Avonlea jollifications the preceding week, involving rather late hours. Anne’s head was hardly on her pillow before she was half asleep; but just then her door was softly opened and a pleading voice said, “Anne.”

Anne sat up drowsily.

“Davy, is that you? What is the matter?”

A white-clad figure flung itself across the floor and on to the bed.

“Anne,” sobbed Davy, getting his arms about her neck. “I’m awful glad you’re home. I couldn’t go to sleep till I’d told somebody.”

“Told somebody what?”

“How mis’rubul I am.”

“Why are you miserable, dear?”

“‘Cause I was so bad today, Anne. Oh, I was awful bad — badder’n I’ve ever been yet.”

“What did you do?”

“Oh, I’m afraid to tell you. You’ll never like me again, Anne. I couldn’t say my prayers tonight. I couldn’t tell God what I’d done. I was ‘shamed to have Him know.”

“But He knew anyway, Davy.”

“That’s what Dora said. But I thought p’raps He mightn’t have noticed just at the time. Anyway, I’d rather tell you first.”

“WHAT is it you did?”

Out it all came in a rush.

“I run away from Sunday School — and went fishing with the Cottons — and I told ever so many whoppers to Mrs. Lynde — oh! ‘most half a dozen — and — and — I — I said a swear word, Anne — a pretty near swear word, anyhow — and I called God names.”

There was silence. Davy didn’t know what to make of it. Was Anne so shocked that she never would speak to him again?

“Anne, what are you going to do to me?” he whispered.

“Nothing, dear. You’ve been punished already, I think.”

“No, I haven’t. Nothing’s been done to me.”

“You’ve been very unhappy ever since you did wrong, haven’t you?”

“You bet!” said Davy emphatically.

“That was your conscience punishing you, Davy.”

“What’s my conscience? I want to know.”

“It’s something in you, Davy, that always tells you when you are doing wrong and makes you unhappy if you persist in doing it. Haven’t you noticed that?”

“Yes, but I didn’t know what it was. I wish I didn’t have it. I’d have lots more fun. Where is my conscience, Anne? I want to know. Is it in my stomach?”

“No, it’s in your soul,” answered Anne, thankful for the darkness, since gravity must be preserved in serious matters.

“I s’pose I can’t get clear of it then,” said Davy with a sigh. “Are you going to tell Marilla and Mrs. Lynde on me, Anne?”

“No, dear, I’m not going to tell any one. You are sorry you were naughty, aren’t you?”

“You bet!”

“And you’ll never be bad like that again.”

“No, but—” added Davy cautiously, “I might be bad some other way.”

“You won’t say naughty words, or run away on Sundays, or tell falsehoods to cover up your sins?”

“No. It doesn’t pay,” said Davy.

“Well, Davy, just tell God you are sorry and ask Him to forgive you.”

“Have YOU forgiven me, Anne?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Then,” said Davy joyously, “I don’t care much whether God does or not.”

“Davy!”

“Oh — I’ll ask Him — I’ll ask Him,” said Davy quickly, scrambling off the bed, convinced by Anne’s tone that he must have said something dreadful. “I don’t mind asking Him, Anne. — Please, God, I’m awful sorry I behaved bad today and I’ll try to be good on Sundays always and please forgive me. — There now, Anne.”

“Well, now, run off to bed like a good boy.”

“All right. Say, I don’t feel mis’rubul any more. I feel fine. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Anne slipped down on her pillows with a sigh of relief. Oh — how sleepy — she was! In another second —

“Anne!” Davy was back again by her bed. Anne dragged her eyes open.

“What is it now, dear?” she asked, trying to keep a note of impatience out of her voice.

“Anne, have you ever noticed how Mr. Harrison spits? Do you s’pose, if I practice hard, I can learn to spit just like him?”

Anne sat up.

“Davy Keith,” she said, “go straight to your bed and don’t let me catch you out of it again tonight! Go, now!”

Davy went, and stood not upon the order of his going.

Chapter XI V

The Summons

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Anne was sitting with Ruby Gillis in the Gillis' garden after the day had crept lingeringly through it and was gone. It had been a warm, smoky summer afternoon. The world was in a splendor of outflowering. The idle valleys were full of hazes. The woodways were pranked with shadows and the fields with the purple of the asters.

Anne had given up a moonlight drive to the White Sands beach that she might spend the evening with Ruby. She had so spent many evenings that summer, although she often wondered what good it did any one, and sometimes went home deciding that she could not go again.

Ruby grew paler as the summer waned; the White Sands school was given up—"her father thought it better that she shouldn't teach till New Year's"—and the fancy work she loved oftener and oftener fell from hands grown too weary for it. But she was always gay, always hopeful, always chattering and whispering of her beaux, and their rivalries and despairs. It was this that made Anne's visits hard for her. What had once been silly or amusing was gruesome, now; it was death peering through a wilful mask of life. Yet Ruby seemed to cling to her, and never let her go until she had promised to come again soon. Mrs. Lynde grumbled about Anne's frequent visits, and declared she would catch consumption; even Marilla was dubious.

"Every time you go to see Ruby you come home looking tired out," she said.

"It's so very sad and dreadful," said Anne in a low tone. "Ruby doesn't seem to realize her condition in the least. And yet I somehow feel she needs help — craves it — and I want to give it to her and can't. All the

time I'm with her I feel as if I were watching her struggle with an invisible foe — trying to push it back with such feeble resistance as she has. That is why I come home tired."

But tonight Anne did not feel this so keenly. Ruby was strangely quiet. She said not a word about parties and drives and dresses and "fellows." She lay in the hammock, with her untouched work beside her, and a white shawl wrapped about her thin shoulders. Her long yellow braids of hair — how Anne had envied those beautiful braids in old schooldays! — lay on either side of her. She had taken the pins out — they made her head ache, she said. The hectic flush was gone for the time, leaving her pale and childlike.

The moon rose in the silvery sky, empearling the clouds around her. Below, the pond shimmered in its hazy radiance. Just beyond the Gillis homestead was the church, with the old graveyard beside it. The moonlight shone on the white stones, bringing them out in clear-cut relief against the dark trees behind.

"How strange the graveyard looks by moonlight!" said Ruby suddenly. "How ghostly!" she shuddered. "Anne, it won't be long now before I'll be lying over there. You and Diana and all the rest will be going about, full of life — and I'll be there — in the old graveyard — dead!"

The surprise of it bewildered Anne. For a few moments she could not speak.

"You know it's so, don't you?" said Ruby insistently.

"Yes, I know," answered Anne in a low tone. "Dear Ruby, I know."

"Everybody knows it," said Ruby bitterly. "I know it — I've known it all summer, though I wouldn't give in. And, oh, Anne" — she reached out and caught Anne's hand pleadingly, impulsively—"I don't want to die. I'm AFRAID to die."

"Why should you be afraid, Ruby?" asked Anne quietly.

“Because — because — oh, I’m not afraid but that I’ll go to heaven, Anne. I’m a church member. But — it’ll be all so different. I think — and think — and I get so frightened — and — and — homesick. Heaven must be very beautiful, of course, the Bible says so — but, Anne, IT WON’T BE WHAT I’VE BEEN USED TO.”

Through Anne’s mind drifted an intrusive recollection of a funny story she had heard Philippa Gordon tell — the story of some old man who had said very much the same thing about the world to come. It had sounded funny then — she remembered how she and Priscilla had laughed over it. But it did not seem in the least humorous now, coming from Ruby’s pale, trembling lips. It was sad, tragic — and true! Heaven could not be what Ruby had been used to. There had been nothing in her gay, frivolous life, her shallow ideals and aspirations, to fit her for that great change, or make the life to come seem to her anything but alien and unreal and undesirable. Anne wondered helplessly what she could say that would help her. Could she say anything? “I think, Ruby,” she began hesitatingly — for it was difficult for Anne to speak to any one of the deepest thoughts of her heart, or the new ideas that had vaguely begun to shape themselves in her mind, concerning the great mysteries of life here and hereafter, superseding her old childish conceptions, and it was hardest of all to speak of them to such as Ruby Gillis—”I think, perhaps, we have very mistaken ideas about heaven — what it is and what it holds for us. I don’t think it can be so very different from life here as most people seem to think. I believe we’ll just go on living, a good deal as we live here — and be OURSELVES just the same — only it will be easier to be good and to — follow the highest. All the hindrances and perplexities will be taken away, and we shall see clearly. Don’t be afraid, Ruby.”

“I can’t help it,” said Ruby pitifully. “Even if what you say about heaven is true — and you can’t be sure — it may be only that imagination of yours — it won’t be JUST the same. It CAN’T be. I want to go on living HERE. I’m so young, Anne. I haven’t had my life. I’ve fought so hard to live — and it isn’t any use — I have to die — and leave EVERYTHING I care for.” Anne sat in a pain that was almost intolerable. She could not tell comforting falsehoods; and all that Ruby said was so horribly true. She WAS leaving everything she cared for. She had laid up her treasures on

earth only; she had lived solely for the little things of life — the things that pass — forgetting the great things that go onward into eternity, bridging the gulf between the two lives and making of death a mere passing from one dwelling to the other — from twilight to unclouded day. God would take care of her there — Anne believed — she would learn — but now it was no wonder her soul clung, in blind helplessness, to the only things she knew and loved.

Ruby raised herself on her arm and lifted up her bright, beautiful blue eyes to the moonlit skies.

“I want to live,” she said, in a trembling voice. “I want to live like other girls. I — I want to be married, Anne — and — and — have little children. You know I always loved babies, Anne. I couldn’t say this to any one but you. I know you understand. And then poor Herb — he — he loves me and I love him, Anne. The others meant nothing to me, but HE does — and if I could live I would be his wife and be so happy. Oh, Anne, it’s hard.”

Ruby sank back on her pillows and sobbed convulsively. Anne pressed her hand in an agony of sympathy — silent sympathy, which perhaps helped Ruby more than broken, imperfect words could have done; for presently she grew calmer and her sobs ceased.

“I’m glad I’ve told you this, Anne,” she whispered. “It has helped me just to say it all out. I’ve wanted to all summer — every time you came. I wanted to talk it over with you — but I COULDN’T. It seemed as if it would make death so SURE if I SAID I was going to die, or if any one else said it or hinted it. I wouldn’t say it, or even think it. In the daytime, when people were around me and everything was cheerful, it wasn’t so hard to keep from thinking of it. But in the night, when I couldn’t sleep — it was so dreadful, Anne. I couldn’t get away from it then. Death just came and stared me in the face, until I got so frightened I could have screamed.

“But you won’t be frightened any more, Ruby, will you? You’ll be brave, and believe that all is going to be well with you.”

“I’ll try. I’ll think over what you have said, and try to believe it. And you’ll come up as often as you can, won’t you, Anne?”

“Yes, dear.”

“It — it won’t be very long now, Anne. I feel sure of that. And I’d rather have you than any one else. I always liked you best of all the girls I went to school with. You were never jealous, or mean, like some of them were. Poor Em White was up to see me yesterday. You remember Em and I were such chums for three years when we went to school? And then we quarrelled the time of the school concert. We’ve never spoken to each other since. Wasn’t it silly? Anything like that seems silly NOW. But Em and I made up the old quarrel yesterday. She said she’d have spoken years ago, only she thought I wouldn’t. And I never spoke to her because I was sure she wouldn’t speak to me. Isn’t it strange how people misunderstand each other, Anne?”

“Most of the trouble in life comes from misunderstanding, I think,” said Anne. “I must go now, Ruby. It’s getting late — and you shouldn’t be out in the damp.”

“You’ll come up soon again.”

“Yes, very soon. And if there’s anything I can do to help you I’ll be so glad.”

“I know. You HAVE helped me already. Nothing seems quite so dreadful now. Good night, Anne.”

“Good night, dear.”

Anne walked home very slowly in the moonlight. The evening had changed something for her. Life held a different meaning, a deeper purpose. On the surface it would go on just the same; but the deeps had been stirred. It must not be with her as with poor butterfly Ruby. When she came to the end of one life it must not be to face the next with the shrinking terror of something wholly different — something for which accustomed thought and ideal and aspiration had unfitted her. The little things of life, sweet and excellent in their place, must not be the things lived for; the highest must be sought and followed; the life of heaven must be begun here on earth.

That good night in the garden was for all time. Anne never saw Ruby in life again. The next night the A.V.I.S. gave a farewell party to Jane Andrews before her departure for the West. And, while light feet danced and bright eyes laughed and merry tongues chattered, there came a summons to a soul in Avonlea that might not be disregarded or evaded. The next morning the word went from house to house that Ruby Gillis was dead. She had died in her sleep, painlessly and calmly, and on her face was a smile — as if, after all, death had come as a kindly friend to lead her over the threshold, instead of the grisly phantom she had dreaded.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde said emphatically after the funeral that Ruby Gillis was the handsomest corpse she ever laid eyes on. Her loveliness, as she lay, white-clad, among the delicate flowers that Anne had placed about her, was remembered and talked of for years in Avonlea. Ruby had always been beautiful; but her beauty had been of the earth, earthy; it had had a certain insolent quality in it, as if it flaunted itself in the beholder's eye; spirit had never shone through it, intellect had never refined it. But death had touched it and consecrated it, bringing out delicate modelings and purity of outline never seen before — doing what life and love and great sorrow and deep womanhood joys might have done for Ruby. Anne, looking down through a mist of tears, at her old playfellow, thought she saw the face God had meant Ruby to have, and remembered it so always.

Mrs. Gillis called Anne aside into a vacant room before the funeral procession left the house, and gave her a small packet.

“I want you to have this,” she sobbed. “Ruby would have liked you to have it. It's the embroidered centerpiece she was working at. It isn't quite finished — the needle is sticking in it just where her poor little fingers put it the last time she laid it down, the afternoon before she died.”

“There's always a piece of unfinished work left,” said Mrs. Lynde, with tears in her eyes. “But I suppose there's always some one to finish it.”

“How difficult it is to realize that one we have always known can really be dead,” said Anne, as she and Diana walked home. “Ruby is the first of our schoolmates to go. One by one, sooner or later, all the rest of us must follow.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Diana uncomfortably. She did not want to talk of that. She would have preferred to have discussed the details of the funeral — the splendid white velvet casket Mr. Gillis had insisted on having for Ruby—”the Gillises must always make a splurge, even at funerals,” quoth Mrs. Rachel Lynde — Herb Spencer’s sad face, the uncontrolled, hysteric grief of one of Ruby’s sisters — but Anne would not talk of these things. She seemed wrapped in a reverie in which Diana felt lonesomely that she had neither lot nor part.

“Ruby Gillis was a great girl to laugh,” said Davy suddenly. “Will she laugh as much in heaven as she did in Avonlea, Anne? I want to know.”

“Yes, I think she will,” said Anne.

“Oh, Anne,” protested Diana, with a rather shocked smile.

“Well, why not, Diana?” asked Anne seriously. “Do you think we’ll never laugh in heaven?”

“Oh — I — I don’t know” floundered Diana. “It doesn’t seem just right, somehow. You know it’s rather dreadful to laugh in church.”

“But heaven won’t be like church — all the time,” said Anne.

“I hope it ain’t,” said Davy emphatically. “If it is I don’t want to go. Church is awful dull. Anyway, I don’t mean to go for ever so long. I mean to live to be a hundred years old, like Mr. Thomas Blewett of White Sands. He says he’s lived so long ‘cause he always smoked tobacco and it killed all the germs. Can I smoke tobacco pretty soon, Anne?”

“No, Davy, I hope you’ll never use tobacco,” said Anne absently.

“What’ll you feel like if the germs kill me then?” demanded Davy.

Chapter X V

A Dream Turned Upside Down

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“Just one more week and we go back to Redmond,” said Anne. She was happy at the thought of returning to work, classes and Redmond friends. Pleasing visions were also being woven around Patty’s Place. There was a warm pleasant sense of home in the thought of it, even though she had never lived there.

But the summer had been a very happy one, too — a time of glad living with summer suns and skies, a time of keen delight in wholesome things; a time of renewing and deepening of old friendships; a time in which she had learned to live more nobly, to work more patiently, to play more heartily.

“All life lessons are not learned at college,” she thought. “Life teaches them everywhere.”

But alas, the final week of that pleasant vacation was spoiled for Anne, by one of those impish happenings which are like a dream turned upside down.

“Been writing any more stories lately?” inquired Mr. Harrison genially one evening when Anne was taking tea with him and Mrs. Harrison.

“No,” answered Anne, rather crisply.

“Well, no offense meant. Mrs. Hiram Sloane told me the other day that a big envelope addressed to the Rollings Reliable Baking Powder Company of Montreal had been dropped into the post office box a month ago, and she suspicioned that somebody was trying for the prize they’d offered for

the best story that introduced the name of their baking powder. She said it wasn't addressed in your writing, but I thought maybe it was you."

"Indeed, no! I saw the prize offer, but I'd never dream of competing for it. I think it would be perfectly disgraceful to write a story to advertise a baking powder. It would be almost as bad as Judson Parker's patent medicine fence."

So spake Anne loftily, little dreaming of the valley of humiliation awaiting her. That very evening Diana popped into the porch gable, bright-eyed and rosy cheeked, carrying a letter.

"Oh, Anne, here's a letter for you. I was at the office, so I thought I'd bring it along. Do open it quick. If it is what I believe it is I shall just be wild with delight." Anne, puzzled, opened the letter and glanced over the typewritten contents.

Miss Anne Shirley,

Green Gables,

Avonlea, P.E. Island.

"DEAR MADAM: We have much pleasure in informing you that your charming story 'Averil's Atonement' has won the prize of twenty-five dollars offered in our recent competition. We enclose the check herewith. We are arranging for the publication of the story in several prominent Canadian newspapers, and we also intend to have it printed in pamphlet form for distribution among our patrons. Thanking you for the interest you have shown in our enterprise, we remain,

"Yours very truly,

"THE ROLLINGS RELIABLE

"BAKING POWDER Co."

"I don't understand," said Anne, blankly.

Diana clapped her hands.

“Oh, I KNEW it would win the prize — I was sure of it. I sent your story into the competition, Anne.”

“Diana — Barry!”

“Yes, I did,” said Diana gleefully, perching herself on the bed. “When I saw the offer I thought of your story in a minute, and at first I thought I’d ask you to send it in. But then I was afraid you wouldn’t — you had so little faith left in it. So I just decided I’d send the copy you gave me, and say nothing about it. Then, if it didn’t win the prize, you’d never know and you wouldn’t feel badly over it, because the stories that failed were not to be returned, and if it did you’d have such a delightful surprise.”

Diana was not the most discerning of mortals, but just at this moment it struck her that Anne was not looking exactly overjoyed. The surprise was there, beyond doubt — but where was the delight?

“Why, Anne, you don’t seem a bit pleased!” she exclaimed.

Anne instantly manufactured a smile and put it on.

“Of course I couldn’t be anything but pleased over your unselfish wish to give me pleasure,” she said slowly. “But you know — I’m so amazed — I can’t realize it — and I don’t understand. There wasn’t a word in my story about — about—” Anne choked a little over the word—”baking powder.”

“Oh, I put that in,” said Diana, reassured. “It was as easy as wink — and of course my experience in our old Story Club helped me. You know the scene where Averil makes the cake? Well, I just stated that she used the Rollings Reliable in it, and that was why it turned out so well; and then, in the last paragraph, where PERCEVAL clasps AVERIL in his arms and says, ‘Sweetheart, the beautiful coming years will bring us the fulfilment of our home of dreams,’ I added, ‘in which we will never use any baking powder except Rollings Reliable.’”

“Oh,” gasped poor Anne, as if some one had dashed cold water on her.

“And you’ve won the twenty-five dollars,” continued Diana jubilantly. “Why, I heard Priscilla say once that the Canadian Woman only pays five dollars for a story!”

Anne held out the hateful pink slip in shaking fingers.

“I can’t take it — it’s yours by right, Diana. You sent the story in and made the alterations. I — I would certainly never have sent it. So you must take the check.”

“I’d like to see myself,” said Diana scornfully. “Why, what I did wasn’t any trouble. The honor of being a friend of the prizewinner is enough for me. Well, I must go. I should have gone straight home from the post office for we have company. But I simply had to come and hear the news. I’m so glad for your sake, Anne.”

Anne suddenly bent forward, put her arms about Diana, and kissed her cheek.

“I think you are the sweetest and truest friend in the world, Diana,” she said, with a little tremble in her voice, “and I assure you I appreciate the motive of what you’ve done.”

Diana, pleased and embarrassed, got herself away, and poor Anne, after flinging the innocent check into her bureau drawer as if it were blood-money, cast herself on her bed and wept tears of shame and outraged sensibility. Oh, she could never live this down — never!

Gilbert arrived at dusk, brimming over with congratulations, for he had called at Orchard Slope and heard the news. But his congratulations died on his lips at sight of Anne’s face.

“Why, Anne, what is the matter? I expected to find you radiant over winning Rollings Reliable prize. Good for you!”

“Oh, Gilbert, not you,” implored Anne, in an ET-TU BRUTE tone. “I thought YOU would understand. Can’t you see how awful it is?”

“I must confess I can’t. WHAT is wrong?”

“Everything,” moaned Anne. “I feel as if I were disgraced forever. What do you think a mother would feel like if she found her child tattooed over with a baking powder advertisement? I feel just the same. I loved my poor little story, and I wrote it out of the best that was in me. And it is SACRILEGE to have it degraded to the level of a baking powder advertisement. Don’t you remember what Professor Hamilton used to tell us in the literature class at Queen’s? He said we were never to write a word for a low or unworthy motive, but always to cling to the very highest ideals. What will he think when he hears I’ve written a story to advertise Rollings Reliable? And, oh, when it gets out at Redmond! Think how I’ll be teased and laughed at!”

“That you won’t,” said Gilbert, wondering uneasily if it were that confounded Junior’s opinion in particular over which Anne was worried. “The Reds will think just as I thought — that you, being like nine out of ten of us, not overburdened with worldly wealth, had taken this way of earning an honest penny to help yourself through the year. I don’t see that there’s anything low or unworthy about that, or anything ridiculous either. One would rather write masterpieces of literature no doubt — but meanwhile board and tuition fees have to be paid.”

This commonsense, matter-of-fact view of the case cheered Anne a little. At least it removed her dread of being laughed at, though the deeper hurt of an outraged ideal remained.

Chapter XV I

Adjusted Relationships

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“It’s the homiest spot I ever saw — it’s homier than home,” avowed Philippa Gordon, looking about her with delighted eyes. They were all assembled at twilight in the big livingroom at Patty’s Place — Anne and Priscilla, Phil and Stella, Aunt Jamesina, Rusty, Joseph, the Sarah-Cat, and Gog and Magog. The firelight shadows were dancing over the walls; the cats were purring; and a huge bowl of hothouse chrysanthemums, sent to Phil by one of the victims, shone through the golden gloom like creamy moons.

It was three weeks since they had considered themselves settled, and already all believed the experiment would be a success. The first fortnight after their return had been a pleasantly exciting one; they had been busy setting up their household goods, organizing their little establishment, and adjusting different opinions.

Anne was not over-sorry to leave Avonlea when the time came to return to college. The last few days of her vacation had not been pleasant. Her prize story had been published in the Island papers; and Mr. William Blair had, upon the counter of his store, a huge pile of pink, green and yellow pamphlets, containing it, one of which he gave to every customer. He sent a complimentary bundle to Anne, who promptly dropped them all in the kitchen stove. Her humiliation was the consequence of her own ideals only, for Avonlea folks thought it quite splendid that she should have won the prize. Her many friends regarded her with honest admiration; her few foes with scornful envy. Josie Pye said she believed Anne Shirley had just copied the story; she was sure she remembered reading it in a paper years before. The Sloanes, who had found out or guessed that Charlie had been “turned down,” said they didn’t think it was much to be proud of; almost any one could have done it, if she tried. Aunt Atossa told Anne she was

very sorry to hear she had taken to writing novels; nobody born and bred in Avonlea would do it; that was what came of adopting orphans from goodness knew where, with goodness knew what kind of parents. Even Mrs. Rachel Lynde was darkly dubious about the propriety of writing fiction, though she was almost reconciled to it by that twenty-five dollar check.

“It is perfectly amazing, the price they pay for such lies, that’s what,” she said, half-proudly, half-severely.

All things considered, it was a relief when going-away time came. And it was very jolly to be back at Redmond, a wise, experienced Soph with hosts of friends to greet on the merry opening day. Pris and Stella and Gilbert were there, Charlie Sloane, looking more important than ever a Sophomore looked before, Phil, with the Alec-and-Alonzo question still unsettled, and Moody Spurgeon MacPherson. Moody Spurgeon had been teaching school ever since leaving Queen’s, but his mother had concluded it was high time he gave it up and turned his attention to learning how to be a minister. Poor Moody Spurgeon fell on hard luck at the very beginning of his college career. Half a dozen ruthless Sophs, who were among his fellow-boarders, swooped down upon him one night and shaved half of his head. In this guise the luckless Moody Spurgeon had to go about until his hair grew again. He told Anne bitterly that there were times when he had his doubts as to whether he was really called to be a minister.

Aunt Jamesina did not come until the girls had Patty’s Place ready for her. Miss Patty had sent the key to Anne, with a letter in which she said Gog and Magog were packed in a box under the spare-room bed, but might be taken out when wanted; in a postscript she added that she hoped the girls would be careful about putting up pictures. The living room had been newly papered five years before and she and Miss Maria did not want any more holes made in that new paper than was absolutely necessary. For the rest she trusted everything to Anne.

How those girls enjoyed putting their nest in order! As Phil said, it was almost as good as getting married. You had the fun of homemaking without the bother of a husband. All brought something with them to adorn or make comfortable the little house. Pris and Phil and Stella had knick-

knacks and pictures galore, which latter they proceeded to hang according to taste, in reckless disregard of Miss Patty's new paper.

"We'll putty the holes up when we leave, dear — she'll never know," they said to protesting Anne.

Diana had given Anne a pine needle cushion and Miss Ada had given both her and Priscilla a fearfully and wonderfully embroidered one. Marilla had sent a big box of preserves, and darkly hinted at a hamper for Thanksgiving, and Mrs. Lynde gave Anne a patchwork quilt and loaned her five more.

"You take them," she said authoritatively. "They might as well be in use as packed away in that trunk in the garret for moths to gnaw."

No moths would ever have ventured near those quilts, for they reeked of mothballs to such an extent that they had to be hung in the orchard of Patty's Place a full fortnight before they could be endured indoors. Verily, aristocratic Spofford Avenue had rarely beheld such a display. The gruff old millionaire who lived "next door" came over and wanted to buy the gorgeous red and yellow "tulip-pattern" one which Mrs. Rachel had given Anne. He said his mother used to make quilts like that, and by Jove, he wanted one to remind him of her. Anne would not sell it, much to his disappointment, but she wrote all about it to Mrs. Lynde. That highly-gratified lady sent word back that she had one just like it to spare, so the tobacco king got his quilt after all, and insisted on having it spread on his bed, to the disgust of his fashionable wife.

Mrs. Lynde's quilts served a very useful purpose that winter. Patty's Place for all its many virtues, had its faults also. It was really a rather cold house; and when the frosty nights came the girls were very glad to snuggle down under Mrs. Lynde's quilts, and hoped that the loan of them might be accounted unto her for righteousness. Anne had the blue room she had coveted at sight. Priscilla and Stella had the large one. Phil was blissfully content with the little one over the kitchen; and Aunt Jamesina was to have the downstairs one off the livingroom. Rusty at first slept on the doorstep.

Anne, walking home from Redmond a few days after her return, became aware that the people that she met surveyed her with a covert, indulgent smile. Anne wondered uneasily what was the matter with her. Was her hat crooked? Was her belt loose? Craning her head to investigate, Anne, for the first time, saw Rusty.

Trotting along behind her, close to her heels, was quite the most forlorn specimen of the cat tribe she had ever beheld. The animal was well past kittenhood, lank, thin, disreputable looking. Pieces of both ears were lacking, one eye was temporarily out of repair, and one jowl ludicrously swollen. As for color, if a once black cat had been well and thoroughly singed the result would have resembled the hue of this waif's thin, draggled, unsightly fur.

Anne "shooed," but the cat would not "shoo." As long as she stood he sat back on his haunches and gazed at her reproachfully out of his one good eye; when she resumed her walk he followed. Anne resigned herself to his company until she reached the gate of Patty's Place, which she coldly shut in his face, fondly supposing she had seen the last of him. But when, fifteen minutes later, Phil opened the door, there sat the rusty-brown cat on the step. More, he promptly darted in and sprang upon Anne's lap with a half-pleading, half-triumphant "miaow."

"Anne," said Stella severely, "do you own that animal?"

"No, I do NOT," protested disgusted Anne. "The creature followed me home from somewhere. I couldn't get rid of him. Ugh, get down. I like decent cats reasonably well; but I don't like beasties of your complexion."

Pussy, however, refused to get down. He coolly curled up in Anne's lap and began to purr.

"He has evidently adopted you," laughed Priscilla.

"I won't BE adopted," said Anne stubbornly.

"The poor creature is starving," said Phil pityingly. "Why, his bones are almost coming through his skin."

“Well, I’ll give him a square meal and then he must return to whence he came,” said Anne resolutely.

The cat was fed and put out. In the morning he was still on the doorstep. On the doorstep he continued to sit, bolting in whenever the door was opened. No coolness of welcome had the least effect on him; of nobody save Anne did he take the least notice. Out of compassion the girls fed him; but when a week had passed they decided that something must be done. The cat’s appearance had improved. His eye and cheek had resumed their normal appearance; he was not quite so thin; and he had been seen washing his face.

“But for all that we can’t keep him,” said Stella. “Aunt Jimsie is coming next week and she will bring the Sarah-cat with her. We can’t keep two cats; and if we did this Rusty Coat would fight all the time with the Sarah-cat. He’s a fighter by nature. He had a pitched battle last evening with the tobacco-king’s cat and routed him, horse, foot and artillery.”

“We must get rid of him,” agreed Anne, looking darkly at the subject of their discussion, who was purring on the hearth rug with an air of lamb-like meekness. “But the question is — how? How can four unprotected females get rid of a cat who won’t be got rid of?”

“We must chloroform him,” said Phil briskly. “That is the most humane way.”

“Who of us knows anything about chloroforming a cat?” demanded Anne gloomily.

“I do, honey. It’s one of my few — sadly few — useful accomplishments. I’ve disposed of several at home. You take the cat in the morning and give him a good breakfast. Then you take an old burlap bag — there’s one in the back porch — put the cat on it and turn over him a wooden box. Then take a two-ounce bottle of chloroform, uncork it, and slip it under the edge of the box. Put a heavy weight on top of the box and leave it till evening. The cat will be dead, curled up peacefully as if he were asleep. No pain — no struggle.”

“It sounds easy,” said Anne dubiously.

“It IS easy. Just leave it to me. I’ll see to it,” said Phil reassuringly.

Accordingly the chloroform was procured, and the next morning Rusty was lured to his doom. He ate his breakfast, licked his chops, and climbed into Anne’s lap. Anne’s heart misgave her. This poor creature loved her — trusted her. How could she be a party to this destruction?

“Here, take him,” she said hastily to Phil. “I feel like a murderess.”

“He won’t suffer, you know,” comforted Phil, but Anne had fled.

The fatal deed was done in the back porch. Nobody went near it that day. But at dusk Phil declared that Rusty must be buried.

“Pris and Stella must dig his grave in the orchard,” declared Phil, “and Anne must come with me to lift the box off. That’s the part I always hate.”

The two conspirators tiptoed reluctantly to the back porch. Phil gingerly lifted the stone she had put on the box. Suddenly, faint but distinct, sounded an unmistakable mew under the box.

“He — he isn’t dead,” gasped Anne, sitting blankly down on the kitchen doorstep.

“He must be,” said Phil incredulously.

Another tiny mew proved that he wasn’t. The two girls stared at each other.

“What will we do?” questioned Anne.

“Why in the world don’t you come?” demanded Stella, appearing in the doorway. “We’ve got the grave ready. ‘What silent still and silent all?’” she quoted teasingly.

““Oh, no, the voices of the dead Sound like the distant torrent’s fall,”” promptly counter-quoted Anne, pointing solemnly to the box.

A burst of laughter broke the tension.

“We must leave him here till morning,” said Phil, replacing the stone. “He hasn’t mewed for five minutes. Perhaps the mews we heard were his dying groan. Or perhaps we merely imagined them, under the strain of our guilty consciences.”

But, when the box was lifted in the morning, Rusty bounded at one gay leap to Anne’s shoulder where he began to lick her face affectionately. Never was there a cat more decidedly alive.

“Here’s a knot hole in the box,” groaned Phil. “I never saw it. That’s why he didn’t die. Now, we’ve got to do it all over again.”

“No, we haven’t,” declared Anne suddenly. “Rusty isn’t going to be killed again. He’s my cat — and you’ve just got to make the best of it.”

“Oh, well, if you’ll settle with Aunt Jimsie and the Sarah-cat,” said Stella, with the air of one washing her hands of the whole affair.

From that time Rusty was one of the family. He slept o’ nights on the scrubbing cushion in the back porch and lived on the fat of the land. By the time Aunt Jamesina came he was plump and glossy and tolerably respectable. But, like Kipling’s cat, he “walked by himself.” His paw was against every cat, and every cat’s paw against him. One by one he vanquished the aristocratic felines of Spofford Avenue. As for human beings, he loved Anne and Anne alone. Nobody else even dared stroke him. An angry spit and something that sounded much like very improper language greeted any one who did.

“The airs that cat puts on are perfectly intolerable,” declared Stella.

“Him was a nice old pussens, him was,” vowed Anne, cuddling her pet defiantly.

“Well, I don’t know how he and the Sarah-cat will ever make out to live together,” said Stella pessimistically. “Cat-fights in the orchard o’ nights are bad enough. But cat-fights here in the livingroom are unthinkable.” In due

time Aunt Jamesina arrived. Anne and Priscilla and Phil had awaited her advent rather dubiously; but when Aunt Jamesina was enthroned in the rocking chair before the open fire they figuratively bowed down and worshipped her.

Aunt Jamesina was a tiny old woman with a little, softly-triangular face, and large, soft blue eyes that were alight with unquenchable youth, and as full of hopes as a girl's. She had pink cheeks and snow-white hair which she wore in quaint little puffs over her ears.

"It's a very old-fashioned way," she said, knitting industriously at something as dainty and pink as a sunset cloud. "But I am old-fashioned. My clothes are, and it stands to reason my opinions are, too. I don't say they're any the better of that, mind you. In fact, I daresay they're a good deal the worse. But they've worn nice and easy. New shoes are smarter than old ones, but the old ones are more comfortable. I'm old enough to indulge myself in the matter of shoes and opinions. I mean to take it real easy here. I know you expect me to look after you and keep you proper, but I'm not going to do it. You're old enough to know how to behave if you're ever going to be. So, as far as I am concerned," concluded Aunt Jamesina, with a twinkle in her young eyes, "you can all go to destruction in your own way."

"Oh, will somebody separate those cats?" pleaded Stella, shudderingly.

Aunt Jamesina had brought with her not only the Sarah-cat but Joseph. Joseph, she explained, had belonged to a dear friend of hers who had gone to live in Vancouver.

“She couldn’t take Joseph with her so she begged me to take him. I really couldn’t refuse. He’s a beautiful cat — that is, his disposition is beautiful. She called him Joseph because his coat is of many colors.”

It certainly was. Joseph, as the disgusted Stella said, looked like a walking rag-bag. It was impossible to say what his ground color was. His legs were white with black spots on them. His back was gray with a huge patch of yellow on one side and a black patch on the other. His tail was yellow with a gray tip. One ear was black and one yellow. A black patch over one eye gave him a fearfully rakish look. In reality he was meek and inoffensive, of a sociable disposition. In one respect, if in no other, Joseph was like a lily of the field. He toiled not neither did he spin or catch mice. Yet Solomon in all his glory slept not on softer cushions, or feasted more fully on fat things.

Joseph and the Sarah-cat arrived by express in separate boxes. After they had been released and fed, Joseph selected the cushion and corner which appealed to him, and the Sarah-cat gravely sat herself down before the fire and proceeded to wash her face. She was a large, sleek, gray-and-white cat, with an enormous dignity which was not at all impaired by any consciousness of her plebian origin. She had been given to Aunt Jamesina by her washerwoman.

“Her name was Sarah, so my husband always called puss the Sarah-cat,” explained Aunt Jamesina. “She is eight years old, and a remarkable mouser. Don’t worry, Stella. The Sarah-cat NEVER fights and Joseph rarely.”

“They’ll have to fight here in self-defense,” said Stella.

At this juncture Rusty arrived on the scene. He bounded joyously half way across the room before he saw the intruders. Then he stopped short; his tail expanded until it was as big as three tails. The fur on his back rose up in a defiant arch; Rusty lowered his head, uttered a fearful shriek of hatred and defiance, and launched himself at the Sarah-cat.

The stately animal had stopped washing her face and was looking at him curiously. She met his onslaught with one contemptuous sweep of her capable paw. Rusty went rolling helplessly over on the rug; he picked himself up dazedly. What sort of a cat was this who had boxed his ears? He looked dubiously at the Sarah-cat. Would he or would he not? The Sarah-cat deliberately turned her back on him and resumed her toilet operations. Rusty decided that he would not. He never did. From that time on the Sarah-cat ruled the roost. Rusty never again interfered with her.

But Joseph rashly sat up and yawned. Rusty, burning to avenge his disgrace, swooped down upon him. Joseph, pacific by nature, could fight upon occasion and fight well. The result was a series of drawn battles. Every day Rusty and Joseph fought at sight. Anne took Rusty's part and detested Joseph. Stella was in despair. But Aunt Jamesina only laughed.

"Let them fight it out," she said tolerantly. "They'll make friends after a bit. Joseph needs some exercise — he was getting too fat. And Rusty has to learn he isn't the only cat in the world."

Eventually Joseph and Rusty accepted the situation and from sworn enemies became sworn friends. They slept on the same cushion with their paws about each other, and gravely washed each other's faces.

"We've all got used to each other," said Phil. "And I've learned how to wash dishes and sweep a floor."

"But you needn't try to make us believe you can chloroform a cat," laughed Anne.

"It was all the fault of the knothole," protested Phil.

"It was a good thing the knothole was there," said Aunt Jamesina rather severely. "Kittens HAVE to be drowned, I admit, or the world would be overrun. But no decent, grownup cat should be done to death — unless he sucks eggs."

"You wouldn't have thought Rusty very decent if you'd seen him when he came here," said Stella. "He positively looked like the Old Nick."

“I don’t believe Old Nick can be so very, ugly” said Aunt Jamesina reflectively. “He wouldn’t do so much harm if he was. I always think of him as a rather handsome gentleman.”

Chapter XVI I

A Letter from Davy

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“It’s beginning to snow, girls,” said Phil, coming in one November evening, “and there are the loveliest little stars and crosses all over the garden walk. I never noticed before what exquisite things snowflakes really are. One has time to notice things like that in the simple life. Bless you all for permitting me to live it. It’s really delightful to feel worried because butter has gone up five cents a pound.”

“Has it?” demanded Stella, who kept the household accounts.

“It has — and here’s your butter. I’m getting quite expert at marketing. It’s better fun than flirting,” concluded Phil gravely.

“Everything is going up scandalously,” sighed Stella.

“Never mind. Thank goodness air and salvation are still free,” said Aunt Jamesina.

“And so is laughter,” added Anne. “There’s no tax on it yet and that is well, because you’re all going to laugh presently. I’m going to read you Davy’s letter. His spelling has improved immensely this past year, though he is not strong on apostrophes, and he certainly possesses the gift of writing an interesting letter. Listen and laugh, before we settle down to the evening’s study-grind.”

“Dear Anne,” ran Davy’s letter, “I take my pen to tell you that we are all pretty well and hope this will find you the same. It’s snowing some today and Marilla says the old woman in the sky is shaking her feather beds. Is the old woman in the sky God’s wife, Anne? I want to know.

“Mrs. Lynde has been real sick but she is better now. She fell down the cellar stairs last week. When she fell she grabbed hold of the shelf with all the milk pails and stewpans on it, and it gave way and went down with her and made a splendid crash. Marilla thought it was an earthquake at first.

“One of the stewpans was all dinged up and Mrs. Lynde strained her ribs. The doctor came and gave her medicine to rub on her ribs but she didn’t understand him and took it all inside instead. The doctor said it was a wonder it didn’t kill her but it didn’t and it cured her ribs and Mrs. Lynde says doctors don’t know much anyhow. But we couldn’t fix up the stewpan. Marilla had to throw it out. Thanksgiving was last week. There was no school and we had a great dinner. I ate mince pie and roasted turkey and fruit cake and donuts and cheese and jam and chocolate cake. Marilla said I’d die but I didn’t. Dora had earache after it, only it wasn’t in her ears it was in her stomach. I didn’t have earache anywhere.

“Our new teacher is a man. He does things for jokes. Last week he made all us third-class boys write a composition on what kind of a wife we’d like to have and the girls on what kind of a husband. He laughed fit to kill when he read them. This was mine. I thought you’d like to see it.

“‘The kind of a wife I’d like to have.

“‘She must have good manners and get my meals on time and do what I tell her and always be very polite to me. She must be fifteen years old. She must be good to the poor and keep her house tidy and be good tempered and go to church regularly. She must be very handsome and have curly hair. If I get a wife that is just what I like I’ll be an awful good husband to her. I think a woman ought to be awful good to her husband. Some poor women haven’t any husbands.

“‘THE END.’”

“I was at Mrs. Isaac Wright’s funeral at White Sands last week. The husband of the corpse felt real sorry. Mrs. Lynde says Mrs. Wright’s grandfather stole a sheep but Marilla says we mustn’t speak ill of the dead. Why mustn’t we, Anne? I want to know. It’s pretty safe, ain’t it?

“Mrs. Lynde was awful mad the other day because I asked her if she was alive in Noah’s time. I didnt mean to hurt her feelings. I just wanted to know. Was she, Anne?”

“Mr. Harrison wanted to get rid of his dog. So he hunged him once but he come to life and scooted for the barn while Mr. Harrison was digging the grave, so he hunged him again and he stayed dead that time. Mr. Harrison has a new man working for him. He’s awful okward. Mr. Harrison says he is left handed in both his feet. Mr. Barry’s hired man is lazy. Mrs. Barry says that but Mr. Barry says he aint lazy exactly only he thinks it easier to pray for things than to work for them.

“Mrs. Harmon Andrews prize pig that she talked so much of died in a fit. Mrs. Lynde says it was a judgment on her for pride. But I think it was hard on the pig. Milty Boulter has been sick. The doctor gave him medicine and it tasted horrid. I offered to take it for him for a quarter but the Boulders are so mean. Milty says he’d rather take it himself and save his money. I asked Mrs. Boulter how a person would go about catching a man and she got awful mad and said she didnt know, shed never chased men.

“The A.V.I.S. is going to paint the hall again. They’re tired of having it blue.

“The new minister was here to tea last night. He took three pieces of pie. If I did that Mrs. Lynde would call me piggy. And he et fast and took big bites and Marilla is always telling me not to do that. Why can ministers do what boys can’t? I want to know.

“I haven’t any more news. Here are six kisses. xxxxxx. Dora sends one. Heres hers. x.

“Your loving friend DAVID KEITH”

“P.S. Anne, who was the devils father? I want to know.”

Chapter XVII I

Miss Josephine Remembers the Anne-girl

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When Christmas holidays came the girls of Patty's Place scattered to their respective homes, but Aunt Jamesina elected to stay where she was.

"I couldn't go to any of the places I've been invited and take those three cats," she said. "And I'm not going to leave the poor creatures here alone for nearly three weeks. If we had any decent neighbors who would feed them I might, but there's nothing except millionaires on this street. So I'll stay here and keep Patty's Place warm for you."

Anne went home with the usual joyous anticipations — which were not wholly fulfilled. She found Avonlea in the grip of such an early, cold, and stormy winter as even the "oldest inhabitant" could not recall. Green Gables was literally hemmed in by huge drifts. Almost every day of that ill-starred vacation it stormed fiercely; and even on fine days it drifted unceasingly. No sooner were the roads broken than they filled in again. It was almost impossible to stir out. The A.V.I.S. tried, on three evenings, to have a party in honor of the college students, and on each evening the storm was so wild that nobody could go, so they gave up the attempt in despair. Anne, despite her love of and loyalty to Green Gables, could not help thinking longingly of Patty's Place, its cosy open fire, Aunt Jamesina's mirthful eyes, the three cats, the merry chatter of the girls, the pleasantness of Friday evenings when college friends dropped in to talk of grave and gay.

Anne was lonely; Diana, during the whole of the holidays, was imprisoned at home with a bad attack of bronchitis. She could not come to Green Gables and it was rarely Anne could get to Orchard Slope, for the old way through the Haunted Wood was impassable with drifts, and the long way over the frozen Lake of Shining Waters was almost as bad. Ruby Gillis

was sleeping in the white-heaped graveyard; Jane Andrews was teaching a school on western prairies. Gilbert, to be sure, was still faithful, and waded up to Green Gables every possible evening. But Gilbert's visits were not what they once were. Anne almost dreaded them. It was very disconcerting to look up in the midst of a sudden silence and find Gilbert's hazel eyes fixed upon her with a quite unmistakable expression in their grave depths; and it was still more disconcerting to find herself blushing hotly and uncomfortably under his gaze, just as if — just as if — well, it was very embarrassing. Anne wished herself back at Patty's Place, where there was always somebody else about to take the edge off a delicate situation. At Green Gables Marilla went promptly to Mrs. Lynde's domain when Gilbert came and insisted on taking the twins with her. The significance of this was unmistakable and Anne was in a helpless fury over it.

Davy, however, was perfectly happy. He reveled in getting out in the morning and shoveling out the paths to the well and henhouse. He gloried in the Christmastide delicacies which Marilla and Mrs. Lynde vied with each other in preparing for Anne, and he was reading an enthralling tale, in a school library book, of a wonderful hero who seemed blessed with a miraculous faculty for getting into scrapes from which he was usually delivered by an earthquake or a volcanic explosion, which blew him high and dry out of his troubles, landed him in a fortune, and closed the story with proper ECLAT.

"I tell you it's a bully story, Anne," he said ecstatically. "I'd ever so much rather read it than the Bible."

"Would you?" smiled Anne.

Davy peered curiously at her.

"You don't seem a bit shocked, Anne. Mrs. Lynde was awful shocked when I said it to her."

"No, I'm not shocked, Davy. I think it's quite natural that a nine-year-old boy would sooner read an adventure story than the Bible. But when you are older I hope and think that you will realize what a wonderful book the Bible is."

“Oh, I think some parts of it are fine,” conceded Davy. “That story about Joseph now — it’s bully. But if I’d been Joseph I wouldn’t have forgave the brothers. No, siree, Anne. I’d have cut all their heads off. Mrs. Lynde was awful mad when I said that and shut the Bible up and said she’d never read me any more of it if I talked like that. So I don’t talk now when she reads it Sunday afternoons; I just think things and say them to Milty Boulter next day in school. I told Milty the story about Elisha and the bears and it scared him so he’s never made fun of Mr. Harrison’s bald head once. Are there any bears on P.E. Island, Anne? I want to know.”

“Not nowadays,” said Anne, absently, as the wind blew a scud of snow against the window. “Oh, dear, will it ever stop storming.”

“God knows,” said Davy airily, preparing to resume his reading.

Anne WAS shocked this time.

“Davy!” she exclaimed reproachfully.

“Mrs. Lynde says that,” protested Davy. “One night last week Marilla said ‘Will Ludovic Speed and Theodora Dix EVER get married?’ and Mrs. Lynde said, “‘God knows’ — just like that.”

“Well, it wasn’t right for her to say it,” said Anne, promptly deciding upon which horn of this dilemma to empale herself. “It isn’t right for anybody to take that name in vain or speak it lightly, Davy. Don’t ever do it again.”

“Not if I say it slow and solemn, like the minister?” queried Davy gravely.

“No, not even then.”

“Well, I won’t. Ludovic Speed and Theodora Dix live in Middle Grafton and Mrs. Rachel says he has been courting her for a hundred years. Won’t they soon be too old to get married, Anne? I hope Gilbert won’t court YOU that long. When are you going to be married, Anne? Mrs. Lynde says it’s a sure thing.”

“Mrs. Lynde is a—” began Anne hotly; then stopped. “Awful old gossip,” completed Davy calmly. “That’s what every one calls her. But is it a sure thing, Anne? I want to know.”

“You’re a very silly little boy, Davy,” said Anne, stalking haughtily out of the room. The kitchen was deserted and she sat down by the window in the fast falling wintry twilight. The sun had set and the wind had died down. A pale chilly moon looked out behind a bank of purple clouds in the west. The sky faded out, but the strip of yellow along the western horizon grew brighter and fiercer, as if all the stray gleams of light were concentrating in one spot; the distant hills, rimmed with priest-like firs, stood out in dark distinctness against it. Anne looked across the still, white fields, cold and lifeless in the harsh light of that grim sunset, and sighed. She was very lonely; and she was sad at heart; for she was wondering if she would be able to return to Redmond next year. It did not seem likely. The only scholarship possible in the Sophomore year was a very small affair. She would not take Marilla’s money; and there seemed little prospect of being able to earn enough in the summer vacation.

“I suppose I’ll just have to drop out next year,” she thought drearily, “and teach a district school again until I earn enough to finish my course. And by that time all my old class will have graduated and Patty’s Place will be out of the question. But there! I’m not going to be a coward. I’m thankful I can earn my way through if necessary.”

“Here’s Mr. Harrison wading up the lane,” announced Davy, running out. “I hope he’s brought the mail. It’s three days since we got it. I want to see what them pesky Grits are doing. I’m a Conservative, Anne. And I tell you, you have to keep your eye on them Grits.”

Mr. Harrison had brought the mail, and merry letters from Stella and Priscilla and Phil soon dissipated Anne’s blues. Aunt Jamesina, too, had written, saying that she was keeping the hearth-fire alight, and that the cats were all well, and the house plants doing fine.

“The weather has been real cold,” she wrote, “so I let the cats sleep in the house — Rusty and Joseph on the sofa in the livingroom, and the Sarah-cat on the foot of my bed. It’s real company to hear her purring when I wake

up in the night and think of my poor daughter in the foreign field. If it was anywhere but in India I wouldn't worry, but they say the snakes out there are terrible. It takes all the Sarah-cats's purring to drive away the thought of those snakes. I have enough faith for everything but the snakes. I can't think why Providence ever made them. Sometimes I don't think He did. I'm inclined to believe the Old Harry had a hand in making THEM."

Anne had left a thin, typewritten communication till the last, thinking it unimportant. When she had read it she sat very still, with tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter, Anne?" asked Marilla.

"Miss Josephine Barry is dead," said Anne, in a low tone.

"So she has gone at last," said Marilla. "Well, she has been sick for over a year, and the Barrys have been expecting to hear of her death any time. It is well she is at rest for she has suffered dreadfully, Anne. She was always kind to you."

"She has been kind to the last, Marilla. This letter is from her lawyer. She has left me a thousand dollars in her will."

"Gracious, ain't that an awful lot of money," exclaimed Davy. "She's the woman you and Diana lit on when you jumped into the spare room bed, ain't she? Diana told me that story. Is that why she left you so much?"

"Hush, Davy," said Anne gently. She slipped away to the porch gable with a full heart, leaving Marilla and Mrs. Lynde to talk over the news to their hearts' content.

"Do you s'pose Anne will ever get married now?" speculated Davy anxiously. "When Dorcas Sloane got married last summer she said if she'd had enough money to live on she'd never have been bothered with a man, but even a widower with eight children was better'n living with a sister-in-law."

"Davy Keith, do hold your tongue," said Mrs. Rachel severely. "The way you talk is scandalous for a small boy, that's what."

Chapter XI X

An Interlude

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“To think that this is my twentieth birthday, and that I’ve left my teens behind me forever,” said Anne, who was curled up on the hearthrug with Rusty in her lap, to Aunt Jamesina who was reading in her pet chair. They were alone in the living room. Stella and Priscilla had gone to a committee meeting and Phil was upstairs adorning herself for a party.

“I suppose you feel kind of, sorry” said Aunt Jamesina. “The teens are such a nice part of life. I’m glad I’ve never gone out of them myself.”

Anne laughed.

“You never will, Auntie. You’ll be eighteen when you should be a hundred. Yes, I’m sorry, and a little dissatisfied as well. Miss Stacy told me long ago that by the time I was twenty my character would be formed, for good or evil. I don’t feel that it’s what it should be. It’s full of flaws.”

“So’s everybody’s,” said Aunt Jamesina cheerfully. “Mine’s cracked in a hundred places. Your Miss Stacy likely meant that when you are twenty your character would have got its permanent bent in one direction or ‘tother, and would go on developing in that line. Don’t worry over it, Anne. Do your duty by God and your neighbor and yourself, and have a good time. That’s my philosophy and it’s always worked pretty well. Where’s Phil off to tonight?”

“She’s going to a dance, and she’s got the sweetest dress for it — creamy yellow silk and cobwebby lace. It just suits those brown tints of hers.”

“There’s magic in the words ‘silk’ and ‘lace,’ isn’t there?” said Aunt Jamesina. “The very sound of them makes me feel like skipping off to a

dance. And YELLOW silk. It makes one think of a dress of sunshine. I always wanted a yellow silk dress, but first my mother and then my husband wouldn't hear of it. The very first thing I'm going to do when I get to heaven is to get a yellow silk dress."

Amid Anne's peal of laughter Phil came downstairs, trailing clouds of glory, and surveyed herself in the long oval mirror on the wall.

"A flattering looking glass is a promoter of amiability," she said. "The one in my room does certainly make me green. Do I look pretty nice, Anne?"

"Do you really know how pretty you are, Phil?" asked Anne, in honest admiration.

"Of course I do. What are looking glasses and men for? That wasn't what I meant. Are all my ends tucked in? Is my skirt straight? And would this rose look better lower down? I'm afraid it's too high — it will make me look lopsided. But I hate things tickling my ears."

"Everything is just right, and that southwest dimple of yours is lovely."

"Anne, there's one thing in particular I like about you — you're so ungrudging. There isn't a particle of envy in you."

"Why should she be envious?" demanded Aunt Jamesina. "She's not quite as goodlooking as you, maybe, but she's got a far handsomer nose."

"I know it," conceded Phil.

"My nose always has been a great comfort to me," confessed Anne.

"And I love the way your hair grows on your forehead, Anne. And that one wee curl, always looking as if it were going to drop, but never dropping, is delicious. But as for noses, mine is a dreadful worry to me. I know by the time I'm forty it will be Byrney. What do you think I'll look like when I'm forty, Anne?"

"Like an old, matronly, married woman," teased Anne.

“I won’t,” said Phil, sitting down comfortably to wait for her escort.

“Joseph, you calico beastie, don’t you dare jump on my lap. I won’t go to a dance all over cat hairs. No, Anne, I WON’T look matronly. But no doubt I’ll be married.”

“To Alec or Alonzo?” asked Anne.

“To one of them, I suppose,” sighed Phil, “if I can ever decide which.”

“It shouldn’t be hard to decide,” scolded Aunt Jamesina.

“I was born a see-saw Aunty, and nothing can ever prevent me from teetering.”

“You ought to be more levelheaded, Philippa.”

“It’s best to be levelheaded, of course,” agreed Philippa, “but you miss lots of fun. As for Alec and Alonzo, if you knew them you’d understand why it’s difficult to choose between them. They’re equally nice.”

“Then take somebody who is nicer” suggested Aunt Jamesina. “There’s that Senior who is so devoted to you — Will Leslie. He has such nice, large, mild eyes.”

“They’re a little bit too large and too mild — like a cow’s,” said Phil cruelly.

“What do you say about George Parker?”

“There’s nothing to say about him except that he always looks as if he had just been starched and ironed.”

“Marr Holworthy then. You can’t find a fault with him.”

“No, he would do if he wasn’t poor. I must marry a rich man, Aunt Jamesina. That — and good looks — is an indispensable qualification. I’d marry Gilbert Blythe if he were rich.”

“Oh, would you?” said Anne, rather viciously.

“We don’t like that idea a little bit, although we don’t want Gilbert ourselves, oh, no,” mocked Phil. “But don’t let’s talk of disagreeable subjects. I’ll have to marry sometime, I suppose, but I shall put off the evil day as long as I can.”

“You mustn’t marry anybody you don’t love, Phil, when all’s said and done,” said Aunt Jamesina.

““Oh, hearts that loved in the good old way

Have been out o’ the fashion this many a day.’”

trilled Phil mockingly. “There’s the carriage. I fly — Bi-bi, you two old-fashioned darlings.”

When Phil had gone Aunt Jamesina looked solemnly at Anne.

“That girl is pretty and sweet and goodhearted, but do you think she is quite right in her mind, by spells, Anne?”

“Oh, I don’t think there’s anything the matter with Phil’s mind,” said Anne, hiding a smile. “It’s just her way of talking.”

Aunt Jamesina shook her head.

“Well, I hope so, Anne. I do hope so, because I love her. But I can’t understand her — she beats me. She isn’t like any of the girls I ever knew, or any of the girls I was myself.”

“How many girls were you, Aunt Jimsie?”

“About half a dozen, my dear.”

Chapter X X

Gilbert Speaks

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“This has been a dull, prosy day,” yawned Phil, stretching herself idly on the sofa, having previously dispossessed two exceedingly indignant cats.

Anne looked up from Pickwick Papers. Now that spring examinations were over she was treating herself to Dickens.

“It has been a prosy day for us,” she said thoughtfully, “but to some people it has been a wonderful day. Some one has been rapturously happy in it. Perhaps a great deed has been done somewhere today — or a great poem written — or a great man born. And some heart has been broken, Phil.”

“Why did you spoil your pretty thought by tagging that last sentence on, honey?” grumbled Phil. “I don’t like to think of broken hearts — or anything unpleasant.”

“Do you think you’ll be able to shirk unpleasant things all your life, Phil?”

“Dear me, no. Am I not up against them now? You don’t call Alec and Alonzo pleasant things, do you, when they simply plague my life out?”

“You never take anything seriously, Phil.”

“Why should I? There are enough folks who do. The world needs people like me, Anne, just to amuse it. It would be a terrible place if EVERYBODY were intellectual and serious and in deep, deadly earnest. MY mission is, as Josiah Allen says, ‘to charm and allure.’ Confess now. Hasn’t life at Patty’s Place been really much brighter and pleasanter this past winter because I’ve been here to leaven you?”

“Yes, it has,” owned Anne.

“And you all love me — even Aunt Jamesina, who thinks I’m stark mad. So why should I try to be different? Oh, dear, I’m so sleepy. I was awake until one last night, reading a harrowing ghost story. I read it in bed, and after I had finished it do you suppose I could get out of bed to put the light out? No! And if Stella had not fortunately come in late that lamp would have burned good and bright till morning. When I heard Stella I called her in, explained my predicament, and got her to put out the light. If I had got out myself to do it I knew something would grab me by the feet when I was getting in again. By the way, Anne, has Aunt Jamesina decided what to do this summer?”

“Yes, she’s going to stay here. I know she’s doing it for the sake of those blessed cats, although she says it’s too much trouble to open her own house, and she hates visiting.”

“What are you reading?”

“Pickwick.”

“That’s a book that always makes me hungry,” said Phil. “There’s so much good eating in it. The characters seem always to be reveling on ham and eggs and milk punch. I generally go on a cupboard rummage after reading Pickwick. The mere thought reminds me that I’m starving. Is there any tidbit in the pantry, Queen Anne?”

“I made a lemon pie this morning. You may have a piece of it.”

Phil dashed out to the pantry and Anne betook herself to the orchard in company with Rusty. It was a moist, pleasantly-odorous night in early spring. The snow was not quite all gone from the park; a little dingy bank of it yet lay under the pines of the harbor road, screened from the influence of April suns. It kept the harbor road muddy, and chilled the evening air. But grass was growing green in sheltered spots and Gilbert had found some pale, sweet arbutus in a hidden corner. He came up from the park, his hands full of it.

Anne was sitting on the big gray boulder in the orchard looking at the poem of a bare, birchen bough hanging against the pale red sunset with the very perfection of grace. She was building a castle in air — a wondrous mansion whose sunlit courts and stately halls were steeped in Araby's perfume, and where she reigned queen and chatelaine. She frowned as she saw Gilbert coming through the orchard. Of late she had managed not to be left alone with Gilbert. But he had caught her fairly now; and even Rusty had deserted her.

Gilbert sat down beside her on the boulder and held out his Mayflowers.

"Don't these remind you of home and our old schoolday picnics, Anne?"

Anne took them and buried her face in them.

"I'm in Mr. Silas Sloane's barrens this very minute," she said rapturously.

"I suppose you will be there in reality in a few days?"

"No, not for a fortnight. I'm going to visit with Phil in Bolingbroke before I go home. You'll be in Avonlea before I will."

"No, I shall not be in Avonlea at all this summer, Anne. I've been offered a job in the Daily News office and I'm going to take it."

"Oh," said Anne vaguely. She wondered what a whole Avonlea summer would be like without Gilbert. Somehow she did not like the prospect.

"Well," she concluded flatly, "it is a good thing for you, of course."

"Yes, I've been hoping I would get it. It will help me out next year."

"You mustn't work too HARD," said Anne, without any very clear idea of what she was saying. She wished desperately that Phil would come out.

"You've studied very constantly this winter. Isn't this a delightful evening? Do you know, I found a cluster of white violets under that old twisted tree over there today? I felt as if I had discovered a gold mine."

"You are always discovering gold mines," said Gilbert — also absently.

“Let us go and see if we can find some more,” suggested Anne eagerly.
“I’ll call Phil and—”

“Never mind Phil and the violets just now, Anne,” said Gilbert quietly, taking her hand in a clasp from which she could not free it. “There is something I want to say to you.”

“Oh, don’t say it,” cried Anne, pleadingly. “Don’t — PLEASE, Gilbert.”

“I must. Things can’t go on like this any longer. Anne, I love you. You know I do. I — I can’t tell you how much. Will you promise me that some day you’ll be my wife?”

“I — I can’t,” said Anne miserably. “Oh, Gilbert — you — you’ve spoiled everything.”

“Don’t you care for me at all?” Gilbert asked after a very dreadful pause, during which Anne had not dared to look up.

“Not — not in that way. I do care a great deal for you as a friend. But I don’t love you, Gilbert.”

“But can’t you give me some hope that you will — yet?”

“No, I can’t,” exclaimed Anne desperately. “I never, never can love you — in that way — Gilbert. You must never speak of this to me again.”

There was another pause — so long and so dreadful that Anne was driven at last to look up. Gilbert’s face was white to the lips. And his eyes — but Anne shuddered and looked away. There was nothing romantic about this. Must proposals be either grotesque or — horrible? Could she ever forget Gilbert’s face?

“Is there anybody else?” he asked at last in a low voice.

“No — no,” said Anne eagerly. “I don’t care for any one like THAT — and I LIKE you better than anybody else in the world, Gilbert. And we must — we must go on being friends, Gilbert.”

Gilbert gave a bitter little laugh.

“Friends! Your friendship can’t satisfy me, Anne. I want your love — and you tell me I can never have that.”

“I’m sorry. Forgive me, Gilbert,” was all Anne could say. Where, oh, where were all the gracious and graceful speeches wherewith, in imagination, she had been wont to dismiss rejected suitors?

Gilbert released her hand gently.

“There isn’t anything to forgive. There have been times when I thought you did care. I’ve deceived myself, that’s all. Goodbye, Anne.”

Anne got herself to her room, sat down on her window seat behind the pines, and cried bitterly. She felt as if something incalculably precious had gone out of her life. It was Gilbert’s friendship, of course. Oh, why must she lose it after this fashion?

“What is the matter, honey?” asked Phil, coming in through the moonlit gloom.

Anne did not answer. At that moment she wished Phil were a thousand miles away.

“I suppose you’ve gone and refused Gilbert Blythe. You are an idiot, Anne Shirley!”

“Do you call it idiotic to refuse to marry a man I don’t love?” said Anne coldly, goaded to reply.

“You don’t know love when you see it. You’ve tricked something out with your imagination that you think love, and you expect the real thing to look like that. There, that’s the first sensible thing I’ve ever said in my life. I wonder how I managed it?”

“Phil,” pleaded Anne, “please go away and leave me alone for a little while. My world has tumbled into pieces. I want to reconstruct it.”

“Without any Gilbert in it?” said Phil, going.

A world without any Gilbert in it! Anne repeated the words drearily. Would it not be a very lonely, forlorn place? Well, it was all Gilbert’s fault. He had spoiled their beautiful comradeship. She must just learn to live without it.

Chapter XX I

Roses of Yesterday

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The fortnight Anne spent in Bolingbroke was a very pleasant one, with a little under current of vague pain and dissatisfaction running through it whenever she thought about Gilbert. There was not, however, much time to think about him. “Mount Holly,” the beautiful old Gordon homestead, was a very gay place, overrun by Phil’s friends of both sexes. There was quite a bewildering succession of drives, dances, picnics and boating parties, all expressively lumped together by Phil under the head of “jamborees”; Alec and Alonzo were so constantly on hand that Anne wondered if they ever did anything but dance attendance on that will-o’-the-wisp of a Phil. They were both nice, manly fellows, but Anne would not be drawn into any opinion as to which was the nicer.

“And I depended so on you to help me make up my mind which of them I should promise to marry,” mourned Phil.

“You must do that for yourself. You are quite expert at making up your mind as to whom other people should marry,” retorted Anne, rather caustically.

“Oh, that’s a very different thing,” said Phil, truly.

But the sweetest incident of Anne’s sojourn in Bolingbroke was the visit to her birthplace — the little shabby yellow house in an out-of-the-way street she had so often dreamed about. She looked at it with delighted eyes, as she and Phil turned in at the gate.

“It’s almost exactly as I’ve pictured it,” she said. “There is no honeysuckle over the windows, but there is a lilac tree by the gate, and — yes, there are

the muslin curtains in the windows. How glad I am it is still painted yellow.”

A very tall, very thin woman opened the door.

“Yes, the Shirleys lived here twenty years ago,” she said, in answer to Anne’s question. “They had it rented. I remember ‘em. They both died of fever at onct. It was turrible sad. They left a baby. I guess it’s dead long ago. It was a sickly thing. Old Thomas and his wife took it — as if they hadn’t enough of their own.”

“It didn’t die,” said Anne, smiling. “I was that baby.”

“You don’t say so! Why, you have grown,” exclaimed the woman, as if she were much surprised that Anne was not still a baby. “Come to look at you, I see the resemblance. You’re complected like your pa. He had red hair. But you favor your ma in your eyes and mouth. She was a nice little thing. My darter went to school to her and was nigh crazy about her. They was buried in the one grave and the School Board put up a tombstone to them as a reward for faithful service. Will you come in?”

“Will you let me go all over the house?” asked Anne eagerly.

“Laws, yes, you can if you like. ‘Twon’t take you long — there ain’t much of it. I keep at my man to build a new kitchen, but he ain’t one of your hustlers. The parlor’s in there and there’s two rooms upstairs. Just prowl about yourselves. I’ve got to see to the baby. The east room was the one you were born in. I remember your ma saying she loved to see the sunrise; and I mind hearing that you was born just as the sun was rising and its light on your face was the first thing your ma saw.”

Anne went up the narrow stairs and into that little east room with a full heart. It was as a shrine to her. Here her mother had dreamed the exquisite, happy dreams of anticipated motherhood; here that red sunrise light had fallen over them both in the sacred hour of birth; here her mother had died. Anne looked about her reverently, her eyes with tears. It was for her one of the jeweled hours of life that gleam out radiantly forever in memory.

“Just to think of it — mother was younger than I am now when I was born,” she whispered.

When Anne went downstairs the lady of the house met her in the hall. She held out a dusty little packet tied with faded blue ribbon.

“Here’s a bundle of old letters I found in that closet upstairs when I came here,” she said. “I dunno what they are — I never bothered to look in ‘em, but the address on the top one is ‘Miss Bertha Willis,’ and that was your ma’s maiden name. You can take ‘em if you’d keer to have ‘em.”

“Oh, thank you — thank you,” cried Anne, clasping the packet rapturously.

“That was all that was in the house,” said her hostess. “The furniture was all sold to pay the doctor bills, and Mrs. Thomas got your ma’s clothes and little things. I reckon they didn’t last long among that drove of Thomas youngsters. They was destructive young animals, as I mind ‘em.”

“I haven’t one thing that belonged to my mother,” said Anne, chokily. “I — I can never thank you enough for these letters.”

“You’re quite welcome. Laws, but your eyes is like your ma’s. She could just about talk with hers. Your father was sorter homely but awful nice. I mind hearing folks say when they was married that there never was two people more in love with each other — Pore creatures, they didn’t live much longer; but they was awful happy while they was alive, and I s’pose that counts for a good deal.”

Anne longed to get home to read her precious letters; but she made one little pilgrimage first. She went alone to the green corner of the “old” Bolingbroke cemetery where her father and mother were buried, and left on their grave the white flowers she carried. Then she hastened back to Mount Holly, shut herself up in her room, and read the letters. Some were written by her father, some by her mother. There were not many — only a dozen in all — for Walter and Bertha Shirley had not been often separated during their courtship. The letters were yellow and faded and dim, blurred with the touch of passing years. No profound words of wisdom were traced on the stained and wrinkled pages, but only lines of love and trust. The

sweetness of forgotten things clung to them — the far-off, fond imaginings of those long-dead lovers. Bertha Shirley had possessed the gift of writing letters which embodied the charming personality of the writer in words and thoughts that retained their beauty and fragrance after the lapse of time. The letters were tender, intimate, sacred. To Anne, the sweetest of all was the one written after her birth to the father on a brief absence. It was full of a proud young mother's accounts of "baby" — her cleverness, her brightness, her thousand sweetnesses.

"I love her best when she is asleep and better still when she is awake," Bertha Shirley had written in the postscript. Probably it was the last sentence she had ever penned. The end was very near for her.

"This has been the most beautiful day of my life," Anne said to Phil that night. "I've FOUND my father and mother. Those letters have made them REAL to me. I'm not an orphan any longer. I feel as if I had opened a book and found roses of yesterday, sweet and beloved, between its leaves."

Chapter XXI I

Spring and Anne Return to Green Gables

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The firelight shadows were dancing over the kitchen walls at Green Gables, for the spring evening was chilly; through the open east window drifted in the subtly sweet voices of the night. Marilla was sitting by the fire — at least, in body. In spirit she was roaming olden ways, with feet grown young. Of late Marilla had thus spent many an hour, when she thought she should have been knitting for the twins.

“I suppose I’m growing old,” she said.

Yet Marilla had changed but little in the past nine years, save to grow something thinner, and even more angular; there was a little more gray in the hair that was still twisted up in the same hard knot, with two hairpins — WERE they the same hairpins? — still stuck through it. But her expression was very different; the something about the mouth which had hinted at a sense of humor had developed wonderfully; her eyes were gentler and milder, her smile more frequent and tender.

Marilla was thinking of her whole past life, her cramped but not unhappy childhood, the jealously hidden dreams and the blighted hopes of her girlhood, the long, gray, narrow, monotonous years of dull middle life that followed. And the coming of Anne — the vivid, imaginative, impetuous child with her heart of love, and her world of fancy, bringing with her color and warmth and radiance, until the wilderness of existence had blossomed like the rose. Marilla felt that out of her sixty years she had lived only the nine that had followed the advent of Anne. And Anne would be home tomorrow night.

The kitchen door opened. Marilla looked up expecting to see Mrs. Lynde. Anne stood before her, tall and starry-eyed, with her hands full of

Mayflowers and violets.

“Anne Shirley!” exclaimed Marilla. For once in her life she was surprised out of her reserve; she caught her girl in her arms and crushed her and her flowers against her heart, kissing the bright hair and sweet face warmly. “I never looked for you till tomorrow night. How did you get from Carmody?”

“Walked, dearest of Marillas. Haven’t I done it a score of times in the Queen’s days? The mailman is to bring my trunk tomorrow; I just got homesick all at once, and came a day earlier. And oh! I’ve had such a lovely walk in the May twilight; I stopped by the barrens and picked these Mayflowers; I came through Violet-Vale; it’s just a big bowlful of violets now — the dear, sky-tinted things. Smell them, Marilla — drink them in.”

Marilla sniffed obligingly, but she was more interested in Anne than in drinking violets.

“Sit down, child. You must be real tired. I’m going to get you some supper.”

“There’s a darling moonrise behind the hills tonight, Marilla, and oh, how the frogs sang me home from Carmody! I do love the music of the frogs. It seems bound up with all my happiest recollections of old spring evenings. And it always reminds me of the night I came here first. Do you remember it, Marilla?”

“Well, yes,” said Marilla with emphasis. “I’m not likely to forget it ever.”

“They used to sing so madly in the marsh and brook that year. I would listen to them at my window in the dusk, and wonder how they could seem so glad and so sad at the same time. Oh, but it’s good to be home again! Redmond was splendid and Bolingbroke delightful — but Green Gables is HOME.”

“Gilbert isn’t coming home this summer, I hear,” said Marilla.

“No.” Something in Anne’s tone made Marilla glance at her sharply, but Anne was apparently absorbed in arranging her violets in a bowl. “See, aren’t they sweet?” she went on hurriedly. “The year is a book, isn’t it, Marilla? Spring’s pages are written in Mayflowers and violets, summer’s in roses, autumn’s in red maple leaves, and winter in holly and evergreen.”

“Did Gilbert do well in his examinations?” persisted Marilla.

“Excellently well. He led his class. But where are the twins and Mrs. Lynde?”

“Rachel and Dora are over at Mr. Harrison’s. Davy is down at Boulders’. I think I hear him coming now.”

Davy burst in, saw Anne, stopped, and then hurled himself upon her with a joyful yell.

“Oh, Anne, ain’t I glad to see you! Say, Anne, I’ve grown two inches since last fall. Mrs. Lynde measured me with her tape today, and say, Anne, see my front tooth. It’s gone. Mrs. Lynde tied one end of a string to it and the other end to the door, and then shut the door. I sold it to Milty for two cents. Milty’s collecting teeth.”

“What in the world does he want teeth for?” asked Marilla.

“To make a necklace for playing Indian Chief,” explained Davy, climbing upon Anne’s lap. “He’s got fifteen already, and everybody’s else’s promised, so there’s no use in the rest of us starting to collect, too. I tell you the Boulders are great business people.”

“Were you a good boy at Mrs. Boulders’?” asked Marilla severely.

“Yes; but say, Marilla, I’m tired of being good.”

“You’d get tired of being bad much sooner, Davy-boy,” said Anne.

“Well, it’d be fun while it lasted, wouldn’t it?” persisted Davy. “I could be sorry for it afterwards, couldn’t I?”

“Being sorry wouldn’t do away with the consequences of being bad, Davy. Don’t you remember the Sunday last summer when you ran away from Sunday School? You told me then that being bad wasn’t worth while. What were you and Milty doing today?”

“Oh, we fished and chased the cat, and hunted for eggs, and yelled at the echo. There’s a great echo in the bush behind the Boulter barn. Say, what is echo, Anne; I want to know.”

“Echo is a beautiful nymph, Davy, living far away in the woods, and laughing at the world from among the hills.”

“What does she look like?”

“Her hair and eyes are dark, but her neck and arms are white as snow. No mortal can ever see how fair she is. She is fleeter than a deer, and that mocking voice of hers is all we can know of her. You can hear her calling at night; you can hear her laughing under the stars. But you can never see her. She flies afar if you follow her, and laughs at you always just over the next hill.”

“Is that true, Anne? Or is it a whopper?” demanded Davy staring.

“Davy,” said Anne despairingly, “haven’t you sense enough to distinguish between a fairytale and a falsehood?”

“Then what is it that sasses back from the Boulter bush? I want to know,” insisted Davy.

“When you are a little older, Davy, I’ll explain it all to you.”

The mention of age evidently gave a new turn to Davy’s thoughts for after a few moments of reflection, he whispered solemnly:

“Anne, I’m going to be married.”

“When?” asked Anne with equal solemnity.

“Oh, not until I’m grownup, of course.”

“Well, that’s a relief, Davy. Who is the lady?”

“Stella Fletcher; she’s in my class at school. And say, Anne, she’s the prettiest girl you ever saw. If I die before I grow up you’ll keep an eye on her, won’t you?”

“Davy Keith, do stop talking such nonsense,” said Marilla severely.

“‘Tisn’t nonsense,” protested Davy in an injured tone. “She’s my promised wife, and if I was to die she’d be my promised widow, wouldn’t she? And she hasn’t got a soul to look after her except her old grandmother.”

“Come and have your supper, Anne,” said Marilla, “and don’t encourage that child in his absurd talk.”

Chapter XXII I

Paul Cannot Find the Rock People

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Life was very pleasant in Avonlea that summer, although Anne, amid all her vacation joys, was haunted by a sense of “something gone which should be there.” She would not admit, even in her inmost reflections, that this was caused by Gilbert’s absence. But when she had to walk home alone from prayer meetings and A.V.I.S. powwows, while Diana and Fred, and many other gay couples, loitered along the dusky, starlit country roads, there was a queer, lonely ache in her heart which she could not explain away. Gilbert did not even write to her, as she thought he might have done. She knew he wrote to Diana occasionally, but she would not inquire about him; and Diana, supposing that Anne heard from him, volunteered no information. Gilbert’s mother, who was a gay, frank, lighthearted lady, but not overburdened with tact, had a very embarrassing habit of asking Anne, always in a painfully distinct voice and always in the presence of a crowd, if she had heard from Gilbert lately. Poor Anne could only blush horribly and murmur, “not very lately,” which was taken by all, Mrs. Blythe included, to be merely a maidenly evasion.

Apart from this, Anne enjoyed her summer. Priscilla came for a merry visit in June; and, when she had gone, Mr. and Mrs. Irving, Paul and Charlotta the Fourth came “home” for July and August.

Echo Lodge was the scene of gaieties once more, and the echoes over the river were kept busy mimicking the laughter that rang in the old garden behind the spruces.

“Miss Lavendar” had not changed, except to grow even sweeter and prettier. Paul adored her, and the companionship between them was beautiful to see.

“But I don’t call her ‘mother’ just by itself,” he explained to Anne. “You see, THAT name belongs just to my own little mother, and I can’t give it to any one else. You know, teacher. But I call her ‘Mother Lavendar’ and I love her next best to father. I — I even love her a LITTLE better than you, teacher.”

“Which is just as it ought to be,” answered Anne.

Paul was thirteen now and very tall for his years. His face and eyes were as beautiful as ever, and his fancy was still like a prism, separating everything that fell upon it into rainbows. He and Anne had delightful rambles to wood and field and shore. Never were there two more thoroughly “kindred spirits.”

Charlotta the Fourth had blossomed out into young ladyhood. She wore her hair now in an enormous pompador and had discarded the blue ribbon bows of auld lang syne, but her face was as freckled, her nose as snubbed, and her mouth and smiles as wide as ever.

“You don’t think I talk with a Yankee accent, do you, Miss Shirley, ma’am?” she demanded anxiously.

“I don’t notice it, Charlotta.”

“I’m real glad of that. They said I did at home, but I thought likely they just wanted to aggravate me. I don’t want no Yankee accent. Not that I’ve a word to say against the Yankees, Miss Shirley, ma’am. They’re real civilized. But give me old P.E. Island every time.”

Paul spent his first fortnight with his grandmother Irving in Avonlea. Anne was there to meet him when he came, and found him wild with eagerness to get to the shore — Nora and the Golden Lady and the Twin Sailors would be there. He could hardly wait to eat his supper. Could he not see Nora’s elfin face peering around the point, watching for him wistfully? But it was a very sober Paul who came back from the shore in the twilight.

“Didn’t you find your Rock People?” asked Anne.

Paul shook his chestnut curls sorrowfully.

“The Twin Sailors and the Golden Lady never came at all,” he said. “Nora was there — but Nora is not the same, teacher. She is changed.”

“Oh, Paul, it is you who are changed,” said Anne. “You have grown too old for the Rock People. They like only children for playfellows. I am afraid the Twin Sailors will never again come to you in the pearly, enchanted boat with the sail of moonshine; and the Golden Lady will play no more for you on her golden harp. Even Nora will not meet you much longer. You must pay the penalty of growing-up, Paul. You must leave fairyland behind you.”

“You two talk as much foolishness as ever you did,” said old Mrs. Irving, half-indulgently, half-reprovingly.

“Oh, no, we don’t,” said Anne, shaking her head gravely. “We are getting very, very wise, and it is such a pity. We are never half so interesting when we have learned that language is given us to enable us to conceal our thoughts.”

“But it isn’t — it is given us to exchange our thoughts,” said Mrs. Irving seriously. She had never heard of Tallyrand and did not understand epigrams.

Anne spent a fortnight of halcyon days at Echo Lodge in the golden prime of August. While there she incidentally contrived to hurry Ludovic Speed in his leisurely courting of Theodora Dix, as related duly in another chronicle of her history.⁽¹⁾ Arnold Sherman, an elderly friend of the Irvings, was there at the same time, and added not a little to the general pleasantness of life.

(1 Chronicles of Avonlea.)

“What a nice playtime this has been,” said Anne. “I feel like a giant refreshed. And it’s only a fortnight more till I go back to Kingsport, and Redmond and Patty’s Place. Patty’s Place is the dearest spot, Miss Lavendar. I feel as if I had two homes — one at Green Gables and one at

Patty's Place. But where has the summer gone? It doesn't seem a day since I came home that spring evening with the Mayflowers. When I was little I couldn't see from one end of the summer to the other. It stretched before me like an unending season. Now, 'tis a handbreadth, 'tis a tale.'

"Anne, are you and Gilbert Blythe as good friends as you used to be?" asked Miss Lavendar quietly.

"I am just as much Gilbert's friend as ever I was, Miss Lavendar."

Miss Lavendar shook her head.

"I see something's gone wrong, Anne. I'm going to be impertinent and ask what. Have you quarrelled?"

"No; it's only that Gilbert wants more than friendship and I can't give him more."

"Are you sure of that, Anne?"

"Perfectly sure."

"I'm very, very sorry."

"I wonder why everybody seems to think I ought to marry Gilbert Blythe," said Anne petulantly.

"Because you were made and meant for each other, Anne — that is why. You needn't toss that young head of yours. It's a fact."

Chapter XXI V

Enter Jonas

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“PROSPECT POINT, “August 20th.

“Dear Anne — spelled — with — an — E,” wrote Phil, “I must prop my eyelids open long enough to write you. I’ve neglected you shamefully this summer, honey, but all my other correspondents have been neglected, too. I have a huge pile of letters to answer, so I must gird up the loins of my mind and hoe in. Excuse my mixed metaphors. I’m fearfully sleepy. Last night Cousin Emily and I were calling at a neighbor’s. There were several other callers there, and as soon as those unfortunate creatures left, our hostess and her three daughters picked them all to pieces. I knew they would begin on Cousin Emily and me as soon as the door shut behind us. When we came home Mrs. Lilly informed us that the aforesaid neighbor’s hired boy was supposed to be down with scarlet fever. You can always trust Mrs. Lilly to tell you cheerful things like that. I have a horror of scarlet fever. I couldn’t sleep when I went to bed for thinking of it. I tossed and tumbled about, dreaming fearful dreams when I did snooze for a minute; and at three I wakened up with a high fever, a sore throat, and a raging headache. I knew I had scarlet fever; I got up in a panic and hunted up Cousin Emily’s ‘doctor book’ to read up the symptoms. Anne, I had them all. So I went back to bed, and knowing the worst, slept like a top the rest of the night. Though why a top should sleep sounder than anything else I never could understand. But this morning I was quite well, so it couldn’t have been the fever. I suppose if I did catch it last night it couldn’t have developed so soon. I can remember that in daytime, but at three o’clock at night I never can be logical.

“I suppose you wonder what I’m doing at Prospect Point. Well, I always like to spend a month of summer at the shore, and father insists that I come to his second-cousin Emily’s ‘select boardinghouse’ at Prospect

Point. So a fortnight ago I came as usual. And as usual old ‘Uncle Mark Miller’ brought me from the station with his ancient buggy and what he calls his ‘generous purpose’ horse. He is a nice old man and gave me a handful of pink peppermints. Peppermints always seem to me such a religious sort of candy — I suppose because when I was a little girl Grandmother Gordon always gave them to me in church. Once I asked, referring to the smell of peppermints, ‘Is that the odor of sanctity?’ I didn’t like to eat Uncle Mark’s peppermints because he just fished them loose out of his pocket, and had to pick some rusty nails and other things from among them before he gave them to me. But I wouldn’t hurt his dear old feelings for anything, so I carefully sowed them along the road at intervals. When the last one was gone, Uncle Mark said, a little rebukingly, ‘Ye shouldn’t a’et all them candies to onct, Miss Phil. You’ll likely have the stummick-ache.’

“Cousin Emily has only five boarders besides myself — four old ladies and one young man. My righthand neighbor is Mrs. Lilly. She is one of those people who seem to take a gruesome pleasure in detailing all their many aches and pains and sicknesses. You cannot mention any ailment but she says, shaking her head, ‘Ah, I know too well what that is’ — and then you get all the details. Jonas declares he once spoke of locomotor ataxia in hearing and she said she knew too well what that was. She suffered from it for ten years and was finally cured by a traveling doctor.

“Who is Jonas? Just wait, Anne Shirley. You’ll hear all about Jonas in the proper time and place. He is not to be mixed up with estimable old ladies.

“My left-hand neighbor at the table is Mrs. Phinney. She always speaks with a wailing, dolorous voice — you are nervously expecting her to burst into tears every moment. She gives you the impression that life to her is indeed a vale of tears, and that a smile, never to speak of a laugh, is a frivolity truly reprehensible. She has a worse opinion of me than Aunt Jamesina, and she doesn’t love me hard to atone for it, as Aunt J. does, either.

“Miss Maria Grimsby sits caticorner from me. The first day I came I remarked to Miss Maria that it looked a little like rain — and Miss Maria laughed. I said the road from the station was very pretty — and Miss

Maria laughed. I said there seemed to be a few mosquitoes left yet — and Miss Maria laughed. I said that Prospect Point was as beautiful as ever — and Miss Maria laughed. If I were to say to Miss Maria, ‘My father has hanged himself, my mother has taken poison, my brother is in the penitentiary, and I am in the last stages of consumption,’ Miss Maria would laugh. She can’t help it — she was born so; but is very sad and awful.

“The fifth old lady is Mrs. Grant. She is a sweet old thing; but she never says anything but good of anybody and so she is a very uninteresting conversationalist.

“And now for Jonas, Anne.

“That first day I came I saw a young man sitting opposite me at the table, smiling at me as if he had known me from my cradle. I knew, for Uncle Mark had told me, that his name was Jonas Blake, that he was a Theological Student from St. Columbia, and that he had taken charge of the Point Prospect Mission Church for the summer.

“He is a very ugly young man — really, the ugliest young man I’ve ever seen. He has a big, loose-jointed figure with absurdly long legs. His hair is tow-color and lank, his eyes are green, and his mouth is big, and his ears — but I never think about his ears if I can help it.

“He has a lovely voice — if you shut your eyes he is adorable — and he certainly has a beautiful soul and disposition.

“We were good chums right way. Of course he is a graduate of Redmond, and that is a link between us. We fished and boated together; and we walked on the sands by moonlight. He didn’t look so homely by moonlight and oh, he was nice. Niceness fairly exhaled from him. The old ladies — except Mrs. Grant — don’t approve of Jonas, because he laughs and jokes — and because he evidently likes the society of frivolous me better than theirs.

“Somehow, Anne, I don’t want him to think me frivolous. This is ridiculous. Why should I care what a tow-haired person called Jonas,

whom I never saw before thinks of me?

“Last Sunday Jonas preached in the village church. I went, of course, but I couldn’t realize that Jonas was going to preach. The fact that he was a minister — or going to be one — persisted in seeming a huge joke to me.

“Well, Jonas preached. And, by the time he had preached ten minutes, I felt so small and insignificant that I thought I must be invisible to the naked eye. Jonas never said a word about women and he never looked at me. But I realized then and there what a pitiful, frivolous, small-souled little butterfly I was, and how horribly different I must be from Jonas’ ideal woman. SHE would be grand and strong and noble. He was so earnest and tender and true. He was everything a minister ought to be. I wondered how I could ever have thought him ugly — but he really is! — with those inspired eyes and that intellectual brow which the roughly-falling hair hid on week days.

“It was a splendid sermon and I could have listened to it forever, and it made me feel utterly wretched. Oh, I wish I was like YOU, Anne.

“He caught up with me on the road home, and grinned as cheerfully as usual. But his grin could never deceive me again. I had seen the REAL Jonas. I wondered if he could ever see the REAL PHIL — whom NOBODY, not even you, Anne, has ever seen yet.

“‘Jonas,’ I said — I forgot to call him Mr. Blake. Wasn’t it dreadful? But there are times when things like that don’t matter—’ Jonas, you were born to be a minister. You COULDN’T be anything else.’

“‘No, I couldn’t,’ he said soberly. ‘I tried to be something else for a long time — I didn’t want to be a minister. But I came to see at last that it was the work given me to do — and God helping me, I shall try to do it.’

“His voice was low and reverent. I thought that he would do his work and do it well and nobly; and happy the woman fitted by nature and training to help him do it. SHE would be no feather, blown about by every fickle wind of fancy. SHE would always know what hat to put on. Probably she would

have only one. Ministers never have much money. But she wouldn't mind having one hat or none at all, because she would have Jonas.

“Anne Shirley, don't you dare to say or hint or think that I've fallen in love with Mr. Blake. Could I care for a lank, poor, ugly theologian — named Jonas? As Uncle Mark says, 'It's impossible, and what's more it's improbable.'”

“Good night, PHIL.”

“P.S. It is impossible — but I am horribly afraid it's true. I'm happy and wretched and scared. HE can NEVER care for me, I know. Do you think I could ever develop into a passable minister's wife, Anne? And WOULD they expect me to lead in prayer? P G.”

Chapter XX V

Enter Prince Charming

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“I’m contrasting the claims of indoors and out,” said Anne, looking from the window of Patty’s Place to the distant pines of the park.

“I’ve an afternoon to spend in sweet doing nothing, Aunt Jimsie. Shall I spend it here where there is a cosy fire, a plateful of delicious russets, three purring and harmonious cats, and two impeccable china dogs with green noses? Or shall I go to the park, where there is the lure of gray woods and of gray water lapping on the harbor rocks?”

“If I was as young as you, I’d decide in favor of the park,” said Aunt Jamesina, tickling Joseph’s yellow ear with a knitting needle.

“I thought that you claimed to be as young as any of us, Aunt,” teased Anne.

“Yes, in my soul. But I’ll admit my legs aren’t as young as yours. You go and get some fresh air, Anne. You look pale lately.”

“I think I’ll go to the park,” said Anne restlessly. “I don’t feel like tame domestic joys today. I want to feel alone and free and wild. The park will be empty, for every one will be at the football match.”

“Why didn’t you go to it?”

“‘Nobody axed me, sir, she said’ — at least, nobody but that horrid little Dan Ranger. I wouldn’t go anywhere with him; but rather than hurt his poor little tender feelings I said I wasn’t going to the game at all. I don’t mind. I’m not in the mood for football today somehow.”

“You go and get some fresh air,” repeated Aunt Jamesina, “but take your umbrella, for I believe it’s going to rain. I’ve rheumatism in my leg.”

“Only old people should have rheumatism, Aunty.”

“Anybody is liable to rheumatism in her legs, Anne. It’s only old people who should have rheumatism in their souls, though. Thank goodness, I never have. When you get rheumatism in your soul you might as well go and pick out your coffin.”

It was November — the month of crimson sunsets, parting birds, deep, sad hymns of the sea, passionate wind-songs in the pines. Anne roamed through the pineland alleys in the park and, as she said, let that great sweeping wind blow the fogs out of her soul. Anne was not wont to be troubled with soul fog. But, somehow, since her return to Redmond for this third year, life had not mirrored her spirit back to her with its old, perfect, sparkling clearness.

Outwardly, existence at Patty’s Place was the same pleasant round of work and study and recreation that it had always been. On Friday evenings the big, firelighted livingroom was crowded by callers and echoed to endless jest and laughter, while Aunt Jamesina smiled beamingly on them all. The “Jonas” of Phil’s letter came often, running up from St. Columbia on the early train and departing on the late. He was a general favorite at Patty’s Place, though Aunt Jamesina shook her head and opined that divinity students were not what they used to be.

“He’s VERY nice, my dear,” she told Phil, “but ministers ought to be graver and more dignified.”

“Can’t a man laugh and laugh and be a Christian still?” demanded Phil.

“Oh, MEN — yes. But I was speaking of MINISTERS, my dear,” said Aunt Jamesina rebukingly. “And you shouldn’t flirt so with Mr. Blake — you really shouldn’t.”

“I’m not flirting with him,” protested Phil.

Nobody believed her, except Anne. The others thought she was amusing herself as usual, and told her roundly that she was behaving very badly.

“Mr. Blake isn’t of the Alec-and-Alonzo type, Phil,” said Stella severely. “He takes things seriously. You may break his heart.”

“Do you really think I could?” asked Phil. “I’d love to think so.”

“Philippa Gordon! I never thought you were utterly unfeeling. The idea of you saying you’d love to break a man’s heart!”

“I didn’t say so, honey. Quote me correctly. I said I’d like to think I COULD break it. I would like to know I had the POWER to do it.”

“I don’t understand you, Phil. You are leading that man on deliberately — and you know you don’t mean anything by it.”

“I mean to make him ask me to marry him if I can,” said Phil calmly.

“I give you up,” said Stella hopelessly.

Gilbert came occasionally on Friday evenings. He seemed always in good spirits, and held his own in the jests and repartee that flew about. He neither sought nor avoided Anne. When circumstances brought them in contact he talked to her pleasantly and courteously, as to any newly-made acquaintance. The old camaraderie was gone entirely. Anne felt it keenly; but she told herself she was very glad and thankful that Gilbert had got so completely over his disappointment in regard to her. She had really been afraid, that April evening in the orchard, that she had hurt him terribly and that the wound would be long in healing. Now she saw that she need not have worried. Men have died and the worms have eaten them but not for love. Gilbert evidently was in no danger of immediate dissolution. He was enjoying life, and he was full of ambition and zest. For him there was to be no wasting in despair because a woman was fair and cold. Anne, as she listened to the ceaseless badinage that went on between him and Phil, wondered if she had only imagined that look in his eyes when she had told him she could never care for him.

There were not lacking those who would gladly have stepped into Gilbert's vacant place. But Anne snubbed them without fear and without reproach. If the real Prince Charming was never to come she would have none of a substitute. So she sternly told herself that gray day in the windy park.

Suddenly the rain of Aunt Jamesina's prophecy came with a swish and rush. Anne put up her umbrella and hurried down the slope. As she turned out on the harbor road a savage gust of wind tore along it. Instantly her umbrella turned wrong side out. Anne clutched at it in despair. And then — there came a voice close to her.

"Pardon me — may I offer you the shelter of my umbrella?"

Anne looked up. Tall and handsome and distinguished-looking — dark, melancholy, inscrutable eyes — melting, musical, sympathetic voice — yes, the very hero of her dreams stood before her in the flesh. He could not have more closely resembled her ideal if he had been made to order.

"Thank you," she said confusedly.

"We'd better hurry over to that little pavillion on the point," suggested the unknown. "We can wait there until this shower is over. It is not likely to rain so heavily very long."

The words were very commonplace, but oh, the tone! And the smile which accompanied them! Anne felt her heart beating strangely.

Together they scurried to the pavilion and sat breathlessly down under its friendly roof. Anne laughingly held up her false umbrella.

"It is when my umbrella turns inside out that I am convinced of the total depravity of inanimate things," she said gaily.

The raindrops sparkled on her shining hair; its loosened rings curled around her neck and forehead. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes big and starry. Her companion looked down at her admiringly. She felt herself blushing under his gaze. Who could he be? Why, there was a bit of the Redmond white and scarlet pinned to his coat lapel. Yet she had thought

she knew, by sight at least, all the Redmond students except the Freshmen. And this courtly youth surely was no Freshman.

“We are schoolmates, I see,” he said, smiling at Anne’s colors. “That ought to be sufficient introduction. My name is Royal Gardner. And you are the Miss Shirley who read the Tennyson paper at the Philomathic the other evening, aren’t you?”

“Yes; but I cannot place you at all,” said Anne, frankly. “Please, where DO you belong?”

“I feel as if I didn’t belong anywhere yet. I put in my Freshman and Sophomore years at Redmond two years ago. I’ve been in Europe ever since. Now I’ve come back to finish my Arts course.”

“This is my Junior year, too,” said Anne.

“So we are classmates as well as collegemates. I am reconciled to the loss of the years that the locust has eaten,” said her companion, with a world of meaning in those wonderful eyes of his.

The rain came steadily down for the best part of an hour. But the time seemed really very short. When the clouds parted and a burst of pale November sunshine fell athwart the harbor and the pines Anne and her companion walked home together. By the time they had reached the gate of Patty’s Place he had asked permission to call, and had received it. Anne went in with cheeks of flame and her heart beating to her fingertips. Rusty, who climbed into her lap and tried to kiss her, found a very absent welcome. Anne, with her soul full of romantic thrills, had no attention to spare just then for a crop-eared pussy cat.

That evening a parcel was left at Patty’s Place for Miss Shirley. It was a box containing a dozen magnificent roses. Phil pounced impertinently on the card that fell from it, read the name and the poetical quotation written on the back.

“Royal Gardner!” she exclaimed. “Why, Anne, I didn’t know you were acquainted with Roy Gardner!”

“I met him in the park this afternoon in the rain,” explained Anne hurriedly. “My umbrella turned inside out and he came to my rescue with his.”

“Oh!” Phil peered curiously at Anne. “And is that exceedingly commonplace incident any reason why he should send us longstemmed roses by the dozen, with a very sentimental rhyme? Or why we should blush divinest rosy-red when we look at his card? Anne, thy face betrayeth thee.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Phil. Do you know Mr. Gardner?”

“I’ve met his two sisters, and I know of him. So does everybody worthwhile in Kingsport. The Gardners are among the richest, bluest, of Bluenoses. Roy is adorably handsome and clever. Two years ago his mother’s health failed and he had to leave college and go abroad with her — his father is dead. He must have been greatly disappointed to have to give up his class, but they say he was perfectly sweet about it. Fee — fi — fo — fum, Anne. I smell romance. Almost do I envy you, but not quite. After all, Roy Gardner isn’t Jonas.”

“You goose!” said Anne loftily. But she lay long awake that night, nor did she wish for sleep. Her waking fancies were more alluring than any vision of dreamland. Had the real Prince come at last? Recalling those glorious dark eyes which had gazed so deeply into her own, Anne was very strongly inclined to think he had.

Chapter XXV I

Enter Christine

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The girls at Patty's Place were dressing for the reception which the Juniors were giving for the Seniors in February. Anne surveyed herself in the mirror of the blue room with girlish satisfaction. She had a particularly pretty gown on. Originally it had been only a simple little slip of cream silk with a chiffon overdress. But Phil had insisted on taking it home with her in the Christmas holidays and embroidering tiny rosebuds all over the chiffon. Phil's fingers were deft, and the result was a dress which was the envy of every Redmond girl. Even Allie Boone, whose frocks came from Paris, was wont to look with longing eyes on that rosebud concoction as Anne trailed up the main staircase at Redmond in it.

Anne was trying the effect of a white orchid in her hair. Roy Gardner had sent her white orchids for the reception, and she knew no other Redmond girl would have them that night — when Phil came in with admiring gaze.

“Anne, this is certainly your night for looking handsome. Nine nights out of ten I can easily outshine you. The tenth you blossom out suddenly into something that eclipses me altogether. How do you manage it?”

“It's the dress, dear. Fine feathers.”

“‘Tisn't. The last evening you flamed out into beauty you wore your old blue flannel shirtwaist that Mrs. Lynde made you. If Roy hadn't already lost head and heart about you he certainly would tonight. But I don't like orchids on you, Anne. No; it isn't jealousy. Orchids don't seem to BELONG to you. They're too exotic — too tropical — too insolent. Don't put them in your hair, anyway.”

“Well, I won’t. I admit I’m not fond of orchids myself. I don’t think they’re related to me. Roy doesn’t often send them — he knows I like flowers I can live with. Orchids are only things you can visit with.”

“Jonas sent me some dear pink rosebuds for the evening — but — he isn’t coming himself. He said he had to lead a prayer-meeting in the slums! I don’t believe he wanted to come. Anne, I’m horribly afraid Jonas doesn’t really care anything about me. And I’m trying to decide whether I’ll pine away and die, or go on and get my B.A. and be sensible and useful.”

“You couldn’t possibly be sensible and useful, Phil, so you’d better pine away and die,” said Anne cruelly.

“Heartless Anne!”

“Silly Phil! You know quite well that Jonas loves you.”

“But — he won’t TELL me so. And I can’t MAKE him. He LOOKS it, I’ll admit. But speak-to-me-only-with-thine-eyes isn’t a really reliable reason for embroidering doilies and hemstitching tablecloths. I don’t want to begin such work until I’m really engaged. It would be tempting Fate.”

“Mr. Blake is afraid to ask you to marry him, Phil. He is poor and can’t offer you a home such as you’ve always had. You know that is the only reason he hasn’t spoken long ago.”

“I suppose so,” agreed Phil dolefully. “Well” — brightening up—“if he WON’T ask me to marry him I’ll ask him, that’s all. So it’s bound to come right. I won’t worry. By the way, Gilbert Blythe is going about constantly with Christine Stuart. Did you know?”

Anne was trying to fasten a little gold chain about her throat. She suddenly found the clasp difficult to manage. WHAT was the matter with it — or with her fingers?

“No,” she said carelessly. “Who is Christine Stuart?”

“Ronald Stuart’s sister. She’s in Kingsport this winter studying music. I haven’t seen her, but they say she’s very pretty and that Gilbert is quite crazy over her. How angry I was when you refused Gilbert, Anne. But Roy Gardner was foreordained for you. I can see that now. You were right, after all.”

Anne did not blush, as she usually did when the girls assumed that her eventual marriage to Roy Gardner was a settled thing. All at once she felt rather dull. Phil’s chatter seemed trivial and the reception a bore. She boxed poor Rusty’s ears.

“Get off that cushion instantly, you cat, you! Why don’t you stay down where you belong?”

Anne picked up her orchids and went downstairs, where Aunt Jamesina was presiding over a row of coats hung before the fire to warm. Roy Gardner was waiting for Anne and teasing the Sarah-cat while he waited. The Sarah-cat did not approve of him. She always turned her back on him. But everybody else at Patty’s Place liked him very much. Aunt Jamesina, carried away by his unfailing and deferential courtesy, and the pleading tones of his delightful voice, declared he was the nicest young man she ever knew, and that Anne was a very fortunate girl. Such remarks made Anne restive. Roy’s wooing had certainly been as romantic as girlish heart could desire, but — she wished Aunt Jamesina and the girls would not take things so for granted. When Roy murmured a poetical compliment as he helped her on with her coat, she did not blush and thrill as usual; and he found her rather silent in their brief walk to Redmond. He thought she looked a little pale when she came out of the coeds’ dressing room; but as they entered the reception room her color and sparkle suddenly returned to her. She turned to Roy with her gayest expression. He smiled back at her with what Phil called “his deep, black, velvety smile.” Yet she really did not see Roy at all. She was acutely conscious that Gilbert was standing under the palms just across the room talking to a girl who must be Christine Stuart.

She was very handsome, in the stately style destined to become rather massive in middle life. A tall girl, with large dark-blue eyes, ivory outlines, and a gloss of darkness on her smooth hair.

“She looks just as I’ve always wanted to look,” thought Anne miserably. “Roseleaf complexion — starry violet eyes — raven hair — yes, she has them all. It’s a wonder her name isn’t Cordelia Fitzgerald into the bargain! But I don’t believe her figure is as good as mine, and her nose certainly isn’t.”

Anne felt a little comforted by this conclusion.

Chapter XXVI I

Mutual Confidences

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March came in that winter like the meekest and mildest of lambs, bringing days that were crisp and golden and tingling, each followed by a frosty pink twilight which gradually lost itself in an elfland of moonshine.

Over the girls at Patty's Place was falling the shadow of April examinations. They were studying hard; even Phil had settled down to text and notebooks with a doggedness not to be expected of her.

"I'm going to take the Johnson Scholarship in Mathematics," she announced calmly. "I could take the one in Greek easily, but I'd rather take the mathematical one because I want to prove to Jonas that I'm really enormously clever."

"Jonas likes you better for your big brown eyes and your crooked smile than for all the brains you carry under your curls," said Anne.

"When I was a girl it wasn't considered ladylike to know anything about Mathematics," said Aunt Jamesina. "But times have changed. I don't know that it's all for the better. Can you cook, Phil?"

"No, I never cooked anything in my life except a gingerbread and it was a failure — flat in the middle and hilly round the edges. You know the kind. But, Aunty, when I begin in good earnest to learn to cook don't you think the brains that enable me to win a mathematical scholarship will also enable me to learn cooking just as well?"

"Maybe," said Aunt Jamesina cautiously. "I am not decrying the higher education of women. My daughter is an M.A. She can cook, too. But I

taught her to cook BEFORE I let a college professor teach her Mathematics.”

In mid-March came a letter from Miss Patty Spofford, saying that she and Miss Maria had decided to remain abroad for another year.

“So you may have Patty’s Place next winter, too,” she wrote. “Maria and I are going to run over Egypt. I want to see the Sphinx once before I die.”

“Fancy those two dames ‘running over Egypt’! I wonder if they’ll look up at the Sphinx and knit,” laughed Priscilla.

“I’m so glad we can keep Patty’s Place for another year,” said Stella. “I was afraid they’d come back. And then our jolly little nest here would be broken up — and we poor callow nestlings thrown out on the cruel world of boardinghouses again.”

“I’m off for a tramp in the park,” announced Phil, tossing her book aside. “I think when I am eighty I’ll be glad I went for a walk in the park tonight.”

“What do you mean?” asked Anne.

“Come with me and I’ll tell you, honey.”

They captured in their ramble all the mysteries and magics of a March evening. Very still and mild it was, wrapped in a great, white, brooding silence — a silence which was yet threaded through with many little silvery sounds which you could hear if you hearkened as much with your soul as your ears. The girls wandered down a long pineland aisle that seemed to lead right out into the heart of a deep-red, overflowing winter sunset.

“I’d go home and write a poem this blessed minute if I only knew how,” declared Phil, pausing in an open space where a rosy light was staining the green tips of the pines. “It’s all so wonderful here — this great, white stillness, and those dark trees that always seem to be thinking.”

“‘The woods were God’s first temples,’” quoted Anne softly. “One can’t help feeling reverent and adoring in such a place. I always feel so near Him when I walk among the pines.”

“Anne, I’m the happiest girl in the world,” confessed Phil suddenly.

“So Mr. Blake has asked you to marry him at last?” said Anne calmly.

“Yes. And I sneezed three times while he was asking me. Wasn’t that horrid? But I said ‘yes’ almost before he finished — I was so afraid he might change his mind and stop. I’m besottedly happy. I couldn’t really believe before that Jonas would ever care for frivolous me.”

“Phil, you’re not really frivolous,” said Anne gravely. “‘Way down underneath that frivolous exterior of yours you’ve got a dear, loyal, womanly little soul. Why do you hide it so?’”

“I can’t help it, Queen Anne. You are right — I’m not frivolous at heart. But there’s a sort of frivolous skin over my soul and I can’t take it off. As Mrs. Poyser says, I’d have to be hatched over again and hatched different before I could change it. But Jonas knows the real me and loves me, frivolity and all. And I love him. I never was so surprised in my life as I was when I found out I loved him. I’d never thought it possible to fall in love with an ugly man. Fancy me coming down to one solitary beau. And one named Jonas! But I mean to call him Jo. That’s such a nice, crisp little name. I couldn’t nickname Alonzo.”

“What about Alec and Alonzo?”

“Oh, I told them at Christmas that I never could marry either of them. It seems so funny now to remember that I ever thought it possible that I might. They felt so badly I just cried over both of them — howled. But I knew there was only one man in the world I could ever marry. I had made up my own mind for once and it was real easy, too. It’s very delightful to feel so sure, and know it’s your own sureness and not somebody else’s.”

“Do you suppose you’ll be able to keep it up?”

“Making up my mind, you mean? I don’t know, but Jo has given me a splendid rule. He says, when I’m perplexed, just to do what I would wish I had done when I shall be eighty. Anyhow, Jo can make up his mind quickly enough, and it would be uncomfortable to have too much mind in the same house.”

“What will your father and mother say?”

“Father won’t say much. He thinks everything I do right. But mother WILL talk. Oh, her tongue will be as Byrney as her nose. But in the end it will be all right.”

“You’ll have to give up a good many things you’ve always had, when you marry Mr. Blake, Phil.”

“But I’ll have HIM. I won’t miss the other things. We’re to be married a year from next June. Jo graduates from St. Columbia this spring, you know. Then he’s going to take a little mission church down on Patterson Street in the slums. Fancy me in the slums! But I’d go there or to Greenland’s icy mountains with him.”

“And this is the girl who would NEVER marry a man who wasn’t rich,” commented Anne to a young pine tree.

“Oh, don’t cast up the follies of my youth to me. I shall be poor as gaily as I’ve been rich. You’ll see. I’m going to learn how to cook and make over dresses. I’ve learned how to market since I’ve lived at Patty’s Place; and once I taught a Sunday School class for a whole summer. Aunt Jamesina says I’ll ruin Jo’s career if I marry him. But I won’t. I know I haven’t much sense or sobriety, but I’ve got what is ever so much better — the knack of making people like me. There is a man in Bolingbroke who lisps and always testifies in prayer-meeting. He says, ‘If you can’t thine like an electric thtar thine like a candlethtick.’ I’ll be Jo’s little candlestick.”

“Phil, you’re incorrigible. Well, I love you so much that I can’t make nice, light, congratulatory little speeches. But I’m heart-glad of your happiness.”

“I know. Those big gray eyes of yours are brimming over with real friendship, Anne. Some day I’ll look the same way at you. You’re going to marry Roy, aren’t you, Anne?”

“My dear Philippa, did you ever hear of the famous Betty Baxter, who ‘refused a man before he’d axed her’? I am not going to emulate that celebrated lady by either refusing or accepting any one before he ‘axes’ me.”

“All Redmond knows that Roy is crazy about you,” said Phil candidly. “And you DO love him, don’t you, Anne?”

“I — I suppose so,” said Anne reluctantly. She felt that she ought to be blushing while making such a confession; but she was not; on the other hand, she always blushed hotly when any one said anything about Gilbert Blythe or Christine Stuart in her hearing. Gilbert Blythe and Christine Stuart were nothing to her — absolutely nothing. But Anne had given up trying to analyze the reason of her blushes. As for Roy, of course she was in love with him — madly so. How could she help it? Was he not her ideal? Who could resist those glorious dark eyes, and that pleading voice? Were not half the Redmond girls wildly envious? And what a charming sonnet he had sent her, with a box of violets, on her birthday! Anne knew every word of it by heart. It was very good stuff of its kind, too. Not exactly up to the level of Keats or Shakespeare — even Anne was not so deeply in love as to think that. But it was very tolerable magazine verse. And it was addressed to HER — not to Laura or Beatrice or the Maid of Athens, but to her, Anne Shirley. To be told in rhythmical cadences that her eyes were stars of the morning — that her cheek had the flush it stole from the sunrise — that her lips were redder than the roses of Paradise, was thrillingly romantic. Gilbert would never have dreamed of writing a sonnet to her eyebrows. But then, Gilbert could see a joke. She had once told Roy a funny story — and he had not seen the point of it. She recalled the chummy laugh she and Gilbert had had together over it, and wondered uneasily if life with a man who had no sense of humor might not be somewhat uninteresting in the long run. But who could expect a melancholy, inscrutable hero to see the humorous side of things? It would be flatly unreasonable.

Chapter XXVII I

A June Evening

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“I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June,” said Anne, as she came through the spice and bloom of the twilit orchard to the front door steps, where Marilla and Mrs. Rachel were sitting, talking over Mrs. Samson Coates’ funeral, which they had attended that day. Dora sat between them, diligently studying her lessons; but Davy was sitting tailor-fashion on the grass, looking as gloomy and depressed as his single dimple would let him.

“You’d get tired of it,” said Marilla, with a sigh.

“I daresay; but just now I feel that it would take me a long time to get tired of it, if it were all as charming as today. Everything loves June. Davy-boy, why this melancholy November face in blossom-time?”

“I’m just sick and tired of living,” said the youthful pessimist.

“At ten years? Dear me, how sad!”

“I’m not making fun,” said Davy with dignity. “I’m dis — dis — discouraged” — bringing out the big word with a valiant effort.

“Why and wherefore?” asked Anne, sitting down beside him.

“‘Cause the new teacher that come when Mr. Holmes got sick give me ten sums to do for Monday. It’ll take me all day tomorrow to do them. It isn’t fair to have to work Saturdays. Milty Boulter said he wouldn’t do them, but Marilla says I’ve got to. I don’t like Miss Carson a bit.”

“Don’t talk like that about your teacher, Davy Keith,” said Mrs. Rachel severely. “Miss Carson is a very fine girl. There is no nonsense about her.”

“That doesn’t sound very attractive,” laughed Anne. “I like people to have a little nonsense about them. But I’m inclined to have a better opinion of Miss Carson than you have. I saw her in prayer-meeting last night, and she has a pair of eyes that can’t always look sensible. Now, Davy-boy, take heart of grace. ‘Tomorrow will bring another day’ and I’ll help you with the sums as far as in me lies. Don’t waste this lovely hour ‘twixt light and dark worrying over arithmetic.”

“Well, I won’t,” said Davy, brightening up. “If you help me with the sums I’ll have ‘em done in time to go fishing with Milty. I wish old Aunt Atossa’s funeral was tomorrow instead of today. I wanted to go to it ‘cause Milty said his mother said Aunt Atossa would be sure to rise up in her coffin and say sarcastic things to the folks that come to see her buried. But Marilla said she didn’t.”

“Poor Atossa laid in her coffin peaceful enough,” said Mrs. Lynde solemnly. “I never saw her look so pleasant before, that’s what. Well, there weren’t many tears shed over her, poor old soul. The Elisha Wrights are thankful to be rid of her, and I can’t say I blame them a mite.”

“It seems to me a most dreadful thing to go out of the world and not leave one person behind you who is sorry you are gone,” said Anne, shuddering.

“Nobody except her parents ever loved poor Atossa, that’s certain, not even her husband,” averred Mrs. Lynde. “She was his fourth wife. He’d sort of got into the habit of marrying. He only lived a few years after he married her. The doctor said he died of dyspepsia, but I shall always maintain that he died of Atossa’s tongue, that’s what. Poor soul, she always knew everything about her neighbors, but she never was very well acquainted with herself. Well, she’s gone anyhow; and I suppose the next excitement will be Diana’s wedding.”

“It seems funny and horrible to think of Diana’s being married,” sighed Anne, hugging her knees and looking through the gap in the Haunted Wood to the light that was shining in Diana’s room.

“I don’t see what’s horrible about it, when she’s doing so well,” said Mrs. Lynde emphatically. “Fred Wright has a fine farm and he is a model young man.”

“He certainly isn’t the wild, dashing, wicked, young man Diana once wanted to marry,” smiled Anne. “Fred is extremely good.”

“That’s just what he ought to be. Would you want Diana to marry a wicked man? Or marry one yourself?”

“Oh, no. I wouldn’t want to marry anybody who was wicked, but I think I’d like it if he COULD be wicked and WOULDN’T. Now, Fred is HOPELESSLY good.”

“You’ll have more sense some day, I hope,” said Marilla.

Marilla spoke rather bitterly. She was grievously disappointed. She knew Anne had refused Gilbert Blythe. Avonlea gossip buzzed over the fact, which had leaked out, nobody knew how. Perhaps Charlie Sloane had guessed and told his guesses for truth. Perhaps Diana had betrayed it to Fred and Fred had been indiscreet. At all events it was known; Mrs. Blythe no longer asked Anne, in public or private, if she had heard lately from Gilbert, but passed her by with a frosty bow. Anne, who had always liked Gilbert’s merry, young-hearted mother, was grieved in secret over this. Marilla said nothing; but Mrs. Lynde gave Anne many exasperated digs about it, until fresh gossip reached that worthy lady, through the medium of Moody Spurgeon MacPherson’s mother, that Anne had another “beau” at college, who was rich and handsome and good all in one. After that Mrs. Rachel held her tongue, though she still wished in her inmost heart that Anne had accepted Gilbert. Riches were all very well; but even Mrs. Rachel, practical soul though she was, did not consider them the one essential. If Anne “liked” the Handsome Unknown better than Gilbert there was nothing more to be said; but Mrs. Rachel was dreadfully afraid that Anne was going to make the mistake of marrying for money. Marilla knew Anne too well to fear this; but she felt that something in the universal scheme of things had gone sadly awry.

“What is to be, will be,” said Mrs. Rachel gloomily, “and what isn’t to be happens sometimes. I can’t help believing it’s going to happen in Anne’s case, if Providence doesn’t interfere, that’s what.” Mrs. Rachel sighed. She was afraid Providence wouldn’t interfere; and she didn’t dare to.

Anne had wandered down to the Dryad’s Bubble and was curled up among the ferns at the root of the big white birch where she and Gilbert had so often sat in summers gone by. He had gone into the newspaper office again when college closed, and Avonlea seemed very dull without him. He never wrote to her, and Anne missed the letters that never came. To be sure, Roy wrote twice a week; his letters were exquisite compositions which would have read beautifully in a memoir or biography. Anne felt herself more deeply in love with him than ever when she read them; but her heart never gave the queer, quick, painful bound at sight of his letters which it had given one day when Mrs. Hiram Sloane had handed her out an envelope addressed in Gilbert’s black, upright handwriting. Anne had hurried home to the east gable and opened it eagerly — to find a typewritten copy of some college society report—”only that and nothing more.” Anne flung the harmless screed across her room and sat down to write an especially nice epistle to Roy.

Diana was to be married in five more days. The gray house at Orchard Slope was in a turmoil of baking and brewing and boiling and stewing, for there was to be a big, old-timey wedding. Anne, of course, was to be bridesmaid, as had been arranged when they were twelve years old, and Gilbert was coming from Kingsport to be best man. Anne was enjoying the excitement of the various preparations, but under it all she carried a little heartache. She was, in a sense, losing her dear old chum; Diana’s new home would be two miles from Green Gables, and the old constant companionship could never be theirs again. Anne looked up at Diana’s light and thought how it had beamed to her for many years; but soon it would shine through the summer twilights no more. Two big, painful tears welled up in her gray eyes.

“Oh,” she thought, “how horrible it is that people have to grow up — and marry — and CHANGE!”

Chapter XXI X

Diana's Wedding

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“After all, the only real roses are the pink ones,” said Anne, as she tied white ribbon around Diana’s bouquet in the westward-looking gable at Orchard Slope. “They are the flowers of love and faith.”

Diana was standing nervously in the middle of the room, arrayed in her bridal white, her black curls frosted over with the film of her wedding veil. Anne had draped that veil, in accordance with the sentimental compact of years before.

“It’s all pretty much as I used to imagine it long ago, when I wept over your inevitable marriage and our consequent parting,” she laughed. “You are the bride of my dreams, Diana, with the ‘lovely misty veil’; and I am YOUR bridesmaid. But, alas! I haven’t the puffed sleeves — though these short lace ones are even prettier. Neither is my heart wholly breaking nor do I exactly hate Fred.”

“We are not really parting, Anne,” protested Diana. “I’m not going far away. We’ll love each other just as much as ever. We’ve always kept that ‘oath’ of friendship we swore long ago, haven’t we?”

“Yes. We’ve kept it faithfully. We’ve had a beautiful friendship, Diana. We’ve never marred it by one quarrel or coolness or unkind word; and I hope it will always be so. But things can’t be quite the same after this. You’ll have other interests. I’ll just be on the outside. But ‘such is life’ as Mrs. Rachel says. Mrs. Rachel has given you one of her beloved knitted quilts of the ‘tobacco stripe’ pattern, and she says when I am married she’ll give me one, too.”

“The mean thing about your getting married is that I won’t be able to be your bridesmaid,” lamented Diana.

“I’m to be Phil’s bridesmaid next June, when she marries Mr. Blake, and then I must stop, for you know the proverb ‘three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,’” said Anne, peeping through the window over the pink and snow of the blossoming orchard beneath. “Here comes the minister, Diana.”

“Oh, Anne,” gasped Diana, suddenly turning very pale and beginning to tremble. “Oh, Anne — I’m so nervous — I can’t go through with it — Anne, I know I’m going to faint.”

“If you do I’ll drag you down to the rainwater hogshed and drop you in,” said Anne unsympathetically. “Cheer up, dearest. Getting married can’t be so very terrible when so many people survive the ceremony. See how cool and composed I am, and take courage.”

“Wait till your turn comes, Miss Anne. Oh, Anne, I hear father coming upstairs. Give me my bouquet. Is my veil right? Am I very pale?”

“You look just lovely. Di, darling, kiss me goodbye for the last time. Diana Barry will never kiss me again.”

“Diana Wright will, though. There, mother’s calling. Come.”

Following the simple, old-fashioned way in vogue then, Anne went down to the parlor on Gilbert’s arm. They met at the top of the stairs for the first time since they had left Kingsport, for Gilbert had arrived only that day. Gilbert shook hands courteously. He was looking very well, though, as Anne instantly noted, rather thin. He was not pale; there was a flush on his cheek that had burned into it as Anne came along the hall towards him, in her soft, white dress with lilies-of-the-valley in the shining masses of her hair. As they entered the crowded parlor together a little murmur of admiration ran around the room. “What a fine-looking pair they are,” whispered the impressible Mrs. Rachel to Marilla.

Fred ambled in alone, with a very red face, and then Diana swept in on her father's arm. She did not faint, and nothing untoward occurred to interrupt the ceremony. Feasting and merrymaking followed; then, as the evening waned, Fred and Diana drove away through the moonlight to their new home, and Gilbert walked with Anne to Green Gables.

Something of their old comradeship had returned during the informal mirth of the evening. Oh, it was nice to be walking over that well-known road with Gilbert again!

The night was so very still that one should have been able to hear the whisper of roses in blossom — the laughter of daisies — the piping of grasses — many sweet sounds, all tangled up together. The beauty of moonlight on familiar fields irradiated the world.

“Can't we take a ramble up Lovers' Lane before you go in?” asked Gilbert as they crossed the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters, in which the moon lay like a great, drowned blossom of gold.

Anne assented readily. Lovers' Lane was a veritable path in a fairyland that night — a shimmering, mysterious place, full of wizardry in the white-woven enchantment of moonlight. There had been a time when such a walk with Gilbert through Lovers' Lane would have been far too dangerous. But Roy and Christine had made it very safe now. Anne found herself thinking a good deal about Christine as she chatted lightly to Gilbert. She had met her several times before leaving Kingsport, and had been charmingly sweet to her. Christine had also been charmingly sweet. Indeed, they were a most cordial pair. But for all that, their acquaintance had not ripened into friendship. Evidently Christine was not a kindred spirit.

“Are you going to be in Avonlea all summer?” asked Gilbert.

“No. I'm going down east to Valley Road next week. Esther Haythorne wants me to teach for her through July and August. They have a summer term in that school, and Esther isn't feeling well. So I'm going to substitute for her. In one way I don't mind. Do you know, I'm beginning to feel a little bit like a stranger in Avonlea now? It makes me sorry — but

it's true. It's quite appalling to see the number of children who have shot up into big boys and girls — really young men and women — these past two years. Half of my pupils are grown up. It makes me feel awfully old to see them in the places you and I and our mates used to fill.”

Anne laughed and sighed. She felt very old and mature and wise — which showed how young she was. She told herself that she longed greatly to go back to those dear merry days when life was seen through a rosy mist of hope and illusion, and possessed an indefinable something that had passed away forever. Where was it now — the glory and the dream?

““So wags the world away,”” quoted Gilbert practically, and a trifle absently. Anne wondered if he were thinking of Christine. Oh, Avonlea was going to be so lonely now — with Diana gone!

Chapter XX X

Mrs. Skinner's Romance

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Anne stepped off the train at Valley Road station and looked about to see if any one had come to meet her. She was to board with a certain Miss Janet Sweet, but she saw no one who answered in the least to her preconception of that lady, as formed from Esther's letter. The only person in sight was an elderly woman, sitting in a wagon with mail bags piled around her. Two hundred would have been a charitable guess at her weight; her face was as round and red as a harvest-moon and almost as featureless. She wore a tight, black, cashmere dress, made in the fashion of ten years ago, a little dusty black straw hat trimmed with bows of yellow ribbon, and faded black lace mits.

"Here, you," she called, waving her whip at Anne. "Are you the new Valley Road schoolma'am?"

“Yes.”

“Well, I thought so. Valley Road is noted for its goodlooking schoolma’ams, just as Millersville is noted for its humly ones. Janet Sweet asked me this morning if I could bring you out. I said, ‘Sartin I kin, if she don’t mind being scrunched up some. This rig of mine’s kinder small for the mail bags and I’m some heftier than Thomas!’ Just wait, miss, till I shift these bags a bit and I’ll tuck you in somehow. It’s only two miles to Janet’s. Her next-door neighbor’s hired boy is coming for your trunk tonight. My name is Skinner — Amelia Skinner.”

Anne was eventually tucked in, exchanging amused smiles with herself during the process.

“Jog along, black mare,” commanded Mrs. Skinner, gathering up the reins in her pudgy hands. “This is my first trip on the mail rowte. Thomas wanted to hoe his turnips today so he asked me to come. So I jest sot down and took a standing-up snack and started. I sorter like it. O’ course it’s rather tejus. Part of the time I sits and thinks and the rest I jest sits. Jog along, black mare. I want to git home airly. Thomas is terrible lonesome when I’m away. You see, we haven’t been married very long.”

“Oh!” said Anne politely.

“Just a month. Thomas courted me for quite a spell, though. It was real romantic.” Anne tried to picture Mrs. Skinner on speaking terms with romance and failed.

“Oh?” she said again.

“Yes. Y’see, there was another man after me. Jog along, black mare. I’d been a widder so long folks had given up expecting me to marry again. But when my darter — she’s a schoolma’am like you — went out West to teach I felt real lonesome and wasn’t nowise sot against the idea. Bime-by Thomas began to come up and so did the other feller — William Obadiah Seaman, his name was. For a long time I couldn’t make up my mind which of them to take, and they kep’ coming and coming, and I kep’ worrying.

Y'see, W.O. was rich — he had a fine place and carried considerable style. He was by far the best match. Jog along, black mare."

"Why didn't you marry him?" asked Anne.

"Well, y'see, he didn't love me," answered Mrs. Skinner, solemnly.

Anne opened her eyes widely and looked at Mrs. Skinner. But there was not a glint of humor on that lady's face. Evidently Mrs. Skinner saw nothing amusing in her own case.

"He'd been a widder-man for three yers, and his sister kept house for him. Then she got married and he just wanted some one to look after his house. It was worth looking after, too, mind you that. It's a handsome house. Jog along, black mare. As for Thomas, he was poor, and if his house didn't leak in dry weather it was about all that could be said for it, though it looks kind of pictureaskew. But, y'see, I loved Thomas, and I didn't care one red cent for W.O. So I argued it out with myself. 'Sarah Crowe,' say I — my first was a Crowe—'you can marry your rich man if you like but you won't be happy. Folks can't get along together in this world without a little bit of love. You'd just better tie up to Thomas, for he loves you and you love him and nothing else ain't going to do you.' Jog along, black mare. So I told Thomas I'd take him. All the time I was getting ready I never dared drive past W.O.'s place for fear the sight of that fine house of his would put me in the swithers again. But now I never think of it at all, and I'm just that comfortable and happy with Thomas. Jog along, black mare."

"How did William Obadiah take it?" queried Anne.

"Oh, he rumpussed a bit. But he's going to see a skinny old maid in Millersville now, and I guess she'll take him fast enough. She'll make him a better wife than his first did. W.O. never wanted to marry her. He just asked her to marry him 'cause his father wanted him to, never dreaming but that she'd say 'no.' But mind you, she said 'yes.' There was a predicament for you. Jog along, black mare. She was a great housekeeper, but most awful mean. She wore the same bonnet for eighteen years. Then she got a new one and W.O. met her on the road and didn't know her. Jog

along, black mare. I feel that I'd a narrer escape. I might have married him and been most awful miserable, like my poor cousin, Jane Ann. Jane Ann married a rich man she didn't care anything about, and she hasn't the life of a dog. She come to see me last week and says, says she, 'Sarah Skinner, I envy you. I'd rather live in a little hut on the side of the road with a man I was fond of than in my big house with the one I've got.' Jane Ann's man ain't such a bad sort, nuther, though he's so contrary that he wears his fur coat when the thermometer's at ninety. The only way to git him to do anything is to coax him to do the opposite. But there ain't any love to smooth things down and it's a poor way of living. Jog along, black mare. There's Janet's place in the hollow—'Wayside,' she calls it. Quite pictureaskew, ain't it? I guess you'll be glad to git out of this, with all them mail bags jamming round you."

"Yes, but I have enjoyed my drive with you very much," said Anne sincerely.

"Git away now!" said Mrs. Skinner, highly flattered. "Wait till I tell Thomas that. He always feels dretful tickled when I git a compliment. Jog along, black mare. Well, here we are. I hope you'll git on well in the school, miss. There's a short cut to it through the ma'sh back of Janet's. If you take that way be awful keerful. If you once got stuck in that black mud you'd be sucked right down and never seen or heard tell of again till the day of judgment, like Adam Palmer's cow. Jog along, black mare."

Chapter XXX I

Anne to Philippa

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“Anne Shirley to Philippa Gordon, greeting.

“Well-beloved, it’s high time I was writing you. Here am I, installed once more as a country ‘schoolma’am’ at Valley Road, boarding at ‘Wayside,’ the home of Miss Janet Sweet. Janet is a dear soul and very nicelooking; tall, but not over-tall; stoutish, yet with a certain restraint of outline suggestive of a thrifty soul who is not going to be overlavish even in the matter of avoirdupois. She has a knot of soft, crimped, brown hair with a thread of gray in it, a sunny face with rosy cheeks, and big, kind eyes as blue as forget-me-nots. Moreover, she is one of those delightful, old-fashioned cooks who don’t care a bit if they ruin your digestion as long as they can give you feasts of fat things.

“I like her; and she likes me — principally, it seems, because she had a sister named Anne who died young.

“‘I’m real glad to see you,’ she said briskly, when I landed in her yard. ‘My, you don’t look a mite like I expected. I was sure you’d be dark — my sister Anne was dark. And here you’re redheaded!’

“For a few minutes I thought I wasn’t going to like Janet as much as I had expected at first sight. Then I reminded myself that I really must be more sensible than to be prejudiced against any one simply because she called my hair red. Probably the word ‘auburn’ was not in Janet’s vocabulary at all.

“‘Wayside’ is a dear sort of little spot. The house is small and white, set down in a delightful little hollow that drops away from the road. Between road and house is an orchard and flower-garden all mixed up together. The

front door walk is bordered with quahog clamshells—'cowhawks,' Janet calls them; there is Virginia Creeper over the porch and moss on the roof. My room is a neat little spot 'off the parlor' — just big enough for the bed and me. Over the head of my bed there is a picture of Robby Burns standing at Highland Mary's grave, shadowed by an enormous weeping willow tree. Robby's face is so lugubrious that it is no wonder I have bad dreams. Why, the first night I was here I dreamed I COULDN'T LAUGH.

"The parlor is tiny and neat. Its one window is so shaded by a huge willow that the room has a grotto-like effect of emerald gloom. There are wonderful tidies on the chairs, and gay mats on the floor, and books and cards carefully arranged on a round table, and vases of dried grass on the mantelpiece. Between the vases is a cheerful decoration of preserved coffin plates — five in all, pertaining respectively to Janet's father and mother, a brother, her sister Anne, and a hired man who died here once! If I go suddenly insane some of these days 'know all men by these presents' that those coffin-plates have caused it.

"But it's all delightful and I said so. Janet loved me for it, just as she detested poor Esther because Esther had said so much shade was unhygienic and had objected to sleeping on a feather bed. Now, I glory in feather-beds, and the more unhygienic and feathery they are the more I glory. Janet says it is such a comfort to see me eat; she had been so afraid I would be like Miss Haythorne, who wouldn't eat anything but fruit and hot water for breakfast and tried to make Janet give up frying things. Esther is really a dear girl, but she is rather given to fads. The trouble is that she hasn't enough imagination and HAS a tendency to indigestion.

"Janet told me I could have the use of the parlor when any young men called! I don't think there are many to call. I haven't seen a young man in Valley Road yet, except the next-door hired boy — Sam Toliver, a very tall, lank, tow-haired youth. He came over one evening recently and sat for an hour on the garden fence, near the front porch where Janet and I were doing fancywork. The only remarks he volunteered in all that time were, 'Hev a peppermint, miss! Dew now-fine thing for carARRH, peppermints,' and, 'Powerful lot o' jump-grasses round here ternight. Yep.'

“But there is a love affair going on here. It seems to be my fortune to be mixed up, more or less actively, with elderly love affairs. Mr. and Mrs. Irving always say that I brought about their marriage. Mrs. Stephen Clark of Carmody persists in being most grateful to me for a suggestion which somebody else would probably have made if I hadn’t. I do really think, though, that Ludovic Speed would never have got any further along than placid courtship if I had not helped him and Theodora Dix out.

“In the present affair I am only a passive spectator. I’ve tried once to help things along and made an awful mess of it. So I shall not meddle again. I’ll tell you all about it when we meet.”

Chapter XXXI I

Tea with Mrs. Douglas

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On the first Thursday night of Anne's sojourn in Valley Road Janet asked her to go to prayer-meeting. Janet blossomed out like a rose to attend that prayer-meeting. She wore a pale-blue, pansy-sprinkled muslin dress with more ruffles than one would ever have supposed economical Janet could be guilty of, and a white leghorn hat with pink roses and three ostrich feathers on it. Anne felt quite amazed. Later on, she found out Janet's motive in so arraying herself — a motive as old as Eden.

Valley Road prayer-meetings seemed to be essentially feminine. There were thirty-two women present, two half-grown boys, and one solitary man, beside the minister. Anne found herself studying this man. He was not handsome or young or graceful; he had remarkably long legs — so long that he had to keep them coiled up under his chair to dispose of them — and he was stoop-shouldered. His hands were big, his hair wanted barbering, and his moustache was unkempt. But Anne thought she liked his face; it was kind and honest and tender; there was something else in it, too — just what, Anne found it hard to define. She finally concluded that this man had suffered and been strong, and it had been made manifest in his face. There was a sort of patient, humorous endurance in his expression which indicated that he would go to the stake if need be, but would keep on looking pleasant until he really had to begin squirming.

When prayer-meeting was over this man came up to Janet and said,

“May I see you home, Janet?”

Janet took his arm—”as primly and shyly as if she were no more than sixteen, having her first escort home,” Anne told the girls at Patty's Place later on.

“Miss Shirley, permit me to introduce Mr. Douglas,” she said stiffly.

Mr. Douglas nodded and said, “I was looking at you in prayer-meeting, miss, and thinking what a nice little girl you were.”

Such a speech from ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have annoyed Anne bitterly; but the way in which Mr. Douglas said it made her feel that she had received a very real and pleasing compliment. She smiled appreciatively at him and dropped obligingly behind on the moonlit road.

So Janet had a beau! Anne was delighted. Janet would make a paragon of a wife — cheery, economical, tolerant, and a very queen of cooks. It would be a flagrant waste on Nature’s part to keep her a permanent old maid.

“John Douglas asked me to take you up to see his mother,” said Janet the next day. “She’s bed-ridden a lot of the time and never goes out of the house. But she’s powerful fond of company and always wants to see my boarders. Can you go up this evening?”

Anne assented; but later in the day Mr. Douglas called on his mother’s behalf to invite them up to tea on Saturday evening.

“Oh, why didn’t you put on your pretty pansy dress?” asked Anne, when they left home. It was a hot day, and poor Janet, between her excitement and her heavy black cashmere dress, looked as if she were being broiled alive.

“Old Mrs. Douglas would think it terrible frivolous and unsuitable, I’m afraid. John likes that dress, though,” she added wistfully.

The old Douglas homestead was half a mile from “Wayside” cresting a windy hill. The house itself was large and comfortable, old enough to be dignified, and girdled with maple groves and orchards. There were big, trim barns behind it, and everything bespoke prosperity. Whatever the patient endurance in Mr. Douglas’ face had meant it hadn’t, so Anne reflected, meant debts and duns.

John Douglas met them at the door and took them into the sitting-room, where his mother was enthroned in an armchair.

Anne had expected old Mrs. Douglas to be tall and thin, because Mr. Douglas was. Instead, she was a tiny scrap of a woman, with soft pink cheeks, mild blue eyes, and a mouth like a baby's. Dressed in a beautiful, fashionably-made black silk dress, with a fluffy white shawl over her shoulders, and her snowy hair surmounted by a dainty lace cap, she might have posed as a grandmother doll.

"How do you do, Janet dear?" she said sweetly. "I am so glad to see you again, dear." She put up her pretty old face to be kissed. "And this is our new teacher. I'm delighted to meet you. My son has been singing your praises until I'm half jealous, and I'm sure Janet ought to be wholly so."

Poor Janet blushed, Anne said something polite and conventional, and then everybody sat down and made talk. It was hard work, even for Anne, for nobody seemed at ease except old Mrs. Douglas, who certainly did not find any difficulty in talking. She made Janet sit by her and stroked her hand occasionally. Janet sat and smiled, looking horribly uncomfortable in her hideous dress, and John Douglas sat without smiling.

At the tea table Mrs. Douglas gracefully asked Janet to pour the tea. Janet turned redder than ever but did it. Anne wrote a description of that meal to Stella.

"We had cold tongue and chicken and strawberry preserves, lemon pie and tarts and chocolate cake and raisin cookies and pound cake and fruit cake — and a few other things, including more pie — caramel pie, I think it was. After I had eaten twice as much as was good for me, Mrs. Douglas sighed and said she feared she had nothing to tempt my appetite.

"'I'm afraid dear Janet's cooking has spoiled you for any other,' she said sweetly. 'Of course nobody in Valley Road aspires to rival HER. WON'T you have another piece of pie, Miss Shirley? You haven't eaten ANYTHING.'

“Stella, I had eaten a helping of tongue and one of chicken, three biscuits, a generous allowance of preserves, a piece of pie, a tart, and a square of chocolate cake!”

After tea Mrs. Douglas smiled benevolently and told John to take “dear Janet” out into the garden and get her some roses. “Miss Shirley will keep me company while you are out — won’t you?” she said plaintively. She settled down in her armchair with a sigh.

“I am a very frail old woman, Miss Shirley. For over twenty years I’ve been a great sufferer. For twenty long, weary years I’ve been dying by inches.”

“How painful!” said Anne, trying to be sympathetic and succeeding only in feeling idiotic.

“There have been scores of nights when they’ve thought I could never live to see the dawn,” went on Mrs. Douglas solemnly. “Nobody knows what I’ve gone through — nobody can know but myself. Well, it can’t last very much longer now. My weary pilgrimage will soon be over, Miss Shirley. It is a great comfort to me that John will have such a good wife to look after him when his mother is gone — a great comfort, Miss Shirley.”

“Janet is a lovely woman,” said Anne warmly.

“Lovely! A beautiful character,” assented Mrs. Douglas. “And a perfect housekeeper — something I never was. My health would not permit it, Miss Shirley. I am indeed thankful that John has made such a wise choice. I hope and believe that he will be happy. He is my only son, Miss Shirley, and his happiness lies very near my heart.”

“Of course,” said Anne stupidly. For the first time in her life she was stupid. Yet she could not imagine why. She seemed to have absolutely nothing to say to this sweet, smiling, angelic old lady who was patting her hand so kindly.

“Come and see me soon again, dear Janet,” said Mrs. Douglas lovingly, when they left. “You don’t come half often enough. But then I suppose

John will be bringing you here to stay all the time one of these days.”

Anne, happening to glance at John Douglas, as his mother spoke, gave a positive start of dismay. He looked as a tortured man might look when his tormentors gave the rack the last turn of possible endurance. She felt sure he must be ill and hurried poor blushing Janet away.

“Isn’t old Mrs. Douglas a sweet woman?” asked Janet, as they went down the road.

“M — m,” answered Anne absently. She was wondering why John Douglas had looked so.

“She’s been a terrible sufferer,” said Janet feelingly. “She takes terrible spells. It keeps John all worried up. He’s scared to leave home for fear his mother will take a spell and nobody there but the hired girl.”

Chapter XXXII I

“He Just Kept Coming and Coming”

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Three days later Anne came home from school and found Janet crying. Tears and Janet seemed so incongruous that Anne was honestly alarmed.

“Oh, what is the matter?” she cried anxiously.

“I’m — I’m forty today,” sobbed Janet.

“Well, you were nearly that yesterday and it didn’t hurt,” comforted Anne, trying not to smile.

“But — but,” went on Janet with a big gulp, “John Douglas won’t ask me to marry him.”

“Oh, but he will,” said Anne lamely. “You must give him time, Janet

“Time!” said Janet with indescribable scorn. “He has had twenty years. How much time does he want?”

“Do you mean that John Douglas has been coming to see you for twenty years?”

“He has. And he has never so much as mentioned marriage to me. And I don’t believe he ever will now. I’ve never said a word to a mortal about it, but it seems to me I’ve just got to talk it out with some one at last or go crazy. John Douglas begun to go with me twenty years ago, before mother died. Well, he kept coming and coming, and after a spell I begun making quilts and things; but he never said anything about getting married, only just kept coming and coming. There wasn’t anything I could do. Mother died when we’d been going together for eight years. I thought he maybe

would speak out then, seeing as I was left alone in the world. He was real kind and feeling, and did everything he could for me, but he never said marry. And that's the way it has been going on ever since. People blame ME for it. They say I won't marry him because his mother is so sickly and I don't want the bother of waiting on her. Why, I'd LOVE to wait on John's mother! But I let them think so. I'd rather they'd blame me than pity me! It's so dreadful humiliating that John won't ask me. And WHY won't he? Seems to me if I only knew his reason I wouldn't mind it so much."

"Perhaps his mother doesn't want him to marry anybody," suggested Anne.

"Oh, she does. She's told me time and again that she'd love to see John settled before her time comes. She's always giving him hints — you heard her yourself the other day. I thought I'd ha' gone through the floor."

"It's beyond me," said Anne helplessly. She thought of Ludovic Speed. But the cases were not parallel. John Douglas was not a man of Ludovic's type.

"You should show more spirit, Janet," she went on resolutely. "Why didn't you send him about his business long ago?"

"I couldn't," said poor Janet pathetically. "You see, Anne, I've always been awful fond of John. He might just as well keep coming as not, for there was never anybody else I'd want, so it didn't matter."

"But it might have made him speak out like a man," urged Anne.

Janet shook her head.

"No, I guess not. I was afraid to try, anyway, for fear he'd think I meant it and just go. I suppose I'm a poor-spirited creature, but that is how I feel. And I can't help it."

"Oh, you COULD help it, Janet. It isn't too late yet. Take a firm stand. Let that man know you are not going to endure his shillyshallying any longer. I'LL back you up."

“I dunno,” said Janet hopelessly. “I dunno if I could ever get up enough spunk. Things have drifted so long. But I’ll think it over.”

Anne felt that she was disappointed in John Douglas. She had liked him so well, and she had not thought him the sort of man who would play fast and loose with a woman’s feelings for twenty years. He certainly should be taught a lesson, and Anne felt vindictively that she would enjoy seeing the process. Therefore she was delighted when Janet told her, as they were going to prayer-meeting the next night, that she meant to show some “sperrit.”

“I’ll let John Douglas see I’m not going to be trodden on any longer.”

“You are perfectly right,” said Anne emphatically.

When prayer-meeting was over John Douglas came up with his usual request. Janet looked frightened but resolute.

“No, thank you,” she said icily. “I know the road home pretty well alone. I ought to, seeing I’ve been traveling it for forty years. So you needn’t trouble yourself, MR. Douglas.”

Anne was looking at John Douglas; and, in that brilliant moonlight, she saw the last twist of the rack again. Without a word he turned and strode down the road.

“Stop! Stop!” Anne called wildly after him, not caring in the least for the other dumbfounded onlookers. “Mr. Douglas, stop! Come back.”

John Douglas stopped but he did not come back. Anne flew down the road, caught his arm and fairly dragged him back to Janet.

“You must come back,” she said imploringly. “It’s all a mistake, Mr. Douglas — all my fault. I made Janet do it. She didn’t want to — but it’s all right now, isn’t it, Janet?”

Without a word Janet took his arm and walked away. Anne followed them meekly home and slipped in by the back door.

“Well, you are a nice person to back me up,” said Janet sarcastically.

“I couldn’t help it, Janet,” said Anne repentantly. “I just felt as if I had stood by and seen murder done. I HAD to run after him.”

“Oh, I’m just as glad you did. When I saw John Douglas making off down that road I just felt as if every little bit of joy and happiness that was left in my life was going with him. It was an awful feeling.”

“Did he ask you why you did it?” asked Anne.

“No, he never said a word about it,” replied Janet dully.

Chapter XXXI V

John Douglas Speaks at Last

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Anne was not without a feeble hope that something might come of it after all. But nothing did. John Douglas came and took Janet driving, and walked home from prayer-meeting with her, as he had been doing for twenty years, and as he seemed likely to do for twenty years more. The summer waned. Anne taught her school and wrote letters and studied a little. Her walks to and from school were pleasant. She always went by way of the swamp; it was a lovely place — a boggy soil, green with the greenest of mossy hillocks; a silvery brook meandered through it and spruces stood erectly, their boughs a-trail with gray-green mosses, their roots overgrown with all sorts of woodland lovelinesses.

Nevertheless, Anne found life in Valley Road a little monotonous. To be sure, there was one diverting incident.

She had not seen the lank, tow-headed Samuel of the peppermints since the evening of his call, save for chance meetings on the road. But one warm August night he appeared, and solemnly seated himself on the rustic bench by the porch. He wore his usual working habiliments, consisting of varipatched trousers, a blue jean shirt, out at the elbows, and a ragged straw hat. He was chewing a straw and he kept on chewing it while he looked solemnly at Anne. Anne laid her book aside with a sigh and took up her doily. Conversation with Sam was really out of the question.

After a long silence Sam suddenly spoke.

“I’m leaving over there,” he said abruptly, waving his straw in the direction of the neighboring house.

“Oh, are you?” said Anne politely.

“Yep.”

“And where are you going now?”

“Wall, I’ve been thinking some of gitting a place of my own. There’s one that’d suit me over at Millersville. But ef I rents it I’ll want a woman.”

“I suppose so,” said Anne vaguely.

“Yep.”

There was another long silence. Finally Sam removed his straw again and said,

“Will yeh hev me?”

“Wh — a — t!” gasped Anne.

“Will yeh hev me?”

“Do you mean — MARRY you?” queried poor Anne feebly.

“Yep.”

“Why, I’m hardly acquainted with you,” cried Anne indignantly.

“But yeh’d git acquainted with me after we was married,” said Sam.

Anne gathered up her poor dignity.

“Certainly I won’t marry you,” she said haughtily.

“Wall, yeh might do worse,” expostulated Sam. “I’m a good worker and I’ve got some money in the bank.”

“Don’t speak of this to me again. Whatever put such an idea into your head?” said Anne, her sense of humor getting the better of her wrath. It was such an absurd situation.

“Yeh’re a likely-looking girl and hev a right-smart way o’ stepping,” said Sam. “I don’t want no lazy woman. Think it over. I won’t change my mind yit awhile. Wall, I must be gitting. Gotter milk the cows.”

Anne’s illusions concerning proposals had suffered so much of late years that there were few of them left. So she could laugh wholeheartedly over this one, not feeling any secret sting. She mimicked poor Sam to Janet that night, and both of them laughed immoderately over his plunge into sentiment.

One afternoon, when Anne’s sojourn in Valley Road was drawing to a close, Alec Ward came driving down to “Wayside” in hot haste for Janet.

“They want you at the Douglas place quick,” he said. “I really believe old Mrs. Douglas is going to die at last, after pretending to do it for twenty years.”

Janet ran to get her hat. Anne asked if Mrs. Douglas was worse than usual.

“She’s not half as bad,” said Alec solemnly, “and that’s what makes me think it’s serious. Other times she’d be screaming and throwing herself all over the place. This time she’s lying still and mum. When Mrs. Douglas is mum she is pretty sick, you bet.”

“You don’t like old Mrs. Douglas?” said Anne curiously.

“I like cats as IS cats. I don’t like cats as is women,” was Alec’s cryptic reply.

Janet came home in the twilight.

“Mrs. Douglas is dead,” she said wearily. “She died soon after I got there. She just spoke to me once—’I suppose you’ll marry John now?’ she said. It cut me to the heart, Anne. To think John’s own mother thought I wouldn’t marry him because of her! I couldn’t say a word either — there were other women there. I was thankful John had gone out.”

Janet began to cry drearily. But Anne brewed her a hot drink of ginger tea to her comforting. To be sure, Anne discovered later on that she had used white pepper instead of ginger; but Janet never knew the difference.

The evening after the funeral Janet and Anne were sitting on the front porch steps at sunset. The wind had fallen asleep in the pinelands and lurid sheets of heat-lightning flickered across the northern skies. Janet wore her ugly black dress and looked her very worst, her eyes and nose red from crying. They talked little, for Janet seemed faintly to resent Anne's efforts to cheer her up. She plainly preferred to be miserable.

Suddenly the gate-latch clicked and John Douglas strode into the garden. He walked towards them straight over the geranium bed. Janet stood up. So did Anne. Anne was a tall girl and wore a white dress; but John Douglas did not see her.

"Janet," he said, "will you marry me?"

The words burst out as if they had been wanting to be said for twenty years and MUST be uttered now, before anything else.

Janet's face was so red from crying that it couldn't turn any redder, so it turned a most unbecoming purple.

"Why didn't you ask me before?" she said slowly.

"I couldn't. She made me promise not to — mother made me promise not to. Nineteen years ago she took a terrible spell. We thought she couldn't live through it. She implored me to promise not to ask you to marry me while she was alive. I didn't want to promise such a thing, even though we all thought she couldn't live very long — the doctor only gave her six months. But she begged it on her knees, sick and suffering. I had to promise."

"What had your mother against me?" cried Janet.

"Nothing — nothing. She just didn't want another woman — ANY woman — there while she was living. She said if I didn't promise she'd die right

there and I'd have killed her. So I promised. And she's held me to that promise ever since, though I've gone on my knees to her in my turn to beg her to let me off."

"Why didn't you tell me this?" asked Janet chokingly. "If I'd only KNOWN! Why didn't you just tell me?"

"She made me promise I wouldn't tell a soul," said John hoarsely. "She swore me to it on the Bible; Janet, I'd never have done it if I'd dreamed it was to be for so long. Janet, you'll never know what I've suffered these nineteen years. I know I've made you suffer, too, but you'll marry me for all, won't you, Janet? Oh, Janet, won't you? I've come as soon as I could to ask you."

At this moment the stupefied Anne came to her senses and realized that she had no business to be there. She slipped away and did not see Janet until the next morning, when the latter told her the rest of the story.

"That cruel, relentless, deceitful old woman!" cried Anne.

"Hush — she's dead," said Janet solemnly. "If she wasn't — but she IS. So we mustn't speak evil of her. But I'm happy at last, Anne. And I wouldn't have minded waiting so long a bit if I'd only known why."

"When are you to be married?"

"Next month. Of course it will be very quiet. I suppose people will talk terrible. They'll say I made enough haste to snap John up as soon as his poor mother was out of the way. John wanted to let them know the truth but I said, 'No, John; after all she was your mother, and we'll keep the secret between us, and not cast any shadow on her memory. I don't mind what people say, now that I know the truth myself. It don't matter a mite. Let it all be buried with the dead' says I to him. So I coaxed him round to agree with me."

"You're much more forgiving than I could ever be," Anne said, rather crossly.

“You’ll feel differently about a good many things when you get to be my age,” said Janet tolerantly. “That’s one of the things we learn as we grow older — how to forgive. It comes easier at forty than it did at twenty.”

Chapter XXX V

The Last Redmond Year Opens

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“Here we are, all back again, nicely sunburned and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race,” said Phil, sitting down on a suitcase with a sigh of pleasure. “Isn’t it jolly to see this dear old Patty’s Place again — and Auntie — and the cats? Rusty has lost another piece of ear, hasn’t he?”

“Rusty would be the nicest cat in the world if he had no ears at all,” declared Anne loyally from her trunk, while Rusty writhed about her lap in a frenzy of welcome.

“Aren’t you glad to see us back, Auntie?” demanded Phil.

“Yes. But I wish you’d tidy things up,” said Aunt Jamesina plaintively, looking at the wilderness of trunks and suitcases by which the four laughing, chattering girls were surrounded. “You can talk just as well later on. Work first and then play used to be my motto when I was a girl.”

“Oh, we’ve just reversed that in this generation, Auntie. OUR motto is play your play and then dig in. You can do your work so much better if you’ve had a good bout of play first.”

“If you are going to marry a minister,” said Aunt Jamesina, picking up Joseph and her knitting and resigning herself to the inevitable with the charming grace that made her the queen of housemothers, “you will have to give up such expressions as ‘dig in.’”

“Why?” moaned Phil. “Oh, why must a minister’s wife be supposed to utter only prunes and prisms? I shan’t. Everybody on Patterson Street uses slang — that is to say, metaphorical language — and if I didn’t they would think me insufferably proud and stuck up.”

“Have you broken the news to your family?” asked Priscilla, feeding the Sarah-cat bits from her lunchbasket.

Phil nodded.

“How did they take it?”

“Oh, mother rampaged. But I stood rockfirm — even I, Philippa Gordon, who never before could hold fast to anything. Father was calmer. Father’s own daddy was a minister, so you see he has a soft spot in his heart for the cloth. I had Jo up to Mount Holly, after mother grew calm, and they both loved him. But mother gave him some frightful hints in every conversation regarding what she had hoped for me. Oh, my vacation pathway hasn’t been exactly strewn with roses, girls dear. But — I’ve won out and I’ve got Jo. Nothing else matters.”

“To you,” said Aunt Jamesina darkly.

“Nor to Jo, either,” retorted Phil. “You keep on pitying him. Why, pray? I think he’s to be envied. He’s getting brains, beauty, and a heart of gold in ME.”

“It’s well we know how to take your speeches,” said Aunt Jamesina patiently. “I hope you don’t talk like that before strangers. What would they think?”

“Oh, I don’t want to know what they think. I don’t want to see myself as others see me. I’m sure it would be horribly uncomfortable most of the time. I don’t believe Burns was really sincere in that prayer, either.”

“Oh, I daresay we all pray for some things that we really don’t want, if we were only honest enough to look into our hearts,” owned Aunt Jamesina candidly. “I’ve a notion that such prayers don’t rise very far. I used to pray that I might be enabled to forgive a certain person, but I know now I really didn’t want to forgive her. When I finally got that I DID want to I forgave her without having to pray about it.”

“I can’t picture you as being unforgiving for long,” said Stella.

“Oh, I used to be. But holding spite doesn’t seem worth while when you get along in years.”

“That reminds me,” said Anne, and told the tale of John and Janet.

“And now tell us about that romantic scene you hinted so darkly at in one of your letters,” demanded Phil.

Anne acted out Samuel’s proposal with great spirit. The girls shrieked with laughter and Aunt Jamesina smiled.

“It isn’t in good taste to make fun of your beaux,” she said severely; “but,” she added calmly, “I always did it myself.”

“Tell us about your beaux, Aunty,” entreated Phil. “You must have had any number of them.”

“They’re not in the past tense,” retorted Aunt Jamesina. “I’ve got them yet. There are three old widowers at home who have been casting sheep’s eyes at me for some time. You children needn’t think you own all the romance in the world.”

“Widowers and sheep’s eyes don’t sound very romantic, Aunty.”

“Well, no; but young folks aren’t always romantic either. Some of my beaux certainly weren’t. I used to laugh at them scandalous, poor boys. There was Jim Elwood — he was always in a sort of daydream — never seemed to sense what was going on. He didn’t wake up to the fact that I’d said ‘no’ till a year after I’d said it. When he did get married his wife fell out of the sleigh one night when they were driving home from church and he never missed her. Then there was Dan Winston. He knew too much. He knew everything in this world and most of what is in the next. He could give you an answer to any question, even if you asked him when the Judgment Day was to be. Milton Edwards was real nice and I liked him but I didn’t marry him. For one thing, he took a week to get a joke through his head, and for another he never asked me. Horatio Reeve was the most interesting beau I ever had. But when he told a story he dressed it up so

that you couldn't see it for frills. I never could decide whether he was lying or just letting his imagination run loose."

"And what about the others, Aunty?"

"Go away and unpack," said Aunt Jamesina, waving Joseph at them by mistake for a needle. "The others were too nice to make fun of. I shall respect their memory. There's a box of flowers in your room, Anne. They came about an hour ago."

After the first week the girls of Patty's Place settled down to a steady grind of study; for this was their last year at Redmond and graduation honors must be fought for persistently. Anne devoted herself to English, Priscilla pored over classics, and Philippa pounded away at Mathematics. Sometimes they grew tired, sometimes they felt discouraged, sometimes nothing seemed worth the struggle for it. In one such mood Stella wandered up to the blue room one rainy November evening. Anne sat on the floor in a little circle of light cast by the lamp beside her, amid a surrounding snow of crumpled manuscript.

"What in the world are you doing?"

"Just looking over some old Story Club yarns. I wanted something to cheer AND inebriate. I'd studied until the world seemed azure. So I came up here and dug these out of my trunk. They are so drenched in tears and tragedy that they are excruciatingly funny."

"I'm blue and discouraged myself," said Stella, throwing herself on the couch. "Nothing seems worthwhile. My very thoughts are old. I've thought them all before. What is the use of living after all, Anne?"

"Honey, it's just brain fag that makes us feel that way, and the weather. A pouring rainy night like this, coming after a hard day's grind, would squelch any one but a Mark Tapley. You know it IS worthwhile to live."

"Oh, I suppose so. But I can't prove it to myself just now."

“Just think of all the great and noble souls who have lived and worked in the world,” said Anne dreamily. “Isn’t it worthwhile to come after them and inherit what they won and taught? Isn’t it worthwhile to think we can share their inspiration? And then, all the great souls that will come in the future? Isn’t it worthwhile to work a little and prepare the way for them — make just one step in their path easier?”

“Oh, my mind agrees with you, Anne. But my soul remains doleful and uninspired. I’m always grubby and dingy on rainy nights.”

“Some nights I like the rain — I like to lie in bed and hear it pattering on the roof and drifting through the pines.”

“I like it when it stays on the roof,” said Stella. “It doesn’t always. I spent a gruesome night in an old country farmhouse last summer. The roof leaked and the rain came pattering down on my bed. There was no poetry in THAT. I had to get up in the ‘mirk midnight’ and chivy round to pull the bedstead out of the drip — and it was one of those solid, old-fashioned beds that weigh a ton — more or less. And then that drip-drop, drip-drop kept up all night until my nerves just went to pieces. You’ve no idea what an eerie noise a great drop of rain falling with a mushy thud on a bare floor makes in the night. It sounds like ghostly footsteps and all that sort of thing. What are you laughing over, Anne?”

“These stories. As Phil would say they are killing — in more senses than one, for everybody died in them. What dazzlingly lovely heroines we had — and how we dressed them!

“Silks — satins — velvets — jewels — laces — they never wore anything else. Here is one of Jane Andrews’ stories depicting her heroine as sleeping in a beautiful white satin nightdress trimmed with seed pearls.”

“Go on,” said Stella. “I begin to feel that life is worth living as long as there’s a laugh in it.”

“Here’s one I wrote. My heroine is disporting herself at a ball ‘glittering from head to foot with large diamonds of the first water.’ But what booted beauty or rich attire? ‘The paths of glory lead but to the grave.’ They must

either be murdered or die of a broken heart. There was no escape for them.”

“Let me read some of your stories.”

“Well, here’s my masterpiece. Note its cheerful title—’My Graves.’ I shed quarts of tears while writing it, and the other girls shed gallons while I read it. Jane Andrews’ mother scolded her frightfully because she had so many handkerchiefs in the wash that week. It’s a harrowing tale of the wanderings of a Methodist minister’s wife. I made her a Methodist because it was necessary that she should wander. She buried a child every place she lived in. There were nine of them and their graves were severed far apart, ranging from Newfoundland to Vancouver. I described the children, pictured their several death beds, and detailed their tombstones and epitaphs. I had intended to bury the whole nine but when I had disposed of eight my invention of horrors gave out and I permitted the ninth to live as a hopeless cripple.”

While Stella read *My Graves*, punctuating its tragic paragraphs with chuckles, and Rusty slept the sleep of a just cat who has been out all night curled up on a Jane Andrews tale of a beautiful maiden of fifteen who went to nurse in a leper colony — of course dying of the loathsome disease finally — Anne glanced over the other manuscripts and recalled the old days at Avonlea school when the members of the Story Club, sitting under the spruce trees or down among the ferns by the brook, had written them. What fun they had had! How the sunshine and mirth of those olden summers returned as she read. Not all the glory that was Greece or the grandeur that was Rome could weave such wizardry as those funny, tearful tales of the Story Club. Among the manuscripts Anne found one written on sheets of wrapping paper. A wave of laughter filled her gray eyes as she recalled the time and place of its genesis. It was the sketch she had written the day she fell through the roof of the Cobb duckhouse on the Tory Road.

Anne glanced over it, then fell to reading it intently. It was a little dialogue between asters and sweetpeas, wild canaries in the lilac bush, and the guardian spirit of the garden. After she had read it, she sat, staring into

space; and when Stella had gone she smoothed out the crumpled manuscript.

“I believe I will,” she said resolutely.

Chapter XXXV I

The Gardners' Call

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“Here is a letter with an Indian stamp for you, Aunt Jimsie,” said Phil.
“Here are three for Stella, and two for Pris, and a glorious fat one for me from Jo. There’s nothing for you, Anne, except a circular.”

Nobody noticed Anne’s flush as she took the thin letter Phil tossed her carelessly. But a few minutes later Phil looked up to see a transfigured Anne.

“Honey, what good thing has happened?”

“The Youth’s Friend has accepted a little sketch I sent them a fortnight ago,” said Anne, trying hard to speak as if she were accustomed to having sketches accepted every mail, but not quite succeeding.

“Anne Shirley! How glorious! What was it? When is it to be published? Did they pay you for it?”

“Yes; they’ve sent a check for ten dollars, and the editor writes that he would like to see more of my work. Dear man, he shall. It was an old sketch I found in my box. I rewrote it and sent it in — but I never really thought it could be accepted because it had no plot,” said Anne, recalling the bitter experience of Averil’s Atonement.

“What are you going to do with that ten dollars, Anne? Let’s all go up town and get drunk,” suggested Phil.

“I AM going to squander it in a wild soulless revel of some sort,” declared Anne gaily. “At all events it isn’t tainted money — like the check I got for

that horrible Reliable Baking Powder story. I spent IT usefully for clothes and hated them every time I put them on.”

“Think of having a real live author at Patty’s Place,” said Priscilla.

“It’s a great responsibility,” said Aunt Jamesina solemnly.

“Indeed it is,” agreed Pris with equal solemnity. “Authors are kittle cattle. You never know when or how they will break out. Anne may make copy of us.”

“I meant that the ability to write for the Press was a great responsibility,” said Aunt Jamesina severely, “and I hope Anne realizes, it. My daughter used to write stories before she went to the foreign field, but now she has turned her attention to higher things. She used to say her motto was ‘Never write a line you would be ashamed to read at your own funeral.’ You’d better take that for yours, Anne, if you are going to embark in literature. Though, to be sure,” added Aunt Jamesina perplexedly, “Elizabeth always used to laugh when she said it. She always laughed so much that I don’t know how she ever came to decide on being a missionary. I’m thankful she did — I prayed that she might — but — I wish she hadn’t.”

Then Aunt Jamesina wondered why those giddy girls all laughed.

Anne’s eyes shone all that day; literary ambitions sprouted and budded in her brain; their exhilaration accompanied her to Jennie Cooper’s walking party, and not even the sight of Gilbert and Christine, walking just ahead of her and Roy, could quite subdue the sparkle of her starry hopes. Nevertheless, she was not so rapt from things of earth as to be unable to notice that Christine’s walk was decidedly ungraceful.

“But I suppose Gilbert looks only at her face. So like a man,” thought Anne scornfully.

“Shall you be home Saturday afternoon?” asked Roy.

“Yes.”

“My mother and sisters are coming to call on you,” said Roy quietly.

Something went over Anne which might be described as a thrill, but it was hardly a pleasant one. She had never met any of Roy’s family; she realized the significance of his statement; and it had, somehow, an irrevocableness about it that chilled her.

“I shall be glad to see them,” she said flatly; and then wondered if she really would be glad. She ought to be, of course. But would it not be something of an ordeal? Gossip had filtered to Anne regarding the light in which the Gardners viewed the “infatuation” of son and brother. Roy must have brought pressure to bear in the matter of this call. Anne knew she would be weighed in the balance. From the fact that they had consented to call she understood that, willingly or unwillingly, they regarded her as a possible member of their clan.

“I shall just be myself. I shall not TRY to make a good impression,” thought Anne loftily. But she was wondering what dress she would better wear Saturday afternoon, and if the new style of high hairdressing would suit her better than the old; and the walking party was rather spoiled for her. By night she had decided that she would wear her brown chiffon on Saturday, but would do her hair low.

Friday afternoon none of the girls had classes at Redmond. Stella took the opportunity to write a paper for the Philomathic Society, and was sitting at the table in the corner of the livingroom with an untidy litter of notes and manuscript on the floor around her. Stella always vowed she never could write anything unless she threw each sheet down as she completed it. Anne, in her flannel blouse and serge skirt, with her hair rather blown from her windy walk home, was sitting squarely in the middle of the floor, teasing the Sarah-cat with a wishbone. Joseph and Rusty were both curled up in her lap. A warm plummy odor filled the whole house, for Priscilla was cooking in the kitchen. Presently she came in, enshrouded in a huge work-apron, with a smudge of flour on her nose, to show Aunt Jamesina the chocolate cake she had just iced.

At this auspicious moment the knocker sounded. Nobody paid any attention to it save Phil, who sprang up and opened it, expecting a boy with

the hat she had bought that morning. On the doorstep stood Mrs. Gardner and her daughters.

Anne scrambled to her feet somehow, emptying two indignant cats out of her lap as she did so, and mechanically shifting her wishbone from her right hand to her left. Priscilla, who would have had to cross the room to reach the kitchen door, lost her head, wildly plunged the chocolate cake under a cushion on the inglenook sofa, and dashed upstairs. Stella began feverishly gathering up her manuscript. Only Aunt Jamesina and Phil remained normal. Thanks to them, everybody was soon sitting at ease, even Anne. Priscilla came down, apronless and smudgeless, Stella reduced her corner to decency, and Phil saved the situation by a stream of ready small talk.

Mrs. Gardner was tall and thin and handsome, exquisitely gowned, cordial with a cordiality that seemed a trifle forced. Aline Gardner was a younger edition of her mother, lacking the cordiality. She endeavored to be nice, but succeeded only in being haughty and patronizing. Dorothy Gardner was slim and jolly and rather tomboyish. Anne knew she was Roy's favorite sister and warmed to her. She would have looked very much like Roy if she had had dreamy dark eyes instead of roguish hazel ones. Thanks to her and Phil, the call really went off very well, except for a slight sense of strain in the atmosphere and two rather untoward incidents. Rusty and Joseph, left to themselves, began a game of chase, and sprang madly into Mrs. Gardner's silken lap and out of it in their wild career. Mrs. Gardner lifted her lorgnette and gazed after their flying forms as if she had never seen cats before, and Anne, choking back slightly nervous laughter, apologized as best she could.

"You are fond of cats?" said Mrs. Gardner, with a slight intonation of tolerant wonder.

Anne, despite her affection for Rusty, was not especially fond of cats, but Mrs. Gardner's tone annoyed her. Inconsequently she remembered that Mrs. John Blythe was so fond of cats that she kept as many as her husband would allow.

"They ARE adorable animals, aren't they?" she said wickedly.

“I have never liked cats,” said Mrs. Gardner remotely.

“I love them,” said Dorothy. “They are so nice and selfish. Dogs are TOO good and unselfish. They make me feel uncomfortable. But cats are gloriously human.”

“You have two delightful old china dogs there. May I look at them closely?” said Aline, crossing the room towards the fireplace and thereby becoming the unconscious cause of the other accident. Picking up Magog, she sat down on the cushion under which was secreted Priscilla’s chocolate cake. Priscilla and Anne exchanged agonized glances but could do nothing. The stately Aline continued to sit on the cushion and discuss china dogs until the time of departure.

Dorothy lingered behind a moment to squeeze Anne’s hand and whisper impulsively.

“I KNOW you and I are going to be chums. Oh, Roy has told me all about you. I’m the only one of the family he tells things to, poor boy — nobody COULD confide in mamma and Aline, you know. What glorious times you girls must have here! Won’t you let me come often and have a share in them?”

“Come as often as you like,” Anne responded heartily, thankful that one of Roy’s sisters was likable. She would never like Aline, so much was certain; and Aline would never like her, though Mrs. Gardner might be won. Altogether, Anne sighed with relief when the ordeal was over.

““Of all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are it might have been,””

quoted Priscilla tragically, lifting the cushion. “This cake is now what you might call a flat failure. And the cushion is likewise ruined. Never tell me that Friday isn’t unlucky.”

“People who send word they are coming on Saturday shouldn’t come on Friday,” said Aunt Jamesina.

“I fancy it was Roy’s mistake,” said Phil. “That boy isn’t really responsible for what he says when he talks to Anne. Where IS Anne?”

Anne had gone upstairs. She felt oddly like crying. But she made herself laugh instead. Rusty and Joseph had been TOO awful! And Dorothy WAS a dear.

Chapter XXXVI I

Full-fledged B.A.'s

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“I wish I were dead, or that it were tomorrow night,” groaned Phil.

“If you live long enough both wishes will come true,” said Anne calmly.

“It’s easy for you to be serene. You’re at home in Philosophy. I’m not — and when I think of that horrible paper tomorrow I quail. If I should fail in it what would Jo say?”

“You won’t fail. How did you get on in Greek today?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps it was a good paper and perhaps it was bad enough to make Homer turn over in his grave. I’ve studied and mulled over notebooks until I’m incapable of forming an opinion of anything. How thankful little Phil will be when all this examining is over.”

“Examining? I never heard such a word.”

“Well, haven’t I as good a right to make a word as any one else?” demanded Phil.

“Words aren’t made — they grow,” said Anne.

“Never mind — I begin faintly to discern clear water ahead where no examination breakers loom. Girls, do you — can you realize that our Redmond Life is almost over?”

“I can’t,” said Anne, sorrowfully. “It seems just yesterday that Pris and I were alone in that crowd of Freshmen at Redmond. And now we are Seniors in our final examinations.”

“‘Potent, wise, and reverend Seniors,’” quoted Phil. “Do you suppose we really are any wiser than when we came to Redmond?”

“You don’t act as if you were by times,” said Aunt Jamesina severely.

“Oh, Aunt Jimsie, haven’t we been pretty good girls, take us by and large, these three winters you’ve mothered us?” pleaded Phil.

“You’ve been four of the dearest, sweetest, goodest girls that ever went together through college,” averred Aunt Jamesina, who never spoiled a compliment by misplaced economy.

“But I mistrust you haven’t any too much sense yet. It’s not to be expected, of course. Experience teaches sense. You can’t learn it in a college course. You’ve been to college four years and I never was, but I know heaps more than you do, young ladies.”

“‘There are lots of things that never go by rule,

There’s a powerful pile o’ knowledge

That you never get at college,

There are heaps of things you never learn at school,’”

quoted Stella.

“Have you learned anything at Redmond except dead languages and geometry and such trash?” queried Aunt Jamesina.

“Oh, yes. I think we have, Aunty,” protested Anne.

“We’ve learned the truth of what Professor Woodleigh told us last Philomathic,” said Phil. “He said, ‘Humor is the spiciest condiment in the feast of existence. Laugh at your mistakes but learn from them, joke over your troubles but gather strength from them, make a jest of your difficulties but overcome them.’ Isn’t that worth learning, Aunt Jimsie?”

“Yes, it is, dearie. When you’ve learned to laugh at the things that should be laughed at, and not to laugh at those that shouldn’t, you’ve got wisdom and understanding.”

“What have you got out of your Redmond course, Anne?” murmured Priscilla aside.

“I think,” said Anne slowly, “that I really have learned to look upon each little hindrance as a jest and each great one as the foreshadowing of victory. Summing up, I think that is what Redmond has given me.”

“I shall have to fall back on another Professor Woodleigh quotation to express what it has done for me,” said Priscilla. “You remember that he said in his address, ‘There is so much in the world for us all if we only have the eyes to see it, and the heart to love it, and the hand to gather it to ourselves — so much in men and women, so much in art and literature, so much everywhere in which to delight, and for which to be thankful.’ I think Redmond has taught me that in some measure, Anne.”

“Judging from what you all, say” remarked Aunt Jamesina, “the sum and substance is that you can learn — if you’ve got natural gumption enough — in four years at college what it would take about twenty years of living to teach you. Well, that justifies higher education in my opinion. It’s a matter I was always dubious about before.”

“But what about people who haven’t natural gumption, Aunt Jimsie?”

“People who haven’t natural gumption never learn,” retorted Aunt Jamesina, “neither in college nor life. If they live to be a hundred they really don’t know anything more than when they were born. It’s their misfortune not their fault, poor souls. But those of us who have some gumption should duly thank the Lord for it.”

“Will you please define what gumption is, Aunt Jimsie?” asked Phil.

“No, I won’t, young woman. Any one who has gumption knows what it is, and any one who hasn’t can never know what it is. So there is no need of defining it.”

The busy days flew by and examinations were over. Anne took High Honors in English. Priscilla took Honors in Classics, and Phil in Mathematics. Stella obtained a good all-round showing. Then came Convocation.

“This is what I would once have called an epoch in my life,” said Anne, as she took Roy’s violets out of their box and gazed at them thoughtfully. She meant to carry them, of course, but her eyes wandered to another box on her table. It was filled with lilies-of-the-valley, as fresh and fragrant as those which bloomed in the Green Gables yard when June came to Avonlea. Gilbert Blythe’s card lay beside it.

Anne wondered why Gilbert should have sent her flowers for Convocation. She had seen very little of him during the past winter. He had come to Patty’s Place only one Friday evening since the Christmas holidays, and they rarely met elsewhere. She knew he was studying very hard, aiming at High Honors and the Cooper Prize, and he took little part in the social doings of Redmond. Anne’s own winter had been quite gay socially. She had seen a good deal of the Gardners; she and Dorothy were very intimate; college circles expected the announcement of her engagement to Roy any day. Anne expected it herself. Yet just before she left Patty’s Place for Convocation she flung Roy’s violets aside and put Gilbert’s lilies-of-the-valley in their place. She could not have told why she did it. Somehow, old Avonlea days and dreams and friendships seemed very close to her in this attainment of her long-cherished ambitions. She and Gilbert had once pictured out merrily the day on which they should be capped and gowned graduates in Arts. The wonderful day had come and Roy’s violets had no place in it. Only her old friend’s flowers seemed to belong to this fruition of old-blossoming hopes which he had once shared.

For years this day had beckoned and allured to her; but when it came the one single, keen, abiding memory it left with her was not that of the breathless moment when the stately president of Redmond gave her cap and diploma and hailed her B.A.; it was not of the flash in Gilbert’s eyes when he saw her lilies, nor the puzzled pained glance Roy gave her as he passed her on the platform. It was not of Aline Gardner’s condescending congratulations, or Dorothy’s ardent, impulsive good wishes. It was of one

strange, unaccountable pang that spoiled this long-expected day for her and left in it a certain faint but enduring flavor of bitterness.

The Arts graduates gave a graduation dance that night. When Anne dressed for it she tossed aside the pearl beads she usually wore and took from her trunk the small box that had come to Green Gables on Christmas day. In it was a thread-like gold chain with a tiny pink enamel heart as a pendant. On the accompanying card was written, "With all good wishes from your old chum, Gilbert." Anne, laughing over the memory the enamel heart conjured up the fatal day when Gilbert had called her "Carrots" and vainly tried to make his peace with a pink candy heart, had written him a nice little note of thanks. But she had never worn the trinket. Tonight she fastened it about her white throat with a dreamy smile.

She and Phil walked to Redmond together. Anne walked in silence; Phil chattered of many things. Suddenly she said,

"I heard today that Gilbert Blythe's engagement to Christine Stuart was to be announced as soon as Convocation was over. Did you hear anything of it?"

"No," said Anne.

"I think it's true," said Phil lightly.

Anne did not speak. In the darkness she felt her face burning. She slipped her hand inside her collar and caught at the gold chain. One energetic twist and it gave way. Anne thrust the broken trinket into her pocket. Her hands were trembling and her eyes were smarting.

But she was the gayest of all the gay revellers that night, and told Gilbert unregretfully that her card was full when he came to ask her for a dance. Afterwards, when she sat with the girls before the dying embers at Patty's Place, removing the spring chilliness from their satin skins, none chatted more blithely than she of the day's events.

"Moody Spurgeon MacPherson called here tonight after you left," said Aunt Jamesina, who had sat up to keep the fire on. "He didn't know about

the graduation dance. That boy ought to sleep with a rubber band around his head to train his ears not to stick out. I had a beau once who did that and it improved him immensely. It was I who suggested it to him and he took my advice, but he never forgave me for it.”

“Moody Spurgeon is a very serious young man,” yawned Priscilla. “He is concerned with graver matters than his ears. He is going to be a minister, you know.”

“Well, I suppose the Lord doesn’t regard the ears of a man,” said Aunt Jamesina gravely, dropping all further criticism of Moody Spurgeon. Aunt Jamesina had a proper respect for the cloth even in the case of an unfledged parson.

Chapter XXXVII I

False Dawn

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“Just imagine — this night week I’ll be in Avonlea — delightful thought!” said Anne, bending over the box in which she was packing Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s quilts. “But just imagine — this night week I’ll be gone forever from Patty’s Place — horrible thought!”

“I wonder if the ghost of all our laughter will echo through the maiden dreams of Miss Patty and Miss Maria,” speculated Phil.

Miss Patty and Miss Maria were coming home, after having trotted over most of the habitable globe.

“We’ll be back the second week in May” wrote Miss Patty. “I expect Patty’s Place will seem rather small after the Hall of the Kings at Karnak, but I never did like big places to live in. And I’ll be glad enough to be home again. When you start traveling late in life you’re apt to do too much of it because you know you haven’t much time left, and it’s a thing that grows on you. I’m afraid Maria will never be contented again.”

“I shall leave here my fancies and dreams to bless the next comer,” said Anne, looking around the blue room wistfully — her pretty blue room where she had spent three such happy years. She had knelt at its window to pray and had bent from it to watch the sunset behind the pines. She had heard the autumn raindrops beating against it and had welcomed the spring robins at its sill. She wondered if old dreams could haunt rooms — if, when one left forever the room where she had joyed and suffered and laughed and wept, something of her, intangible and invisible, yet nonetheless real, did not remain behind like a voiceful memory.

“I think,” said Phil, “that a room where one dreams and grieves and rejoices and lives becomes inseparably connected with those processes and acquires a personality of its own. I am sure if I came into this room fifty years from now it would say ‘Anne, Anne’ to me. What nice times we’ve had here, honey! What chats and jokes and good chummy jamborees! Oh, dear me! I’m to marry Jo in June and I know I will be rapturously happy. But just now I feel as if I wanted this lovely Redmond life to go on forever.”

“I’m unreasonable enough just now to wish that, too,” admitted Anne. “No matter what deeper joys may come to us later on we’ll never again have just the same delightful, irresponsible existence we’ve had here. It’s over forever, Phil.”

“What are you going to do with Rusty?” asked Phil, as that privileged pussy padded into the room.

“I am going to take him home with me and Joseph and the Sarah-cat,” announced Aunt Jamesina, following Rusty. “It would be a shame to separate those cats now that they have learned to live together. It’s a hard lesson for cats and humans to learn.”

“I’m sorry to part with Rusty,” said Anne regretfully, “but it would be no use to take him to Green Gables. Marilla detests cats, and Davy would tease his life out. Besides, I don’t suppose I’ll be home very long. I’ve been offered the principalship of the Summerside High School.”

“Are you going to accept it?” asked Phil.

“I — I haven’t decided yet,” answered Anne, with a confused flush.

Phil nodded understandingly. Naturally Anne’s plans could not be settled until Roy had spoken. He would soon — there was no doubt of that. And there was no doubt that Anne would say “yes” when he said “Will you please?” Anne herself regarded the state of affairs with a seldom-ruffled complacency. She was deeply in love with Roy. True, it was not just what she had imagined love to be. But was anything in life, Anne asked herself wearily, like one’s imagination of it? It was the old diamond disillusion of

childhood repeated — the same disappointment she had felt when she had first seen the chill sparkle instead of the purple splendor she had anticipated. “That’s not my idea of a diamond,” she had said. But Roy was a dear fellow and they would be very happy together, even if some indefinable zest was missing out of life. When Roy came down that evening and asked Anne to walk in the park every one at Patty’s Place knew what he had come to say; and every one knew, or thought they knew, what Anne’s answer would be.

“Anne is a very fortunate girl,” said Aunt Jamesina.

“I suppose so,” said Stella, shrugging her shoulders. “Roy is a nice fellow and all that. But there’s really nothing in him.”

“That sounds very like a jealous remark, Stella Maynard,” said Aunt Jamesina rebukingly.

“It does — but I am not jealous,” said Stella calmly. “I love Anne and I like Roy. Everybody says she is making a brilliant match, and even Mrs. Gardner thinks her charming now. It all sounds as if it were made in heaven, but I have my doubts. Make the most of that, Aunt Jamesina.”

Roy asked Anne to marry him in the little pavilion on the harbor shore where they had talked on the rainy day of their first meeting. Anne thought it very romantic that he should have chosen that spot. And his proposal was as beautifully worded as if he had copied it, as one of Ruby Gillis’ lovers had done, out of a Department of Courtship and Marriage. The whole effect was quite flawless. And it was also sincere. There was no doubt that Roy meant what he said. There was no false note to jar the symphony. Anne felt that she ought to be thrilling from head to foot. But she wasn’t; she was horribly cool. When Roy paused for his answer she opened her lips to say her fateful yes. And then — she found herself trembling as if she were reeling back from a precipice. To her came one of those moments when we realize, as by a blinding flash of illumination, more than all our previous years have taught us. She pulled her hand from Roy’s.

“Oh, I can’t marry you — I can’t — I can’t,” she cried, wildly.

Roy turned pale — and also looked rather foolish. He had — small blame to him — felt very sure.

“What do you mean?” he stammered.

“I mean that I can’t marry you,” repeated Anne desperately. “I thought I could — but I can’t.”

“Why can’t you?” Roy asked more calmly.

“Because — I don’t care enough for you.”

A crimson streak came into Roy’s face.

“So you’ve just been amusing yourself these two years?” he said slowly.

“No, no, I haven’t,” gasped poor Anne. Oh, how could she explain? She COULDN’T explain. There are some things that cannot be explained. “I did think I cared — truly I did — but I know now I don’t.”

“You have ruined my life,” said Roy bitterly.

“Forgive me,” pleaded Anne miserably, with hot cheeks and stinging eyes.

Roy turned away and stood for a few minutes looking out seaward. When he came back to Anne, he was very pale again.

“You can give me no hope?” he said.

Anne shook her head mutely.

“Then — goodbye,” said Roy. “I can’t understand it — I can’t believe you are not the woman I’ve believed you to be. But reproaches are idle between us. You are the only woman I can ever love. I thank you for your friendship, at least. Goodbye, Anne.”

“Goodbye,” faltered Anne. When Roy had gone she sat for a long time in the pavilion, watching a white mist creeping subtly and remorselessly landward up the harbor. It was her hour of humiliation and self-contempt

and shame. Their waves went over her. And yet, underneath it all, was a queer sense of recovered freedom.

She slipped into Patty's Place in the dusk and escaped to her room. But Phil was there on the window seat.

"Wait," said Anne, flushing to anticipate the scene. "Wait til you hear what I have to say. Phil, Roy asked me to marry him-and I refused."

"You — you REFUSED him?" said Phil blankly.

"Yes."

"Anne Shirley, are you in your senses?"

"I think so," said Anne wearily. "Oh, Phil, don't scold me. You don't understand."

"I certainly don't understand. You've encouraged Roy Gardner in every way for two years — and now you tell me you've refused him. Then you've just been flirting scandalously with him. Anne, I couldn't have believed it of YOU."

"I WASN'T flirting with him — I honestly thought I cared up to the last minute — and then — well, I just knew I NEVER could marry him."

"I suppose," said Phil cruelly, "that you intended to marry him for his money, and then your better self rose up and prevented you."

"I DIDN'T. I never thought about his money. Oh, I can't explain it to you any more than I could to him."

"Well, I certainly think you have treated Roy shamefully," said Phil in exasperation. "He's handsome and clever and rich and good. What more do you want?"

"I want some one who BELONGS in my life. He doesn't. I was swept off my feet at first by his good looks and knack of paying romantic

compliments; and later on I thought I MUST be in love because he was my dark-eyed ideal.”

“I am bad enough for not knowing my own mind, but you are worse,” said Phil.

“I DO know my own mind,” protested Anne. “The trouble is, my mind changes and then I have to get acquainted with it all over again.”

“Well, I suppose there is no use in saying anything to you.”

“There is no need, Phil. I’m in the dust. This has spoiled everything backwards. I can never think of Redmond days without recalling the humiliation of this evening. Roy despises me — and you despise me — and I despise myself.”

“You poor darling,” said Phil, melting. “Just come here and let me comfort you. I’ve no right to scold you. I’d have married Alec or Alonzo if I hadn’t met Jo. Oh, Anne, things are so mixed-up in real life. They aren’t clear-cut and trimmed off, as they are in novels.”

“I hope that NO one will ever again ask me to marry him as long as I live,” sobbed poor Anne, devoutly believing that she meant it.

Chapter XXXI X

Deals with Weddings

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Anne felt that life partook of the nature of an anticlimax during the first few weeks after her return to Green Gables. She missed the merry comradeship of Patty's Place. She had dreamed some brilliant dreams during the past winter and now they lay in the dust around her. In her present mood of self-disgust, she could not immediately begin dreaming again. And she discovered that, while solitude with dreams is glorious, solitude without them has few charms.

She had not seen Roy again after their painful parting in the park pavilion; but Dorothy came to see her before she left Kingsport.

"I'm awfully sorry you won't marry Roy," she said. "I did want you for a sister. But you are quite right. He would bore you to death. I love him, and he is a dear sweet boy, but really he isn't a bit interesting. He looks as if he ought to be, but he isn't."

"This won't spoil OUR friendship, will it, Dorothy?" Anne had asked wistfully.

"No, indeed. You're too good to lose. If I can't have you for a sister I mean to keep you as a chum anyway. And don't fret over Roy. He is feeling terribly just now — I have to listen to his outpourings every day — but he'll get over it. He always does."

"Oh — ALWAYS?" said Anne with a slight change of voice. "So he has 'got over it' before?"

"Dear me, yes," said Dorothy frankly. "Twice before. And he raved to me just the same both times. Not that the others actually refused him — they

simply announced their engagements to some one else. Of course, when he met you he vowed to me that he had never really loved before — that the previous affairs had been merely boyish fancies. But I don't think you need worry."

Anne decided not to worry. Her feelings were a mixture of relief and resentment. Roy had certainly told her she was the only one he had ever loved. No doubt he believed it. But it was a comfort to feel that she had not, in all likelihood, ruined his life. There were other goddesses, and Roy, according to Dorothy, must needs be worshipping at some shrine. Nevertheless, life was stripped of several more illusions, and Anne began to think drearily that it seemed rather bare.

She came down from the porch gable on the evening of her return with a sorrowful face.

"What has happened to the old Snow Queen, Marilla?"

"Oh, I knew you'd feel bad over that," said Marilla. "I felt bad myself. That tree was there ever since I was a young girl. It blew down in the big gale we had in March. It was rotten at the core."

"I'll miss it so," grieved Anne. "The porch gable doesn't seem the same room without it. I'll never look from its window again without a sense of loss. And oh, I never came home to Green Gables before that Diana wasn't here to welcome me."

"Diana has something else to think of just now," said Mrs. Lynde significantly.

"Well, tell me all the Avonlea news," said Anne, sitting down on the porch steps, where the evening sunshine fell over her hair in a fine golden rain.

"There isn't much news except what we've wrote you," said Mrs. Lynde. "I suppose you haven't heard that Simon Fletcher broke his leg last week. It's a great thing for his family. They're getting a hundred things done that they've always wanted to do but couldn't as long as he was about, the old crank."

“He came of an aggravating family,” remarked Marilla.

“Aggravating? Well, rather! His mother used to get up in prayer-meeting and tell all her children’s shortcomings and ask prayers for them. ‘Course it made them mad, and worse than ever.”

“You haven’t told Anne the news about Jane,” suggested Marilla.

“Oh, Jane,” sniffed Mrs. Lynde. “Well,” she conceded grudgingly, “Jane Andrews is home from the West — came last week — and she’s going to be married to a Winnipeg millionaire. You may be sure Mrs. Harmon lost no time in telling it far and wide.”

“Dear old Jane — I’m so glad,” said Anne heartily. “She deserves the good things of life.”

“Oh, I ain’t saying anything against Jane. She’s a nice enough girl. But she isn’t in the millionaire class, and you’ll find there’s not much to recommend that man but his money, that’s what. Mrs. Harmon says he’s an Englishman who has made money in mines but I believe he’ll turn out to be a Yankee. He certainly must have money, for he has just showered Jane with jewelry. Her engagement ring is a diamond cluster so big that it looks like a plaster on Jane’s fat paw.”

Mrs. Lynde could not keep some bitterness out of her tone. Here was Jane Andrews, that plain little plodder, engaged to a millionaire, while Anne, it seemed, was not yet bespoken by any one, rich or poor. And Mrs. Harmon Andrews did brag insufferably.

“What has Gilbert Blythe been doing to at college?” asked Marilla. “I saw him when he came home last week, and he is so pale and thin I hardly knew him.”

“He studied very hard last winter,” said Anne. “You know he took High Honors in Classics and the Cooper Prize. It hasn’t been taken for five years! So I think he’s rather run down. We’re all a little tired.”

“Anyhow, you’re a B.A. and Jane Andrews isn’t and never will be,” said Mrs. Lynde, with gloomy satisfaction.

A few evenings later Anne went down to see Jane, but the latter was away in Charlottetown—“getting sewing done,” Mrs. Harmon informed Anne proudly. “Of course an Avonlea dressmaker wouldn’t do for Jane under the circumstances.”

“I’ve heard something very nice about Jane,” said Anne.

“Yes, Jane has done pretty well, even if she isn’t a B.A.,” said Mrs. Harmon, with a slight toss of her head. “Mr. Inglis is worth millions, and they’re going to Europe on their wedding tour. When they come back they’ll live in a perfect mansion of marble in Winnipeg. Jane has only one trouble — she can cook so well and her husband won’t let her cook. He is so rich he hires his cooking done. They’re going to keep a cook and two other maids and a coachman and a man-of-all-work. But what about YOU, Anne? I don’t hear anything of your being married, after all your college-going.”

“Oh,” laughed Anne, “I am going to be an old maid. I really can’t find any one to suit me.” It was rather wicked of her. She deliberately meant to remind Mrs. Andrews that if she became an old maid it was not because she had not had at least one chance of marriage. But Mrs. Harmon took swift revenge.

“Well, the over-particular girls generally get left, I notice. And what’s this I hear about Gilbert Blythe being engaged to a Miss Stuart? Charlie Sloane tells me she is perfectly beautiful. Is it true?”

“I don’t know if it is true that he is engaged to Miss Stuart,” replied Anne, with Spartan composure, “but it is certainly true that she is very lovely.”

“I once thought you and Gilbert would have made a match of it,” said Mrs. Harmon. “If you don’t take care, Anne, all of your beaux will slip through your fingers.”

Anne decided not to continue her duel with Mrs. Harmon. You could not fence with an antagonist who met rapier thrust with blow of battle axe.

“Since Jane is away,” she said, rising haughtily, “I don’t think I can stay longer this morning. I’ll come down when she comes home.”

“Do,” said Mrs. Harmon effusively. “Jane isn’t a bit proud. She just means to associate with her old friends the same as ever. She’ll be real glad to see you.”

Jane’s millionaire arrived the last of May and carried her off in a blaze of splendor. Mrs. Lynde was spitefully gratified to find that Mr. Inglis was every day of forty, and short and thin and grayish. Mrs. Lynde did not spare him in her enumeration of his shortcomings, you may be sure.

“It will take all his gold to gild a pill like him, that’s what,” said Mrs. Rachel solemnly.

“He looks kind and goodhearted,” said Anne loyally, “and I’m sure he thinks the world of Jane.”

“Humph!” said Mrs. Rachel.

Phil Gordon was married the next week and Anne went over to Bolingbroke to be her bridesmaid. Phil made a dainty fairy of a bride, and the Rev. Jo was so radiant in his happiness that nobody thought him plain.

“We’re going for a lovers’ saunter through the land of Evangeline,” said Phil, “and then we’ll settle down on Patterson Street. Mother thinks it is terrible — she thinks Jo might at least take a church in a decent place. But the wilderness of the Patterson slums will blossom like the rose for me if Jo is there. Oh, Anne, I’m so happy my heart aches with it.”

Anne was always glad in the happiness of her friends; but it is sometimes a little lonely to be surrounded everywhere by a happiness that is not your own. And it was just the same when she went back to Avonlea. This time it was Diana who was bathed in the wonderful glory that comes to a woman when her firstborn is laid beside her. Anne looked at the white young

mother with a certain awe that had never entered into her feelings for Diana before. Could this pale woman with the rapture in her eyes be the little black-curled, rosy-cheeked Diana she had played with in vanished schooldays? It gave her a queer desolate feeling that she herself somehow belonged only in those past years and had no business in the present at all.

“Isn’t he perfectly beautiful?” said Diana proudly.

The little fat fellow was absurdly like Fred — just as round, just as red. Anne really could not say conscientiously that she thought him beautiful, but she vowed sincerely that he was sweet and kissable and altogether delightful.

“Before he came I wanted a girl, so that I could call her ANNE,” said Diana. “But now that little Fred is here I wouldn’t exchange him for a million girls. He just COULDN’T have been anything but his own precious self.”

“Every little baby is the sweetest and the best,” quoted Mrs. Allan gaily. “If little Anne HAD come you’d have felt just the same about her.”

Mrs. Allan was visiting in Avonlea, for the first time since leaving it. She was as gay and sweet and sympathetic as ever. Her old girl friends had welcomed her back rapturously. The reigning minister’s wife was an estimable lady, but she was not exactly a kindred spirit.

“I can hardly wait till he gets old enough to talk,” sighed Diana. “I just long to hear him say ‘mother.’ And oh, I’m determined that his first memory of me shall be a nice one. The first memory I have of my mother is of her slapping me for something I had done. I am sure I deserved it, and mother was always a good mother and I love her dearly. But I do wish my first memory of her was nicer.”

“I have just one memory of my mother and it is the sweetest of all my memories,” said Mrs. Allan. “I was five years old, and I had been allowed to go to school one day with my two older sisters. When school came out my sisters went home in different groups, each supposing I was with the other. Instead I had run off with a little girl I had played with at recess. We

went to her home, which was near the school, and began making mud pies. We were having a glorious time when my older sister arrived, breathless and angry.

“‘You naughty girl’ she cried, snatching my reluctant hand and dragging me along with her. ‘Come home this minute. Oh, you’re going to catch it! Mother is awful cross. She is going to give you a good whipping.’

“I had never been whipped. Dread and terror filled my poor little heart. I have never been so miserable in my life as I was on that walk home. I had not meant to be naughty. Phemy Cameron had asked me to go home with her and I had not known it was wrong to go. And now I was to be whipped for it. When we got home my sister dragged me into the kitchen where mother was sitting by the fire in the twilight. My poor wee legs were trembling so that I could hardly stand. And mother — mother just took me up in her arms, without one word of rebuke or harshness, kissed me and held me close to her heart. ‘I was so frightened you were lost, darling,’ she said tenderly. I could see the love shining in her eyes as she looked down on me. She never scolded or reproached me for what I had done — only told me I must never go away again without asking permission. She died very soon afterwards. That is the only memory I have of her. Isn’t it a beautiful one?”

Anne felt lonelier than ever as she walked home, going by way of the Birch Path and Willowmere. She had not walked that way for many moons. It was a darkly-purple bloomy night. The air was heavy with blossom fragrance — almost too heavy. The cloyed senses recoiled from it as from an overfull cup. The birches of the path had grown from the fairy saplings of old to big trees. Everything had changed. Anne felt that she would be glad when the summer was over and she was away at work again. Perhaps life would not seem so empty then.

“‘I’ve tried the world — it wears no more

The coloring of romance it wore,’”

sighed Anne — and was straightway much comforted by the romance in the idea of the world being denuded of romance!

Chapter X L

A Book of Revelation

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The Irvings came back to Echo Lodge for the summer, and Anne spent a happy three weeks there in July. Miss Lavendar had not changed; Charlotta the Fourth was a very grownup young lady now, but still adored Anne sincerely.

“When all’s said and done, Miss Shirley, ma’am, I haven’t seen any one in Boston that’s equal to you,” she said frankly.

Paul was almost grown up, too. He was sixteen, his chestnut curls had given place to close-cropped brown locks, and he was more interested in football than fairies. But the bond between him and his old teacher still held. Kindred spirits alone do not change with changing years.

It was a wet, bleak, cruel evening in July when Anne came back to Green Gables. One of the fierce summer storms which sometimes sweep over the gulf was ravaging the sea. As Anne came in the first raindrops dashed against the panes.

“Was that Paul who brought you home?” asked Marilla. “Why didn’t you make him stay all night. It’s going to be a wild evening.”

“He’ll reach Echo Lodge before the rain gets very heavy, I think. Anyway, he wanted to go back tonight. Well, I’ve had a splendid visit, but I’m glad to see you dear folks again. ‘East, west, hame’s best.’ Davy, have you been growing again lately?”

“I’ve growed a whole inch since you left,” said Davy proudly. “I’m as tall as Milty Boulter now. Ain’t I glad. He’ll have to stop crowing about being bigger. Say, Anne, did you know that Gilbert Blythe is dying?” Anne stood

quite silent and motionless, looking at Davy. Her face had gone so white that Marilla thought she was going to faint.

“Davy, hold your tongue,” said Mrs. Rachel angrily. “Anne, don’t look like that — DON’T LOOK LIKE THAT! We didn’t mean to tell you so suddenly.”

“Is — it — true?” asked Anne in a voice that was not hers.

“Gilbert is very ill,” said Mrs. Lynde gravely. “He took down with typhoid fever just after you left for Echo Lodge. Did you never hear of it?”

“No,” said that unknown voice.

“It was a very bad case from the start. The doctor said he’d been terribly run down. They’ve a trained nurse and everything’s been done. DON’T look like that, Anne. While there’s life there’s hope.”

“Mr. Harrison was here this evening and he said they had no hope of him,” reiterated Davy.

Marilla, looking old and worn and tired, got up and marched Davy grimly out of the kitchen.

“Oh, DON’T look so, dear,” said Mrs. Rachel, putting her kind old arms about the pallid girl. “I haven’t given up hope, indeed I haven’t. He’s got the Blythe constitution in his favor, that’s what.”

Anne gently put Mrs. Lynde’s arms away from her, walked blindly across the kitchen, through the hall, up the stairs to her old room. At its window she knelt down, staring out unseeingly. It was very dark. The rain was beating down over the shivering fields. The Haunted Woods was full of the groans of mighty trees wrung in the tempest, and the air throbbed with the thunderous crash of billows on the distant shore. And Gilbert was dying!

There is a book of Revelation in every one’s life, as there is in the Bible. Anne read hers that bitter night, as she kept her agonized vigil through the hours of storm and darkness. She loved Gilbert — had always loved him!

She knew that now. She knew that she could no more cast him out of her life without agony than she could have cut off her right hand and cast it from her. And the knowledge had come too late — too late even for the bitter solace of being with him at the last. If she had not been so blind — so foolish — she would have had the right to go to him now. But he would never know that she loved him — he would go away from this life thinking that she did not care. Oh, the black years of emptiness stretching before her! She could not live through them — she could not! She cowered down by her window and wished, for the first time in her gay young life, that she could die, too. If Gilbert went away from her, without one word or sign or message, she could not live. Nothing was of any value without him. She belonged to him and he to her. In her hour of supreme agony she had no doubt of that. He did not love Christine Stuart — never had loved Christine Stuart. Oh, what a fool she had been not to realize what the bond was that had held her to Gilbert — to think that the flattered fancy she had felt for Roy Gardner had been love. And now she must pay for her folly as for a crime.

Mrs. Lynde and Marilla crept to her door before they went to bed, shook their heads doubtfully at each other over the silence, and went away. The storm raged all night, but when the dawn came it was spent. Anne saw a fairy fringe of light on the skirts of darkness. Soon the eastern hilltops had a fire-shot ruby rim. The clouds rolled themselves away into great, soft, white masses on the horizon; the sky gleamed blue and silvery. A hush fell over the world.

Anne rose from her knees and crept downstairs. The freshness of the rain-wind blew against her white face as she went out into the yard, and cooled her dry, burning eyes. A merry rollicking whistle was lilting up the lane. A moment later Pacifique Buote came in sight.

Anne's physical strength suddenly failed her. If she had not clutched at a low willow bough she would have fallen. Pacifique was George Fletcher's hired man, and George Fletcher lived next door to the Blythes. Mrs. Fletcher was Gilbert's aunt. Pacifique would know if — if — Pacifique would know what there was to be known.

Pacifique strode sturdily on along the red lane, whistling. He did not see Anne. She made three futile attempts to call him. He was almost past before she succeeded in making her quivering lips call, "Pacifique!"

Pacifique turned with a grin and a cheerful good morning.

"Pacifique," said Anne faintly, "did you come from George Fletcher's this morning?"

"Sure," said Pacifique amiably. "I got de word las' night dat my fader, he was seeck. It was so stormy dat I couldn't go den, so I start vair early dis mornin'. I'm goin' troo de woods for short cut."

"Did you hear how Gilbert Blythe was this morning?" Anne's desperation drove her to the question. Even the worst would be more endurable than this hideous suspense.

"He's better," said Pacifique. "He got de turn las' night. De doctor say he'll be all right now dis soon while. Had close shave, dough! Dat boy, he jus' keel himself at college. Well, I mus' hurry. De old man, he'll be in hurry to see me."

Pacifique resumed his walk and his whistle. Anne gazed after him with eyes where joy was driving out the strained anguish of the night. He was a very lank, very ragged, very homely youth. But in her sight he was as beautiful as those who bring good tidings on the mountains. Never, as long as she lived, would Anne see Pacifique's brown, round, black-eyed face without a warm remembrance of the moment when he had given to her the oil of joy for mourning.

Long after Pacifique's gay whistle had faded into the phantom of music and then into silence far up under the maples of Lover's Lane Anne stood under the willows, tasting the poignant sweetness of life when some great dread has been removed from it. The morning was a cup filled with mist and glamor. In the corner near her was a rich surprise of new-blown, crystal-dewed roses. The trills and trickles of song from the birds in the big tree above her seemed in perfect accord with her mood. A sentence from a very old, very true, very wonderful Book came to her lips,

“Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.”

Chapter XL I

Love Takes Up the Glass of Time

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“I’ve come up to ask you to go for one of our old-time rambles through September woods and ‘over hills where spices grow,’ this afternoon,” said Gilbert, coming suddenly around the porch corner. “Suppose we visit Hester Gray’s garden.”

Anne, sitting on the stone step with her lap full of a pale, filmy, green stuff, looked up rather blankly.

“Oh, I wish I could,” she said slowly, “but I really can’t, Gilbert. I’m going to Alice Penhallow’s wedding this evening, you know. I’ve got to do something to this dress, and by the time it’s finished I’ll have to get ready. I’m so sorry. I’d love to go.”

“Well, can you go tomorrow afternoon, then?” asked Gilbert, apparently not much disappointed.

“Yes, I think so.”

“In that case I shall hie me home at once to do something I should otherwise have to do tomorrow. So Alice Penhallow is to be married tonight. Three weddings for you in one summer, Anne — Phil’s, Alice’s, and Jane’s. I’ll never forgive Jane for not inviting me to her wedding.”

“You really can’t blame her when you think of the tremendous Andrews connection who had to be invited. The house could hardly hold them all. I was only bidden by grace of being Jane’s old chum — at least on Jane’s part. I think Mrs. Harmon’s motive for inviting me was to let me see Jane’s surpassing gorgeousness.”

“Is it true that she wore so many diamonds that you couldn’t tell where the diamonds left off and Jane began?”

Anne laughed.

“She certainly wore a good many. What with all the diamonds and white satin and tulle and lace and roses and orange blossoms, prim little Jane was almost lost to sight. But she was VERY happy, and so was Mr. Inglis — and so was Mrs. Harmon.”

“Is that the dress you’re going to wear tonight?” asked Gilbert, looking down at the fluffs and frills.

“Yes. Isn’t it pretty? And I shall wear starflowers in my hair. The Haunted Wood is full of them this summer.”

Gilbert had a sudden vision of Anne, arrayed in a frilly green gown, with the virginal curves of arms and throat slipping out of it, and white stars shining against the coils of her ruddy hair. The vision made him catch his breath. But he turned lightly away.

“Well, I’ll be up tomorrow. Hope you’ll have a nice time tonight.”

Anne looked after him as he strode away, and sighed. Gilbert was friendly — very friendly — far too friendly. He had come quite often to Green Gables after his recovery, and something of their old comradeship had returned. But Anne no longer found it satisfying. The rose of love made the blossom of friendship pale and scentless by contrast. And Anne had again begun to doubt if Gilbert now felt anything for her but friendship. In the common light of common day her radiant certainty of that rapt morning had faded. She was haunted by a miserable fear that her mistake could never be rectified. It was quite likely that it was Christine whom Gilbert loved after all. Perhaps he was even engaged to her. Anne tried to put all unsettling hopes out of her heart, and reconcile herself to a future where work and ambition must take the place of love. She could do good, if not noble, work as a teacher; and the success her little sketches were beginning to meet with in certain editorial sanctums augured well for her

budding literary dreams. But — but — Anne picked up her green dress and sighed again.

When Gilbert came the next afternoon he found Anne waiting for him, fresh as the dawn and fair as a star, after all the gaiety of the preceding night. She wore a green dress — not the one she had worn to the wedding, but an old one which Gilbert had told her at a Redmond reception he liked especially. It was just the shade of green that brought out the rich tints of her hair, and the starry gray of her eyes and the iris-like delicacy of her skin. Gilbert, glancing at her sideways as they walked along a shadowy woodpath, thought she had never looked so lovely. Anne, glancing sideways at Gilbert, now and then, thought how much older he looked since his illness. It was as if he had put boyhood behind him forever.

The day was beautiful and the way was beautiful. Anne was almost sorry when they reached Hester Gray's garden, and sat down on the old bench. But it was beautiful there, too — as beautiful as it had been on the faraway day of the Golden Picnic, when Diana and Jane and Priscilla and she had found it. Then it had been lovely with narcissus and violets; now golden rod had kindled its fairy torches in the corners and asters dotted it bluely. The call of the brook came up through the woods from the valley of birches with all its old allurements; the mellow air was full of the purr of the sea; beyond were fields rimmed by fences bleached silvery gray in the suns of many summers, and long hills scarfed with the shadows of autumnal clouds; with the blowing of the west wind old dreams returned.

"I think," said Anne softly, "that 'the land where dreams come true' is in the blue haze yonder, over that little valley."

"Have you any unfulfilled dreams, Anne?" asked Gilbert.

Something in his tone — something she had not heard since that miserable evening in the orchard at Patty's Place — made Anne's heart beat wildly. But she made answer lightly.

"Of course. Everybody has. It wouldn't do for us to have all our dreams fulfilled. We would be as good as dead if we had nothing left to dream about. What a delicious aroma that low-descending sun is extracting from

the asters and ferns. I wish we could see perfumes as well as smell them. I'm sure they would be very beautiful."

Gilbert was not to be thus sidetracked.

"I have a dream," he said slowly. "I persist in dreaming it, although it has often seemed to me that it could never come true. I dream of a home with a hearth-fire in it, a cat and dog, the footsteps of friends — and YOU!"

Anne wanted to speak but she could find no words. Happiness was breaking over her like a wave. It almost frightened her.

"I asked you a question over two years ago, Anne. If I ask it again today will you give me a different answer?"

Still Anne could not speak. But she lifted her eyes, shining with all the love-rapture of countless generations, and looked into his for a moment. He wanted no other answer.

They lingered in the old garden until twilight, sweet as dusk in Eden must have been, crept over it. There was so much to talk over and recall — things said and done and heard and thought and felt and misunderstood.

"I thought you loved Christine Stuart," Anne told him, as reproachfully as if she had not given him every reason to suppose that she loved Roy Gardner.

Gilbert laughed boyishly.

"Christine was engaged to somebody in her home town. I knew it and she knew I knew it. When her brother graduated he told me his sister was coming to Kingsport the next winter to take music, and asked me if I would look after her a bit, as she knew no one and would be very lonely. So I did. And then I liked Christine for her own sake. She is one of the nicest girls I've ever known. I knew college gossip credited us with being in love with each other. I didn't care. Nothing mattered much to me for a time there, after you told me you could never love me, Anne. There was nobody else — there never could be anybody else for me but you. I've

loved you ever since that day you broke your slate over my head in school.”

“I don’t see how you could keep on loving me when I was such a little fool,” said Anne.

“Well, I tried to stop,” said Gilbert frankly, “not because I thought you what you call yourself, but because I felt sure there was no chance for me after Gardner came on the scene. But I couldn’t — and I can’t tell you, either, what it’s meant to me these two years to believe you were going to marry him, and be told every week by some busybody that your engagement was on the point of being announced. I believed it until one blessed day when I was sitting up after the fever. I got a letter from Phil Gordon — Phil Blake, rather — in which she told me there was really nothing between you and Roy, and advised me to ‘try again.’ Well, the doctor was amazed at my rapid recovery after that.”

Anne laughed — then shivered.

“I can never forget the night I thought you were dying, Gilbert. Oh, I knew — I KNEW then — and I thought it was too late.”

“But it wasn’t, sweetheart. Oh, Anne, this makes up for everything, doesn’t it? Let’s resolve to keep this day sacred to perfect beauty all our lives for the gift it has given us.”

“It’s the birthday of our happiness,” said Anne softly. “I’ve always loved this old garden of Hester Gray’s, and now it will be dearer than ever.”

“But I’ll have to ask you to wait a long time, Anne,” said Gilbert sadly. “It will be three years before I’ll finish my medical course. And even then there will be no diamond sunbursts and marble halls.”

Anne laughed.

“I don’t want sunbursts and marble halls. I just want YOU. You see I’m quite as shameless as Phil about it. Sunbursts and marble halls may be all very well, but there is more ‘scope for imagination’ without them. And as

for the waiting, that doesn't matter. We'll just be happy, waiting and working for each other — and dreaming. Oh, dreams will be very sweet now.”

Gilbert drew her close to him and kissed her. Then they walked home together in the dusk, crowned king and queen in the bridal realm of love, along winding paths fringed with the sweetest flowers that ever bloomed, and over haunted meadows where winds of hope and memory blew.

ANNE OF WINDY POPLARS ***(1936)***

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The First Year

Chapter 1

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(Letter from Anne Shirley, B.A., Principal of Summerside High School, to Gilbert Blythe, medical student at Redmond College, Kingsport.)

“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side, P. E. I.,
“Monday, September 12th.

“DEAREST:

“Isn’t that an address! Did you ever hear anything so delicious? Windy Poplars is the name of my new home and I love it. I also love Spook’s Lane, which has no legal existence. It should be Trent Street but it is never called Trent Street except on the rare occasions when it is mentioned in the Weekly Courier ... and then people look at each other and say, ‘Where on earth is that?’ Spook’s Lane it is ... although for what reason I cannot tell you. I have already asked Rebecca Dew about it, but all she can say is that it has always been Spook’s Lane and there was some old yarn years ago of its being haunted. But she has never seen anything worse-looking than herself in it.

“However, I mustn’t get ahead of my story. You don’t know Rebecca Dew yet. But you will, oh, yes, you will. I foresee that Rebecca Dew will figure largely in my future correspondence.

“It’s dusk, dearest. (In passing, isn’t ‘dusk’ a lovely word? I like it better than twilight. It sounds so velvety and shadowy and ... and ... dusky.) In daylight I belong to the world ... in the night to sleep and eternity. But in the dusk I’m free from both and belong only to myself ... and you. So I’m going to keep this hour sacred to writing to you. Though this won’t be a love-letter. I have a scratchy pen and I can’t write love-letters with a scratchy pen ... or a sharp pen ... or a stub pen. So you’ll only get that kind of letter from me when I have exactly the right kind of pen. Meanwhile, I’ll tell you about my new domicile and its inhabitants. Gilbert, they’re such dears.

“I came up yesterday to look for a boardinghouse. Mrs. Rachel Lynde came with me, ostensibly to do some shopping but really, I know, to

choose a boardinghouse for me. In spite of my Arts course and my B.A., Mrs. Lynde still thinks I am an inexperienced young thing who must be guided and directed and overseen.

“We came by train and oh, Gilbert, I had the funniest adventure. You know I’ve always been one to whom adventures came unsought. I just seem to attract them, as it were.

“It happened just as the train was coming to a stop at the station. I got up and, stooping to pick up Mrs. Lynde’s suitcase (she was planning to spend Sunday with a friend in Summerside), I leaned my knuckles heavily on what I thought was the shiny arm of a seat. In a second I received a violent crack across them that nearly made me howl. Gilbert, what I had taken for the arm of a seat was a man’s bald head. He was glaring fiercely at me and had evidently just waked up. I apologized abjectly and got off the train as quickly as possible. The last I saw of him he was still glaring. Mrs. Lynde was horrified and my knuckles are sore yet!

“I did not expect to have much trouble in finding a boardinghouse, for a certain Mrs. Tom Pringle has been boarding the various principals of the High School for the last fifteen years. But, for some unknown reason, she has grown suddenly tired of ‘being bothered’ and wouldn’t take me. Several other desirable places had some polite excuse. Several other places weren’t desirable. We wandered about the town the whole afternoon and got hot and tired and blue and headachy ... at least I did. I was ready to give up in despair ... and then, Spook’s Lane just happened!

“We had dropped in to see Mrs. Braddock, an old crony of Mrs. Lynde’s. And Mrs. Braddock said she thought ‘the widows’ might take me in.

“‘I’ve heard they want a boarder to pay Rebecca Dew’s wages. They can’t afford to keep Rebecca any longer unless a little extra money comes in. And if Rebecca goes, who is to milk that old red cow?’

“Mrs. Braddock fixed me with a stern eye as if she thought I ought to milk the red cow but wouldn’t believe me on oath if I claimed I could.

“‘What widows are you talking about?’ demanded Mrs. Lynde.

“‘Why, Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty,’ said Mrs. Braddock, as if everybody, even an ignorant B.A., ought to know that. ‘Aunt Kate is Mrs. Amasa MacComber (she’s the Captain’s widow) and Aunt Chatty is Mrs. Lincoln MacLean, just a plain widow. But every one calls them “aunt.” They live at the end of Spook’s Lane.’

“Spook’s Lane! That settled it. I knew I just had to board with the widows.

“‘Let’s go and see them at once,’ I implored Mrs. Lynde. It seemed to me if we lost a moment Spook’s Lane would vanish back into fairyland.

“‘You can see them, but it’ll be Rebecca who’ll really decide whether they’ll take you or not. Rebecca Dew rules the roost at Windy Poplars, I can tell you.’

“Windy Poplars! It couldn’t be true ... no it couldn’t. I must be dreaming. And Mrs. Rachel Lynde was actually saying it was a funny name for a place.

“‘Oh, Captain MacComber called it that. It was his house, you know. He planted all the poplars round it and was mighty proud of it, though he was seldom home and never stayed long. Aunt Kate used to say that was inconvenient, but we never got it figured out whether she meant his staying such a little time or his coming back at all. Well, Miss Shirley, I hope you’ll get there. Rebecca Dew’s a good cook and a genius with cold potatoes. If she takes a notion to you you’ll be in clover. If she doesn’t ... well, she won’t, that’s all. I hear there’s a new banker in town looking for a boardinghouse and she may prefer him. It’s kind of funny Mrs. Tom Pringle wouldn’t take you. Summerside is full of Pringles and half Pringles. They’re called “The Royal Family” and you’ll have to get on their good side, Miss Shirley, or you’ll never get along in Summerside High. They’ve always ruled the roost hereabouts ... there’s a street called after old Captain Abraham Pringle. There’s a regular clan of them, but the two old ladies at Maplehurst boss the tribe. I did hear they were down on you.’

“‘Why should they be?’ I exclaimed. ‘I’m a total stranger to them.’

“Well, a third cousin of theirs applied for the Principalship and they all think he should have got it. When your application was accepted the whole kit and boodle of them threw back their heads and howled. Well, people are like that. We have to take them as we find them, you know. They’ll be as smooth as cream to you but they’ll work against you every time. I’m not wanting to discourage you but forewarned is forearmed. I hope you’ll make good just to spite them. If the widows take you, you won’t mind eating with Rebecca Dew, will you? She isn’t a servant, you know. She’s a far-off cousin of the Captain’s. She doesn’t come to the table when there’s company ... she knows her place then ... but if you were boarding there she wouldn’t consider you company, of course.’

“I assured the anxious Mrs. Braddock that I’d love eating with Rebecca Dew and dragged Mrs. Lynde away. I must get ahead of the banker.

“Mrs. Braddock followed us to the door.

“And don’t hurt Aunt Chatty’s feelings, will you? Her feelings are so easily hurt. She’s so sensitive, poor thing. You see, she hasn’t quite as much money as Aunt Kate ... though Aunt Kate hasn’t any too much either. And then Aunt Kate liked her husband real well ... her own husband, I mean ... but Aunt Chatty didn’t ... didn’t like hers, I mean. Small wonder! Lincoln MacLean was an old crank ... but she thinks people hold it against her. It’s lucky this is Saturday. If it was Friday Aunt Chatty wouldn’t even consider taking you. You’d think Aunt Kate would be the superstitious one, wouldn’t you? Sailors are kind of like that. But it’s Aunt Chatty ... although her husband was a carpenter. She was very pretty in her day, poor thing.’

“I assured Mrs. Braddock that Aunt Chatty’s feelings would be sacred to me, but she followed us down the walk.

“Kate and Chatty won’t explore your belongings when you’re out. They’re very conscientious. Rebecca Dew may, but she won’t tell on you. And I wouldn’t go to the front door if I was you. They only use it for something real important. I don’t think it’s been opened since Amasa’s funeral. Try the side door. They keep the key under the flower-pot on the windowsill, so if nobody’s home just unlock the door and go in and wait.

And whatever you do, don't praise the cat, because Rebecca Dew doesn't like him.'

"I promised I wouldn't praise the cat and we actually got away. Erelong we found ourselves in Spook's Lane. It is a very short side street, leading out to open country, and far away a blue hill makes a beautiful backdrop for it. On one side there are no houses at all and the land slopes down to the harbor. On the other side there are only three. The first one is just a house ... nothing more to be said of it. The next one is a big, imposing, gloomy mansion of stone-trimmed red brick, with a mansard roof warty with dormer-windows, an iron railing around the flat top and so many spruces and firs crowding about it that you can hardly see the house. It must be frightfully dark inside. And the third and last is Windy Poplars, right on the corner, with the grass-grown street on the front and a real country road, beautiful with tree shadows, on the other side.

"I fell in love with it at once. You know there are houses which impress themselves upon you at first sight for some reason you can hardly define. Windy Poplars is like that. I may describe it to you as a white frame house ... very white ... with green shutters ... very green ... with a 'tower' in the corner and a dormer-window on either side, a low stone wall dividing it from the street, with aspen poplars growing at intervals along it, and a big garden at the back where flowers and vegetables are delightfully jumbled up together ... but all this can't convey its charm to you. In short, it is a house with a delightful personality and has something of the flavor of Green Gables about it.

"'This is the spot for me ... it's been foreordained,' I said rapturously.

"Mrs. Lynde looked as if she didn't quite trust foreordination.

"'It'll be a long walk to school,' she said dubiously.

"'I don't mind that. It will be good exercise. Oh, look at that lovely birch and maple grove across the road.'

"Mrs. Lynde looked but all she said was,

“‘I hope you won’t be pestered with mosquitoes.’

“I hoped so, too. I detest mosquitoes. One mosquito can keep me ‘awaker’ than a bad conscience.

“I was glad we didn’t have to go in by the front door. It looked so forbidding ... a big, double-leaved, grained-wood affair, flanked by panels of red, flowered glass. It doesn’t seem to belong to the house at all. The little green side door, which we reached by a darling path of thin, flat sandstones sunk at intervals in the grass, was much more friendly and inviting. The path was edged by very prim, well-ordered beds of ribbon grass and bleeding-heart and tiger-lilies and sweet-William and southernwood and bride’s bouquet and red-and-white daisies and what Mrs. Lynde calls ‘pinies.’ Of course they weren’t all in bloom at this season, but you could see they had bloomed at the proper time and done it well. There was a rose plot in a far corner and between Windy Poplars and the gloomy house next a brick wall all overgrown with Virginia creeper, with an arched trellis above a faded green door in the middle of it. A vine ran right across it, so it was plain it hadn’t been opened for some time. It was really only half a door, for its top half is merely an open oblong through which we could catch a glimpse of a jungly garden on the other side.

“Just as we entered the gate of the garden of Windy Poplars I noticed a little clump of clover right by the path. Some impulse led me to stoop down and look at it. Would you believe it, Gilbert? There, right before my eyes, were three four-leafed clovers! Talk about omens! Even the Pringles can’t contend against that. And I felt sure the banker hadn’t an earthly chance.

“The side door was open so it was evident somebody was at home and we didn’t have to look under the flower-pot. We knocked and Rebecca Dew came to the door. We knew it was Rebecca Dew because it couldn’t have been any one else in the whole wide world. And she couldn’t have had any other name.

“Rebecca Dew is ‘around forty’ and if a tomato had black hair racing away from its forehead, little twinkling black eyes, a tiny nose with a knobby

end and a slit of a mouth, it would look exactly like her. Everything about her is a little too short ... arms and legs and neck and nose ... everything but her smile. It is long enough to reach from ear to ear.

“But we didn’t see her smile just then. She looked very grim when I asked if I could see Mrs. MacComber.

“‘You mean Mrs. Captain MacComber?’ she said rebukingly, as if there were at least a dozen Mrs. MacCombers in the house.

“‘Yes,’ I said meekly. And we were forthwith ushered into the parlor and left there. It was rather a nice little room, a bit cluttered up with antimacassars but with a quiet, friendly atmosphere about it that I liked. Every bit of furniture had its own particular place which it had occupied for years. How that furniture shone! No bought polish ever produced that mirrorlike gloss. I knew it was Rebecca Dew’s elbow grease. There was a full-rigged ship in a bottle on the mantelpiece which interested Mrs. Lynde greatly. She couldn’t imagine how it ever got into the bottle ... but she thought it gave the room ‘a nautical air.’

“‘The widows’ came in. I liked them at once. Aunt Kate was tall and thin and gray, and a little austere ... Marilla’s type exactly: and Aunt Chatty was short and thin and gray, and a little wistful. She may have been very pretty once but nothing is now left of her beauty except her eyes. They are lovely ... soft and big and brown.

“I explained my errand and the widows looked at each other.

“‘We must consult Rebecca Dew,’ said Aunt Chatty.

“‘Undoubtedly,’ said Aunt Kate.

“Rebecca Dew was accordingly summoned from the kitchen. The cat came in with her ... a big fluffy Maltese, with a white breast and a white collar. I should have liked to stroke him, but, remembering Mrs. Braddock’s warning, I ignored him.

“Rebecca gazed at me without the glimmer of a smile.

“‘Rebecca,’ said Aunt Kate, who, I have discovered, does not waste words, ‘Miss Shirley wishes to board here. I don’t think we can take her.’

“‘Why not?’ said Rebecca Dew.

“‘It would be too much trouble for you, I am afraid,’ said Aunt Chatty.

“‘I’m well used to trouble,’ said Rebecca Dew. You can’t separate those names, Gilbert. It’s impossible ... though the widows do it. They call her Rebecca when they speak to her. I don’t know how they manage it.

“‘We are rather old to have young people coming and going,’ persisted Aunt Chatty.

“‘Speak for yourself,’ retorted Rebecca Dew. ‘I’m only forty-five and I still have the use of my faculties. And I think it would be nice to have a young person sleeping in the house. A girl would be better than a boy any time. He’d be smoking day and night ... burn us in our beds. If you must take a boarder, my advice would be to take her. But of course it’s your house.’

“She said and vanished ... as Homer was so fond of remarking. I knew the whole thing was settled but Aunt Chatty said I must go up and see if I was suited with my room.

“‘We will give you the tower room, dear. It’s not quite as large as the spare room, but it has a stovepipe hole for a stove in winter and a much nicer view. You can see the old graveyard from it.’

“I knew I would love the room ... the very name, ‘tower room,’ thrilled me. I felt as if we were living in that old song we used to sing in Avonlea School about the maiden who ‘dwelt in a high tower beside a gray sea.’ It proved to be the dearest place. We ascended to it by a little flight of corner steps leading up from the stair-landing. It was rather small ... but not nearly as small as that dreadful hall bedroom I had my first year at Redmond. It had two windows, a dormer one looking west and a gable one looking north, and in the corner formed by the tower another three-sided window with casements opening outward and shelves underneath for my

books. The floor was covered with round, braided rugs, the big bed had a canopy top and a 'wild-goose' quilt and looked so perfectly smooth and level that it seemed a shame to spoil it by sleeping in it. And, Gilbert, it is so high that I have to climb into it by a funny little movable set of steps which in daytime are stowed away under it. It seems Captain MacComber bought the whole contraption in some 'foreign' place and brought it home.

"There was a dear little corner cupboard with shelves trimmed with white scalloped paper and bouquets painted on its door. There was a round blue cushion on the window-seat ... a cushion with a button deep in the center, making it look like a fat blue doughnut. And there was a sweet washstand with two shelves ... the top one just big enough for a basin and jug of robin's-egg blue and the under one for a soap dish and hot water pitcher. It had a little brass-handled drawer full of towels and on a shelf over it a white china lady sat, with pink shoes and gilt sash and a red china rose in her golden china hair.

"The whole place was engoldened by the light that came through the corn-colored curtains and there was the rarest tapestry on the whitewashed walls where the shadow patterns of the aspens outside fell ... living tapestry, always changing and quivering. Somehow, it seemed such a happy room. I felt as if I were the richest girl in the world.

"'You'll be safe there, that's what,' said Mrs. Lynde, as we went away.

"'I expect I'll find some things a bit cramping after the freedom of Patty's Place,' I said, just to tease her.

"'Freedom!' Mrs. Lynde sniffed. 'Freedom! Don't talk like a Yankee, Anne.'

"I came up today, bag and baggage. Of course I hated to leave Green Gables. No matter how often and long I'm away from it, the minute a vacation comes I'm part of it again as if I had never been away, and my heart is torn over leaving it. But I know I'll like it here. And it likes me. I always know whether a house likes me or not.

“The views from my windows are lovely ... even the old graveyard, which is surrounded by a row of dark fir trees and reached by a winding, dyke-bordered lane. From my west window I can see all over the harbor to distant, misty shores, with the dear little sailboats I love and the ships outward bound ‘for ports unknown’ ... fascinating phrase! Such ‘scope for imagination’ in it! From the north window I can see into the grove of birch and maple across the road. You know I’ve always been a tree worshiper. When we studied Tennyson in our English course at Redmond I was always sorrowfully at one with poor Enone, mourning her ravished pines.

“Beyond the grove and the graveyard is a lovable valley with the glossy red ribbon of a road winding through it and white houses dotted along it. Some valleys are lovable ... you can’t tell why. Just to look at them gives you pleasure. And beyond it again is my blue hill. I’m naming it Storm King ... the ruling passion, *etc.*

“I can be so alone up here when I want to be. You know it’s lovely to be alone once in a while. The winds will be my friends. They’ll wail and sigh and croon around my tower ... the white winds of winter ... the green winds of spring ... the blue winds of summer ... the crimson winds of autumn ... and the wild winds of all seasons ... ‘stormy wind fulfilling his word.’ How I’ve always thrilled to that Bible verse ... as if each and every wind had a message for me. I’ve always envied the boy who flew with the north wind in that lovely old story of George MacDonald’s. Some night, Gilbert, I’ll open my tower casement and just step into the arms of the wind ... and Rebecca Dew will never know why my bed wasn’t slept in that night.

“I hope when we find our ‘house of dreams,’ dearest, that there will be winds around it. I wonder where it is ... that unknown house. Shall I love it best by moonlight or dawn? That home of the future where we will have love and friendship and work ... and a few funny adventures to bring laughter in our old age. Old age! Can we ever be old, Gilbert? It seems impossible.

“From the left window in the tower I can see the roofs of the town ... this place where I am to live for at least a year. People are living in those houses who will be my friends, though I don’t know them yet. And perhaps

my enemies. For the ilk of Pye are found everywhere, under all kinds of names, and I understand the Pringles are to be reckoned with. School begins tomorrow. I shall have to teach geometry! Surely that can't be any worse than learning it. I pray heaven there are no mathematical geniuses among the Pringles.

"I've been here only for half a day, but I feel as if I had known the widows and Rebecca Dew all my life. They've asked me to call them 'aunt' already and I've asked them to call me Anne. I called Rebecca Dew 'Miss Dew' ... once.

"'Miss What?' quoth she.

"'Dew,' I said meekly. 'Isn't that your name?'

"'Well, yes, it is, but I ain't been called Miss Dew for so long it gave me quite a turn. You'd better not do it any more, Miss Shirley, me not being used to it.'

"'I'll remember, Rebecca ... Dew,' I said, trying my hardest to leave off the Dew but not succeeding.

"Mrs. Braddock was quite right in saying Aunt Chatty was sensitive. I discovered that at suppertime. Aunt Kate had said something about 'Chatty's sixty-sixth birthday.' Happening to glance at Aunt Chatty I saw that she had ... no, not burst into tears. That is entirely too explosive a term for her performance. She just overflowed. The tears welled up in her big brown eyes and brimmed over, effortlessly and silently.

"'What's the matter now, Chatty?' asked Aunt Kate rather dourly.

"'It ... it was only my sixty-fifth birthday,' said Aunt Chatty.

"'I beg your pardon, Charlotte,' said Aunt Kate ... and all was sunshine again.

"The cat is a lovely big Tommy-cat with golden eyes, an elegant coat of dusty Maltese and irreproachable linen. Aunts Kate and Chatty call him

Dusty Miller, because that is his name, and Rebecca Dew calls him That Cat because she resents him and resents the fact that she has to give him a square inch of liver every morning and evening, clean his hairs off the parlor armchair seat with an old toothbrush whenever he has sneaked in and hunt him up if he is out late at night.

“‘Rebecca Dew has always hated cats,’ Aunt Chatty tells me, ‘and she hates Dusty especially. Old Mrs. Campbell’s dog ... she kept a dog then ... brought him here two years ago in his mouth. I suppose he thought it was no use to take him to Mrs. Campbell. Such a poor miserable little kitten, all wet and cold, with its poor little bones almost sticking through its skin. A heart of stone couldn’t have refused it shelter. So Kate and I adopted it, but Rebecca Dew has never really forgiven us. We were not diplomatic that time. We should have refused to take it in. I don’t know if you’ve noticed ...’ Aunt Chatty looked cautiously around at the door between the dining-room and kitchen ... ‘how we manage Rebecca Dew.’

“I had noticed it ... and it was beautiful to behold. Summerside and Rebecca Dew may think she rules the roost but the widows know differently.

“‘We didn’t want to take the banker ... a young man would have been so unsettling and we would have had to worry so much if he didn’t go to church regularly. But we pretended we did and Rebecca Dew simply wouldn’t hear of it. I’m so glad we have you, dear. I feel sure you’ll be a very nice person to cook for. I hope you’ll like us all. Rebecca Dew has some very fine qualities. She was not so tidy when she came fifteen years ago as she is now. Once Kate had to write her name ... “Rebecca Dew” ... right across the parlor mirror to show the dust. But she never had to do it again. Rebecca Dew can take a hint. I hope you’ll find your room comfortable, dear. You may have the window open at night. Kate does not approve of night air but she knows boarders must have privileges. She and I sleep together and we have arranged it so that one night the window is shut for her and the next it is open for me. One can always work out little problems like that, don’t you think? Where there is a will there is always a way. Don’t be alarmed if you hear Rebecca prowling a good deal in the night. She is always hearing noises and getting up to investigate them. I

think that is why she didn't want the banker. She was afraid she might run into him in her nightgown. I hope you won't mind Kate not talking much. It's just her way. And she must have so many things to talk of ... she was all over the world with Amasa MacComber in her young days. I wish I had the subjects for conversation she has, but I've never been off P. E. Island. I've often wondered why things should be arranged so ... me loving to talk and with nothing to talk about and Kate with everything and hating to talk. But I suppose Providence knows best.'

"Although Aunt Chatty is a talker all right, she didn't say all this without a break. I interjected remarks at suitable intervals, but they were of no importance.

"They keep a cow which is pastured at Mr. James Hamilton's up the road and Rebecca Dew goes there to milk her. There is any amount of cream and every morning and evening I understand Rebecca Dew passes a glass of new milk through the opening in the wall gate to Mrs. Campbell's 'Woman.' It is for 'little Elizabeth,' who must have it under doctor's orders. Who the Woman is, or who little Elizabeth is, I have yet to discover. Mrs. Campbell is the inhabitant and owner of the fortress next door ... which is called The Evergreens.

"I don't expect to sleep tonight ... I never do sleep my first night in a strange bed and this is the very strangest bed I've ever seen. But I won't mind. I've always loved the night and I'll like lying awake and thinking over everything in life, past, present and to come. Especially to come.

"This is a merciless letter, Gilbert. I won't inflict such a long one on you again. But I wanted to tell you everything, so that you could picture my new surroundings for yourself. It has come to an end now, for far up the harbor the moon is 'sinking into shadowland.' I must write a letter to Marilla yet. It will reach Green Gables the day after tomorrow and Davy will bring it home from the postoffice, and he and Dora will crowd around Marilla while she opens it and Mrs. Lynde will have both ears open... . Ow ... w ...w! That has made me homesick. Goodnight, dearest, from one who is now and ever will be,

"Fondly yours,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.”

Chapter 2

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(Extracts from various letters from the same to the same.)

“September 26th.

“Do you know where I go to read your letters? Across the road into the grove. There is a little dell there where the sun dapples the ferns. A brook meanders through it; there is a twisted mossy tree-trunk on which I sit, and the most delightful row of young sister birches. After this, when I have a dream of a certain kind ... a golden-green, crimson-veined dream ... a very dream of dreams ... I shall please my fancy with the belief that it came from my secret dell of birches and was born of some mystic union between the slenderest, airiest of the sisters and the crooning brook. I love to sit there and listen to the silence of the grove. Have you ever noticed how many different silences there are, Gilbert? The silence of the woods ... of the shore ... of the meadows ... of the night ... of the summer afternoon. All different because all the undertones that thread them are different. I’m sure if I were totally blind and insensitive to heat and cold I could easily tell just where I was by the quality of the silence about me.

“School has been ‘keeping’ for two weeks now and I’ve got things pretty well organized. But Mrs. Braddock was right ... the Pringles are my problem. And as yet I don’t see exactly how I’m going to solve it in spite of my lucky clovers. As Mrs. Braddock says, they are as smooth as cream ... and as slippery.

“The Pringles are a kind of clan who keeps tabs on each other and fight a good bit among themselves but stand shoulder to shoulder in regard to any outsider. I have come to the conclusion that there are just two kinds of people in Summerside ... those who are Pringles and those who aren’t.

“My room is full of Pringles and a good many students who bear another name have Pringle blood in them. The ring-leader of them seems to be Jen

Pringle, a green-eyed bantling who looks as Becky Sharp must have looked at fourteen. I believe she is deliberately organizing a subtle campaign of insubordination and disrespect, with which I am going to find it hard to cope. She has a knack of making irresistibly comic faces and when I hear a smothered ripple of laughter running over the room behind my back I know perfectly well what has caused it, but so far I haven't been able to catch her out in it. She has brains, too ... the little wretch! ... can write compositions that are fourth cousins to literature and is quite brilliant in mathematics ... woe is me! There is a certain sparkle in everything she says or does and she has a sense of humorous situations which would be a bond of kinship between us if she hadn't started out by hating me. As it is, I fear it will be a long time before Jen and I can laugh together over anything.

“Myra Pringle, Jen's cousin, is the beauty of the school ... and apparently stupid. She does perpetrate some amusing howlers ... as, for instance, when she said today in history class that the Indians thought Champlain and his men were gods or ‘something inhuman.’

“Socially the Pringles are what Rebecca Dew calls ‘the e-light’ of Summerside. Already I have been invited to two Pringle homes for supper ... because it is the proper thing to invite a new teacher to supper and the Pringles are not going to omit the required gestures. Last night I was at James Pringle's ... the father of the aforesaid Jen. He looks like a college professor but is in reality stupid and ignorant. He talked a great deal about ‘dis cip line,’ tapping the tablecloth with a finger the nail of which was not impeccable and occasionally doing dreadful things to grammar. The Summerside High had always required a firm hand ... an experienced teacher, male preferred. He was afraid I was a leetle too young ... ‘a fault which time will cure all too soon,’ he said sorrowfully. I didn't say anything because if I had said anything I might have said too much. So I was as smooth and creamy as any Pringle of them all could have been and contented myself with looking limpidly at him and saying inside of myself, ‘You cantankerous, prejudiced old creature!’

“Jen must have got her brains from her mother ... whom I found myself liking. Jen, in her parents' presence, was a model of decorum. But though

her words were polite her tone was insolent. Every time she said 'Miss Shirley' she contrived to make it sound like an insult. And every time she looked at my hair I felt that it was just plain carrot red. No Pringle, I am certain, would ever admit it was auburn.

"I liked the Morton Pringles much better ... though Morton Pringle never really listens to anything you say. He says something to you and then, while you're replying, he is busy thinking out his next remark.

"Mrs. Stephen Pringle ... the Widow Pringle ... Summerside abounds in widows ... wrote me a letter yesterday ... a nice, polite, poisonous letter. Millie has too much home work ... Millie is a delicate child and must not be overworked. Mr. Bell never gave her home work. She is a sensitive child that must be understood. Mr. Bell understood her so well! Mrs. Stephen is sure I will, too, if I try!

"I do not doubt Mrs. Stephen thinks I made Adam Pringle's nose bleed in class today by reason of which he had to go home. And I woke up last night and couldn't go to sleep again because I remembered an i I hadn't dotted in a question I wrote on the board. I'm certain Jen Pringle would notice it and a whisper will go around the clan about it.

"Rebecca Dew says that all the Pringles will invite me to supper, except the old ladies at Maplehurst, and then ignore me forever afterwards. As they are the 'e-light,' this may mean that socially I may be banned in Summerside. Well, we'll see. The battle is on but is not yet either won or lost. Still, I feel rather unhappy over it all. You can't reason with prejudice. I'm still just as I used to be in my childhood ... I can't bear to have people not liking me. It isn't pleasant to think that the families of half my pupils hate me. And for no fault of my own. It is the injustice that stings me. There go more italics! But a few italics really do relieve your feelings.

"Apart from the Pringles I like my pupils very much. There are some clever, ambitious, hardworking ones who are really interested in getting an education. Lewis Allen is paying for his board by doing housework at his boardinghouse and isn't a bit ashamed of it. And Sophy Sinclair rides bareback on her father's old gray mare six miles in and six miles out every

day. There's pluck for you! If I can help a girl like that, am I to mind the Pringles?

"The trouble is ... if I can't win the Pringles I won't have much chance of helping anybody.

"But I love Windy Poplars. It isn't a boardinghouse ... it's a home! And they like me ... even Dusty Miller likes me, though he sometimes disapproves of me and shows it by deliberately sitting with his back turned towards me, occasionally cocking a golden eye over his shoulder at me to see how I'm taking it. I don't pet him much when Rebecca Dew is around because it really does irritate her. By day he is a homely, comfortable, meditative animal ... but he is decidedly a weird creature at night. Rebecca says it is because he is never allowed to stay out after dark. She hates to stand in the back yard and call him. She says the neighbors will all be laughing at her. She calls in such fierce, stentorian tones that she really can be heard all over the town on a still night shouting for 'Puss ... puss ... PUSS!' The widows would have a conniption if Dusty Miller wasn't in when they went to bed. 'Nobody knows what I've gone through on account of That Cat... nobody,' Rebecca has assured me.

"The widows are going to wear well. Every day I like them better. Aunt Kate doesn't believe in reading novels, but informs me that she does not propose to censor my reading-matter. Aunt Chatty loves novels. She has a 'hidy-hole' where she keeps them ... she smuggles them in from the town library ... together with a pack of cards for solitaire and anything else she doesn't want Aunt Kate to see. It is in a chair seat which nobody but Aunt Chatty knows is more than a chair seat. She has shared the secret with me, because, I strongly suspect, she wants me to aid and abet her in the aforesaid smuggling. There shouldn't really be any need for hidy-holes at Windy Poplars, for I never saw a house with so many mysterious cupboards. Though to be sure, Rebecca Dew won't let them be mysterious. She is always cleaning them out ferociously. 'A house can't keep itself clean,' she says sorrowfully when either of the widows protests. I am sure she would make short work of a novel or a pack of cards if she found them. They are both a horror to her orthodox soul. Rebecca Dew says cards are the devil's books and novels even worse. The only things Rebecca ever

reads, apart from her Bible, are the society columns of the Montreal Guardian. She loves to pore over the houses and furniture and doings of millionaires.

“‘Just fancy soaking in a golden bathtub, Miss Shirley,’ she said wistfully.

“But she’s really an old duck. She has produced from somewhere a comfortable old wing chair of faded brocade that just fits my kinks and says, ‘This is your chair. We’ll keep it for you.’ And she won’t let Dusty Miller sleep on it lest I get hairs on my school skirt and give the Pringles something to talk about.

“The whole three are very much interested in my circlet of pearls ... and what it signifies. Aunt Kate showed me her engagement ring (she can’t wear it because it has grown too small) set with turquoises. But poor Aunt Chatty owned to me with tears in her eyes that she had never had an engagement ring ... her husband thought it ‘an unnecessary expenditure.’ She was in my room at the time, giving her face a bath in buttermilk. She does it every night to preserve her complexion, and has sworn me to secrecy because she doesn’t want Aunt Kate to know it.

“‘She would think it ridiculous vanity in a woman of my age. And I am sure Rebecca Dew thinks that no Christian woman should try to be beautiful. I used to slip down to the kitchen to do it after Kate had gone to sleep but I was always afraid of Rebecca Dew coming down. She has ears like a cat’s even when she is asleep. If I could just slip in here every night and do it ... oh, thank you, my dear.’

“I have found out a little about our neighbors at The Evergreens. Mrs. Campbell (who was a Pringle!) is eighty. I haven’t seen her but from what I can gather she is a very grim old lady. She has a maid, Martha Monkman, almost as ancient and grim as herself, who is generally referred to as ‘Mrs. Campbell’s Woman.’ And she has her great-granddaughter, little Elizabeth Grayson, living with her. Elizabeth ... on whom I have never laid eyes in spite of my two weeks’ sojourn ... is eight years old and goes to the public school by ‘the back way’ ... a short cut through the back yards ... so I never encounter her, going or coming. Her mother, who is dead, was a granddaughter of Mrs. Campbell, who brought her up also ... Her parents

being dead. She married a certain Pierce Grayson, a ‘Yankee,’ as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would say. She died when Elizabeth was born and as Pierce Grayson had to leave America at once to take charge of a branch of his firm’s business in Paris, the baby was sent home to old Mrs. Campbell. The story goes that he ‘couldn’t bear the sight of her’ because she had cost her mother’s life, and has never taken any notice of her. This of course may be sheer gossip because neither Mrs. Campbell nor the Woman ever opens her lips about him.

“Rebecca Dew says they are far too strict with little Elizabeth and she hasn’t much of a time of it with them.

““She isn’t like other children ... far too old for eight years. The things that she says sometimes! “Rebecca,” she sez to me one day, “suppose just as you were ready to get into bed you felt your ankle nipped?” No wonder she’s afraid to go to bed in the dark. And they make her do it. Mrs. Campbell says there are to be no cowards in her house. They watch her like two cats watching a mouse, and boss her within an inch of her life. If she makes a speck of noise they nearly pass out. It’s “hush, hush” all the time. I tell you that child is being hush-hushed to death. And what is to be done about it?”

“What, indeed?

“I feel that I’d like to see her. She seems to me a bit pathetic. Aunt Kate says she is well looked after from a physical point of view ... what Aunt Kate really said was, ‘They feed and dress her well’ ... but a child can’t live by bread alone. I can never forget what my own life was before I came to Green Gables.

“I’m going home next Friday evening to spend two beautiful days in Avonlea. The only drawback will be that everybody I see will ask me how I like teaching in Summerside.

“But think of Green Gables now, Gilbert ... the Lake of Shining Waters with a blue mist on it ... the maples across the brook beginning to turn scarlet ... the ferns golden brown in the Haunted Wood ... and the sunset

shadows in Lover's Lane, darling spot. I find it in my heart to wish I were there now with ... with ... guess whom?

"Do you know, Gilbert, there are times when I strongly suspect that I love you!"

"Windy Poplars,

"Spook's Lane,

"S'side,

"October 10th.

"HONORED AND RESPECTED SIR: —

"That is how a love letter of Aunt Chatty's grandmother began. Isn't it delicious? What a thrill of superiority it must have given the grandfather! Wouldn't you really prefer it to 'Gilbert darling, etc.'? But, on the whole, I think I'm glad you're not the grandfather ... or A grandfather. It's wonderful to think we're young and have our whole lives before us ... together ... isn't it?"

(Several pages omitted. Anne's pen being evidently neither sharp, stub nor rusty.)

"I'm sitting on the window seat in the tower looking out into the trees waving against an amber sky and beyond them to the harbor. Last night I had such a lovely walk with myself. I really had to go somewhere for it was just a trifle dismal at Windy Poplars. Aunt Chatty was crying in the sitting-room because her feelings had been hurt and Aunt Kate was crying in her bedroom because it was the anniversary of Captain Amasa's death and Rebecca Dew was crying in the kitchen for no reason that I could discover. I've never seen Rebecca Dew cry before. But when I tried tactfully to find out what was wrong she pettishly wanted to know if a body couldn't enjoy a cry when she felt like it. So I folded my tent and stole away, leaving her to her enjoyment.

"I went out and down the harbor road. There was such a nice frosty, October smell in the air, blent with the delightful odor of newly plowed fields. I walked on and on until twilight had deepened into a moonlit

autumn night. I was alone but not lonely. I held a series of imaginary conversations with imaginary comrades and thought out so many epigrams that I was agreeably surprised at myself. I couldn't help enjoying myself in spite of my Pringle worries.

"The spirit moves me to utter a few yowls regarding the Pringles. I hate to admit it but things are not going any too well in Summerside High. There is no doubt that a cabal has been organized against me.

"For one thing, home work is never done by any of the Pringles or half Pringles. And there is no use in appealing to the parents. They are suave, polite, evasive. I know all the pupils who are not Pringles like me but the Pringle virus of disobedience is undermining the morale of the whole room. One morning I found my desk turned inside out and upside down. Nobody knew who did it, of course. And no one could or would tell who left on it another day the box out of which popped an artificial snake when I opened it. But every Pringle in the school screamed with laughter over my face. I suppose I did look wildly startled.

"Jen Pringle comes late for school half the time, always with some perfectly watertight excuse, delivered politely, with an insolent tilt to her mouth. She passes notes in class under my very nose. I found a peeled onion in the pocket of my coat when I put it on today. I should love to lock that girl up on bread and water until she learned how to behave herself.

"The worst thing to date was the caricature of myself I found on the blackboard one morning ... done in white chalk with scarlet hair. Everybody denied doing it, Jen among the rest, but I knew Jen was the only pupil in the room who could draw like that. It was done well. My nose ... which, as you know, has always been my one pride and joy ... was humpbacked and my mouth was the mouth of a vinegary spinster who had been teaching a school full of Pringles for thirty years. But it was me. I woke up at three o'clock that night and writhed over the recollection. Isn't it queer that the things we writhe over at night are seldom wicked things? Just humiliating ones.

"All sorts of things are being said. I am accused of 'marking down' Hattie Pringle's examination papers just because she is a Pringle. I am said to

‘laugh when the children make mistakes.’ (Well, I did laugh when Fred Pringle defined a centurion as ‘a man who had lived a hundred years.’ I couldn’t help it.)

“James Pringle is saying, ‘There is no discipline in the school ... no discipline whatever.’ And a report is being circulated that I am a ‘foundling.’

“I am beginning to encounter the Pringle antagonism in other quarters. Socially as well as educationally, Summerside seems to be under the Pringle thumb. No wonder they are called the Royal Family. I wasn’t invited to Alice Pringle’s walking party last Friday. And when Mrs. Frank Pringle got up a tea in aid of a church project (Rebecca Dew informs me that the ladies are going to ‘build’ the new spire!), I was the only girl in the Presbyterian church who was not asked to take a table. I have heard that the minister’s wife, who is a newcomer in Summerside, suggested asking me to sing in the choir and was informed that all the Pringles would drop out of it if she did. That would leave such a skeleton that the choir simply couldn’t carry on.

“Of course I’m not the only one of the teachers who has trouble with pupils. When the other teachers send theirs up to me to be ‘disciplined’ ... how I hate that word! ... half of them are Pringles. But there is never any complaint made about them.

“Two evenings ago I kept Jen in after school to do some work she had deliberately left undone. Ten minutes later the carriage from Maplehurst drew up before the school house and Miss Ellen was at the door ... a beautifully dressed, sweetly smiling old lady, with elegant black lace mitts and a fine hawk-like nose, looking as if she had just stepped out of an 1840 bandbox. She was so sorry but could she have Jen? She was going to visit friends in Lowvale and had promised to take Jen. Jen went off triumphantly and I realized afresh the forces arrayed against me.

“In my pessimistic moods I think the Pringles are a compound of Sloanes and Pyes. But I know they’re not. I feel that I could like them if they were not my enemies. They are, for the most part, a frank, jolly, loyal set. I could even like Miss Ellen. I’ve never seen Miss Sarah. Miss Sarah has not left Maplehurst for ten years.

“‘Too delicate ... or thinks she is,’ says Rebecca Dew with a sniff. ‘But there ain’t anything the matter with her pride. All the Pringles are proud but those two old girls pass everything. You should hear them talk about their ancestors. Well, their old father, Captain Abraham Pringle, was a fine old fellow. His brother Myrom wasn’t quite so fine, but you don’t hear the Pringles talking much about him. But I’m desprit afraid you’re going to have a hard time with them all. When they make up their mind about anything or anybody they’ve never been known to change it. But keep your chin up, Miss Shirley ... keep your chin up.’

“‘I wish I could get Miss Ellen’s recipe for pound cake,’ sighed Aunt Chatty. ‘She’s promised it to me time and again but it never comes. It’s an old English family recipe. They’re so exclusive about their recipes.’

“In wild fantastic dreams I see myself compelling Miss Ellen to hand that recipe over to Aunt Chatty on bended knee and make Jen mind her p’s and q’s. The maddening thing is that I could easily make Jen do it myself if her whole clan weren’t backing her up in her deviltry.”

(Two pages omitted.)

“Your obedient servant,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.

“P.S. That was how Aunt Chatty’s grandmother signed her love letters.”

“October 15th.

“We heard today that there had been a burglary at the other end of the town last night. A house was entered and some money and a dozen silver spoons stolen. So Rebecca Dew has gone up to Mr. Hamilton’s to see if she can borrow a dog. She will tie him on the back veranda and she advises me to lock up my engagement ring!

“By the way, I found out why Rebecca Dew cried. It seems there had been a domestic convulsion. Dusty Miller had ‘misbehaved again’ and Rebecca Dew told Aunt Kate she would really have to do something about That Cat.

He was wearing her to a fiddle-string. It was the third time in a year and she knew he did it on purpose. And Aunt Kate said that if Rebecca Dew would always let the cat out when he meowed there would be no danger of his misbehaving.

“‘Well, this is the last straw,’ said Rebecca Dew.

“Consequently, tears!

“The Pringle situation grows a little more acute every week. Something very impertinent was written across one of my books yesterday and Homer Pringle turned handsprings all the way down the aisle when leaving school. Also, I got an anonymous letter recently full of nasty innuendoes. Somehow, I don’t blame Jen for either the book or the letter. Imp as she is, there are things she wouldn’t stoop to. Rebecca Dew is furious and I shudder to think what she would do to the Pringles if she had them in her power. Nero’s wish isn’t to be compared to it. I really don’t blame her, for there are times when I feel myself that I could cheerfully hand any and all of the Pringles a poisoned philter of Borgia brewing.

“I don’t think I’ve told you much about the other teachers. There are two, you know ... the Vice-principal, Katherine Brooke of the Junior Room, and George MacKay of the Prep. Of George I have little to say. He is a shy, goodnatured lad of twenty, with a slight, delicious Highland accent suggestive of low shielings and misty islands ... his grandfather ‘was Isle of Skye’ ... and does very well with the Preps. So far as I know him I like him. But I’m afraid I’m going to have a hard time liking Katherine Brooke.

“Katherine is a girl of, I think, about twenty-eight, though she looks thirty-five. I have been told she cherished hopes of promotion to the Principalship and I suppose she resents my getting it, especially when I am considerably her junior. She is a good teacher ... a bit of a martinet ... but she is not popular with any one. And doesn’t worry over it! She doesn’t seem to have any friends or relations and boards in a gloomy-looking house on grubby little Temple Street. She dresses very dowdily, never goes out socially and is said to be ‘mean.’ She is very sarcastic and her pupils dread her biting remarks. I am told that her way of raising her thick black

eyebrows and drawling at them reduces them to a pulp. I wish I could work it on the Pringles. But I really shouldn't like to govern by fear as she does. I want my pupils to love me.

"In spite of the fact that she has apparently no trouble in making them toe the line she is constantly sending some of them up to me ... especially Pringles. I know she does it purposely and I feel miserably certain that she exults in my difficulties and would be glad to see me worsted.

"Rebecca Dew says that no one can make friends with her. The widows have invited her several times to Sunday supper ... the dear souls are always doing that for lonely people, and always have the most delicious chicken salad for them ... but she never came. So they have given it up because, as Aunt Kate says, 'there are limits.'

"There are rumors that she is very clever and can sing and recite ... 'elocute,' a la Rebecca Dew ... but will not do either. Aunt Chatty once asked her to recite at a church supper.

"'We thought she refused very ungraciously,' said Aunt Kate.

"'Just growled,' said Rebecca Dew.

"Katherine has a deep throaty voice ... almost a man's voice ... and it does sound like a growl when she isn't in good humor.

"She isn't pretty but she might make more of herself. She is dark and swarthy, with magnificent black hair always dragged back from her high forehead and coiled in a clumsy knot at the base of her neck. Her eyes don't match her hair, being a clear, light amber under her black brows. She has ears she needn't be ashamed to show and the most beautiful hands I've ever seen. Also, she has a well-cut mouth. But she dresses terribly. Seems to have a positive genius for getting the colors and lines she should not wear. Dull dark greens and drab grays, when she is too sallow for greens and grays, and stripes which make her tall, lean figure even taller and leaner. And her clothes always look as if she'd slept in them.

“Her manner is very repellent ... as Rebecca Dew would say, she always has a chip on her shoulder. Every time I pass her on the stairs I feel that she is thinking horrid things about me. Every time I speak to her she makes me feel I’ve said the wrong thing. And yet I’m very sorry for her ... though I know she would resent my pity furiously. And I can’t do anything to help her because she doesn’t want to be helped. She is really hateful to me. One day, when we three teachers were all in the staff room, I did something which, it seems, transgressed one of the unwritten laws of the school, and Katherine said cuttingly, ‘Perhaps you think you are above rules, Miss Shirley.’ At another time, when I was suggesting some changes which I thought would be for the good of the school, she said with a scornful smile, ‘I’m not interested in fairy tales.’ Once, when I said some nice things about her work and methods, she said, ‘And what is to be the pill in all this jam?’

“But the thing that annoyed me most ... well, one day when I happened to pick up a book of hers in the staff room and glanced at the flyleaf I said,

“‘I’m glad you spell your name with a K. Katherine is so much more alluring than Catherine, just as K is ever so much gypsier a letter than smug C.’

“She made no response, but the next note she sent up was signed ‘Catherine Brooke’!

“I sneezed all the way home.

“I really would give up trying to be friends with her if I hadn’t a queer, unaccountable feeling that under all her brusqueness and aloofness she is actually starved for companionship.

“Altogether, what with Katherine’s antagonism and the Pringle attitude, I don’t know just what I’d do if it wasn’t for dear Rebecca Dew and your letters ... and little Elizabeth.

“Because I’ve got acquainted with little Elizabeth. And she is a darling.

“Three nights ago I took the glass of milk to the wall door and little Elizabeth herself was there to get it instead of the Woman, her head just coming above the solid part of the door, so that her face was framed in the ivy. She is small, pale, golden and wistful. Her eyes, looking at me through the autumn twilight, are large and golden-hazel. Her silver-gold hair was parted in the middle, sleeked plainly down over her head with a circular comb, and fell in waves on her shoulders. She wore a pale blue gingham dress and the expression of a princess of elfland. She had what Rebecca Dew calls ‘a delicate air,’ and gave me the impression of a child who was more or less undernourished ... not in body, but in soul. More of a moonbeam than a sunbeam.

“‘And this is Elizabeth?’ I said.

“‘Not tonight,’ she answered gravely. ‘This is my night for being Betty because I love everything in the world tonight. I was Elizabeth last night and tomorrow night I’ll prob’ly be Beth. It all depends on how I feel.’

“‘There was the touch of the kindred spirit for you. I thrilled to it at once.

“‘How very nice to have a name you can change so easily and still feel it’s your own.’

“‘Little Elizabeth nodded.

“‘I can make so many names out of it. Elsie and Betty and Bess and Elisa and Lisbeth and Beth ... but not Lizzie. I never can feel like Lizzie.’

“‘Who could?’ I said.

“‘Do you think it silly of me, Miss Shirley? Grandmother and the Woman do.’

“‘Not silly at all ... very wise and very delightful,’ I said..

“‘Little Elizabeth made saucer eyes at me over the rim of her glass. I felt that I was being weighed in some secret spiritual balance and presently I realized thankfully that I had not been found wanting. For little Elizabeth

asked a favor of me ... and little Elizabeth does not ask favors of people she does not like.

“‘Would you mind lifting up the cat and letting me pat him?’ she asked shyly.

“Dusty Miller was rubbing against my legs. I lifted him and little Elizabeth put out a tiny hand and stroked his head delightedly.

“‘I like kittens better than babies,’ she said, looking at me with an odd little air of defiance, as if she knew I would be shocked but tell the truth she must.

“‘I suppose you’ve never had much to do with babies, so you don’t know how sweet they are,’ I said, smiling. ‘Have you a kitten of your own?’

“Elizabeth shook her head.

“‘Oh, no; Grandmother doesn’t like cats. And the Woman hates them. The Woman is out tonight, so that is why I could come for the milk. I love coming for the milk because Rebecca Dew is such an agree’ble person.’

“‘Are you sorry she didn’t come tonight?’ I laughed.

“Little Elizabeth shook her head.

“‘No. You are very agree’ble, too. I’ve been wanting to get ‘quainted with you but I was afraid it mightn’t happen before Tomorrow comes.’

“We stood there and talked while Elizabeth sipped her milk daintily and she told me all about Tomorrow. The Woman had told her that Tomorrow never comes, but Elizabeth knows better. It will come sometime. Some beautiful morning she will just wake up and find it is Tomorrow. Not Today but Tomorrow. And then things will happen ... wonderful things. She may even have a day to do exactly as she likes in, with nobody watching her ... though I think Elizabeth feels that is too good to happen even in Tomorrow. Or she may find out what is at the end of the harbor road ... that wandering, twisting road like a nice red snake, that leads, so

Elizabeth thinks, to the end of the world. Perhaps the Island of Happiness is there. Elizabeth feels sure there is an Island of Happiness somewhere where all the ships that never come back are anchored, and she will find it when Tomorrow comes.

“‘And when Tomorrow comes,’ said Elizabeth, ‘I will have a million dogs and forty-five cats. I told Grandmother that when she wouldn’t let me have a kitten, Miss Shirley, and she was angry and said, “I’m not ‘customed to be spoken to like that, Miss Impert’nence.” I was sent to bed without supper ... but I didn’t mean to be impert’nent. And I couldn’t sleep, Miss Shirley, because the Woman told me that she knew a child once that died in her sleep after being impert’nent.’

“When Elizabeth had finished her milk there came a sharp tapping at some unseen window behind the spruces. I think we had been watched all the time. My elf-maiden ran, her golden head glimmering along the dark spruce aisle until she vanished.

“‘She’s a fanciful little creature,’ said Rebecca Dew when I told her of my adventure ... really, it somehow had the quality of an adventure, Gilbert. ‘One day she said to me, “Are you scared of lions, Rebecca Dew?” “I never met any so I can’t tell you,” sez I. “There will be any amount of lions in Tomorrow,” sez she, “but they will be nice friendly lions.” “Child, you’ll turn into eyes if you look like that,” sez I. She was looking clean through me at something she saw in that Tomorrow of hers. “I’m thinking deep thoughts, Rebecca Dew,” she sez. The trouble with that child is she doesn’t laugh enough.’

“I remembered Elizabeth had never laughed once during our talk. I feel that she hasn’t learned how. The great house is so still and lonely and laughterless. It looks dull and gloomy even now when the world is a riot of autumn color. Little Elizabeth is doing too much listening to lost whispers.

“I think one of my missions in Summerside will be to teach her how to laugh.

“Your tenderest, most faithful friend,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.

“P.S. More of Aunt Chatty’s grandmother!”

Chapter 3

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side,
“October 25th.

“GILBERT DEAR: —

“What do you think? I’ve been to supper at Maplehurst!

“Miss Ellen herself wrote the invitation. Rebecca Dew was really excited ... she had never believed they would take any notice of me. And she was quite sure it was not out of friendliness.

““They have some sinister motive, that I’m certain of!’ she exclaimed.

“I really had some such feeling in my own mind.

““Be sure you put on your best,’ ordered Rebecca Dew.

“So I put on my pretty cream challis dress with the purple violets in it and did my hair the new way with the dip in the forehead. It’s very becoming.

“The ladies of Maplehurst are positively delightful in their own way, Gilbert. I could love them if they’d let me. Maplehurst is a proud, exclusive house which draws its trees around it and won’t associate with common houses. It has a big, white, wooden woman off the bow of old Captain Abraham’s famous ship, the Go and Ask Her, in the orchard and billows of southernwood about the front steps, which was brought out from the old country over a hundred years ago by the first emigrating

Pringle. They have another ancestor who fought at the battle of Minden and his sword is hanging on the parlor wall beside Captain Abraham's portrait. Captain Abraham was their father and they are evidently tremendously proud of him.

"They have stately mirrors over the old, black, fluted mantels, a glass case with wax flowers in it, pictures full of the beauty of the ships of long ago, a hair-wreath containing the hair of every known Pringle, big conch shells and a quilt on the spare-room bed quilted in infinitesimal fans.

"We sat in the parlor on mahogany Sheraton chairs. It was hung with silver-stripe wallpaper. Heavy brocade curtains at the windows. Marble-topped tables, one bearing a beautiful model of a ship with crimson hull and snow-white sails — the Go and Ask Her. An enormous chandelier, all glass and dingle-dangles, suspended from the ceiling. A round mirror with a clock in the center ... something Captain Abraham had brought home from 'foreign parts.' It was wonderful. I'd like something like it in our house of dreams.

"The very shadows were eloquent and traditional. Miss Ellen showed me millions ... more or less ... of Pringle photographs, many of them daguerreotypes in leather cases. A big tortoise-shell cat came in, jumped on my knee and was at once whisked out to the kitchen by Miss Ellen. She apologized to me. But I expect she had previously apologized to the cat in the kitchen.

"Miss Ellen did most of the talking. Miss Sarah, a tiny thing in a black silk dress and starched petticoat, with snow-white hair and eyes as black as her dress, thin, veined hands folded on her lap amid fine lace ruffles, sad, lovely, gentle, looked almost too fragile to talk. And yet I got the impression, Gilbert, that every Pringle of the clan, including Miss Ellen herself, danced to her piping.

"We had a delicious supper. The water was cold, the linen beautiful, the dishes and glassware thin. We were waited on by a maid, quite as aloof and aristocratic as themselves. But Miss Sarah pretended to be a little deaf whenever I spoke to her and I thought every mouthful would choke me. All my courage oozed out of me. I felt just like a poor fly caught on fly-

paper. Gilbert, I can never, never conquer or win the Royal Family. I can see myself resigning at New Year's. I haven't a chance against a clan like that.

"And yet I couldn't help feeling a little sorry for the old ladies as I looked around their house. It had once lived ... people had been born there ... died there ... exulted there ... known sleep, despair, fear, joy, love, hope, hate. And now it has nothing but the memories by which they live ... and their pride in them.

"Aunt Chatty is much upset because when she unfolded clean sheets for my bed today she found a diamond-shaped crease in the center. She is sure it foretells a death in the household. Aunt Kate is very much disgusted with such superstition. But I believe I rather like superstitious people. They lend color to life. Wouldn't it be a rather drab world if everybody was wise and sensible ... and good? What would we find to talk about?

"We had a catastrophe here two nights ago. Dusty Miller stayed out all night, in spite of Rebecca Dew's stentorian shouts of 'Puss' in the back yard. And when he turned up in the morning ... oh, such a looking cat! One eye was closed completely and there was a lump as big as an egg on his jaw. His fur was stiff with mud and one paw was bitten through. But what a triumphant, unrepentant look he had in his one good eye! The widows were horrified but Rebecca Dew said exultantly, 'That Cat has never had a good fight in his life before. And I'll bet the other cat looks far worse than he does!'

"A fog is creeping up the harbor tonight, blotting out the red road that little Elizabeth wants to explore. Weeds and leaves are burning in all the town gardens and the combination of smoke and fog is making Spook's Lane an eerie, fascinating, enchanted place. It is growing late and my bed says, 'I have sleep for you.' I've grown used to climbing a flight of steps into bed ... and climbing down them. Oh, Gilbert, I've never told any one this, but it's too funny to keep any longer. The first morning I woke up in Windy Poplars I forgot all about the steps and made a blithe morning-spring out of bed. I came down like a thousand of brick, as Rebecca Dew would say. Luckily I didn't break any bones, but I was black and blue for a week.

“Little Elizabeth and I are very good friends by now. She comes every evening for her milk because the Woman is laid up with what Rebecca Dew calls ‘brownkites.’ I always find her at the wall gate, waiting for me, her big eyes full of twilight. We talk with the gate, which has never been opened for years, between us. Elizabeth sips the glass of milk as slowly as possible in order to spin our conversation out. Always, when the last drop is drained, comes the tap-tap on the window.

“I have found that one of the things that is going to happen in Tomorrow is that she will get a letter from her father. She had never got one. I wonder what the man can be thinking of.

“‘You know, he couldn’t bear the sight of me, Miss Shirley,’ she told me, ‘but he mightn’t mind writing to me.’

“‘Who told you he couldn’t bear the sight of you?’ I asked indignantly.

“‘The Woman.’ (Always when Elizabeth says ‘the Woman,’ I can see her like a great big forbidding ‘W,’ all angles and corners.) ‘And it must be true or he would come to see me sometimes.’

“She was Beth that night ... it is only when she is Beth that she will talk of her father. When she is Betty she makes faces at her grandmother and the Woman behind their backs; but when she turns into Elsie she is sorry for it and thinks she ought to confess, but is scared to. Very rarely she is Elizabeth and then she has the face of one who listens to fairy music and knows what roses and clovers talk about. She’s the quaintest thing, Gilbert ... as sensitive as one of the leaves of the windy poplars, and I love her. It infuriates me to know that those two terrible old women make her go to bed in the dark.

“‘The Woman said I was big enough to sleep without a light. But I feel so small, Miss Shirley, because the night is so big and awful. And there is a stuffed crow in my room and I am afraid of it. The Woman told me it would pick my eyes out if I cried. Of course, Miss Shirley, I don’t believe that, but still I’m scared. Things whisper so to each other at night. But in Tomorrow I’ll never be scared of anything ... not even of being kidnaped!’

“‘But there is no danger of your being kidnaped, Elizabeth.’

“‘The Woman said there was if I went anywhere alone or talked to strange persons. But you’re not a strange person, are you, Miss Shirley?’

“‘No, darling. We’ve always known each other in Tomorrow,’ I said.”

Chapter 4

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side,
“November 10th.

“DEAREST:

“It used to be that the person I hated most in the world was the person who spoiled my pen-nib. But I can’t hate Rebecca Dew in spite of her habit of using my pen to copy recipes when I’m in school. She’s been doing it again and as a result you won’t get a long or a loving letter this time. (Belovedest.)

“The last cricket song has been sung. The evenings are so chilly now that I have a small chubby, oblong wood-stove in my room. Rebecca Dew put it up ... I forgive her the pen for it. There’s nothing that woman can’t do; and she always has a fire lighted for me in it when I come home from school. It is the tiniest of stoves ... I could pick it up in my hands. It looks just like a pert little black dog on its four bandy iron legs. But when you fill it with hardwood sticks it blooms rosy red and throws a wonderful heat and you can’t think how cozy it is. I’m sitting before it now, with my feet on its tiny hearth, scribbling to you on my knee.

“Every one else in S’side ... more or less ... is at the Hardy Pringles’ dance. I was not invited. And Rebecca Dew is so cross about it that I’d hate to be Dusty Miller. But when I think of Hardy’s daughter Myra, beautiful and brainless, trying to prove in an examination paper that the angels at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, I forgive the entire Pringle clan. And last week she included ‘gallows tree’ quite seriously in a list of trees! But, to be just, all the howlers don’t originate with the Pringles. Blake Fenton defined an alligator recently as ‘a large kind of insect.’ Such are the high lights of a teacher’s life!

“It feels like snow tonight. I like an evening when it feels like snow. The wind is blowing ‘in turret and tree’ and making my cozy room seem even cozier. The last golden leaf will be blown from the aspens tonight.

“I think I’ve been invited to supper everywhere by now ... I mean to the homes of all my pupils, both in town and country. And oh, Gilbert darling, I am so sick of pumpkin preserves! Never, never let us have pumpkin preserves in our house of dreams.

“Almost everywhere I’ve gone for the last month I’ve had P. P. for supper. The first time I had it I loved it ... it was so golden that I felt I was eating preserved sunshine ... and I incautiously raved about it. It got bruited about that I was very fond of P. P. and people had it on purpose for me. Last night I was going to Mr. Hamilton’s and Rebecca Dew assured me that I wouldn’t have to eat P. P. there because none of the Hamiltons liked it. But when we sat down to supper, there on the sideboard was the inevitable cut-glass bowl full of P. P.

“‘I hadn’t any punkin preserves of my own,’ said Mrs. Hamilton, ladling me out a generous dishful, ‘but I heard you was terrible partial to it, so when I was to my cousin’s in Lowvale last Sunday I sez to her, ‘I’m having Miss Shirley to supper this week and she’s terrible partial to punkin preserves. I wish you’d lend me a jar for her.’ So she did and here it is and you can take home what’s left.’

“You should have seen Rebecca Dew’s face when I arrived home from the Hamiltons’ bearing a glass jar two-thirds full of P. P.! Nobody likes it here so we buried it darkly at dead of night in the garden.

“‘You won’t put this in a story, will you?’ she asked anxiously. Ever since Rebecca Dew discovered that I do an occasional bit of fiction for the magazines she has lived in the fear ... or hope, I don’t know which ... that I’ll put everything that happens at Windy Poplars into a story. She wants me to ‘write up the Pringles and blister them.’ But alas, it’s the Pringles that are doing the blistering and between them and my work in school I have scant time for writing fiction.

“There are only withered leaves and frosted stems in the garden now. Rebecca Dew has done the standard roses up in straw and potato bags, and in the twilight they look exactly like a group of humped-back old men leaning on staffs.

“I got a postcard from Davy today with ten kisses crossed on it and a letter from Priscilla written on some paper that ‘a friend of hers in Japan’ sent her ... silky thin paper with dim cherry blossoms on it like ghosts. I’m beginning to have my suspicions about that friend of hers. But your big fat letter was the purple gift the day gave me. I read it four times over to get every bit of its savor ... like a dog polishing off a plate! That certainly isn’t a romantic simile, but it’s the one that just popped into my head. Still, letters, even the nicest, aren’t satisfactory. I want to see you. I’m glad it’s only five weeks to Christmas holidays.”

Chapter 5

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Anne, sitting at her tower window one late November evening, with her pen at her lip and dreams in her eyes, looked out on a twilight world and suddenly thought she would like a walk to the old graveyard. She had never visited it yet, preferring the birch and maple grove or the harbor road for her evening rambles. But there is always a November space after the leaves have fallen when she felt it was almost indecent to intrude on the woods ... for their glory terrestrial had departed and their glory celestial of spirit and purity and whiteness had not yet come upon them. So Anne betook herself to the graveyard instead. She was feeling for the time so dispirited and hopeless that she thought a graveyard would be a comparatively cheerful place. Besides, it was full of Pringles, so Rebecca Dew said. They had buried there for generations, keeping it up in preference to the new graveyard until “no more of them could be squeezed in.” Anne felt that it would be positively encouraging to see how many Pringles were where they couldn’t annoy anybody any more.

In regard to the Pringles Anne felt that she was at the end of her tether. More and more the whole situation was coming to seem like a nightmare. The subtle campaign of insubordination and disrespect which Jen Pringle had organized had at last come to a head. One day, a week previously, she had asked the Seniors to write a composition on “The Most Important Happenings of the Week.” Jen Pringle had written a brilliant one ... the little imp was clever ... and had inserted in it a sly insult to her teacher ... one so pointed that it was impossible to ignore it. Anne had sent her home, telling her that she would have to apologize before she would be allowed to come back. The fat was fairly in the fire. It was open warfare now between her and the Pringles. And poor Anne had no doubt on whose banner victory would perch. The school board would back the Pringles up and she would be given her choice between letting Jen come back or being asked to resign.

She felt very bitter. She had done her best and she knew she could have succeeded if she had had even a fighting chance.

“It’s not my fault,” she thought miserably. “Who could succeed against such a phalanx and such tactics?”

But to go home to Green Gables defeated! To endure Mrs. Lynde’s indignation and the Pyes’ exultation! Even the sympathy of friends would be an anguish. And with her Summerside failure bruited abroad she would never be able to get another school.

But at least they had not got the better of her in the matter of the play. Anne laughed a little wickedly and her eyes filled with mischievous delight over the memory.

She had organized a High School Dramatic Club and directed it in a little play hurriedly gotten up to provide some funds for one of her pet schemes ... buying some good engravings for the rooms. She had made herself ask Katherine Brooke to help her because Katherine always seemed so left out of everything. She could not help regretting it many times, for Katherine was even more brusque and sarcastic than usual. She seldom let a practice pass without some corrosive remark and she overworked her eyebrows. Worse still, it was Katherine who had insisted on having Jen Pringle take the part of Mary Queen of Scots.

“There’s no one else in the school who can play it,” she said impatiently. “No one who has the necessary personality.”

Anne was not so sure of this. She rather thought that Sophy Sinclair, who was tall and had hazel eyes and rich chestnut hair, would make a far better Queen Mary than Jen. But Sophy was not even a member of the club and had never taken part in a play.

“We don’t want absolute greenhorns in this. I’m not going to be associated with anything that is not successful,” Katherine had said disagreeably, and Anne had yielded. She could not deny that Jen was very good in the part. She had a natural flair for acting and she apparently threw herself into it wholeheartedly. They practiced four evenings a week and on the surface

things went along very smoothly. Jen seemed to be so interested in her part that she behaved herself as far as the play was concerned. Anne did not meddle with her but left her to Katherine's coaching. Once or twice, though, she surprised a certain look of sly triumph on Jen's face that puzzled her. She could not guess just what it meant.

One afternoon, soon after the practices had begun, Anne found Sophy Sinclair in tears in a corner of the girls' coatroom. At first she had blinked her hazel eyes vigorously and denied it ... then broke down.

"I did so want to be in the play ... to be Queen Mary," she sobbed. "I've never had a chance ... father wouldn't let me join the club because there are dues to pay and every cent counts so much. And of course I haven't had any experience. I've always loved Queen Mary ... her very name just thrills me to my finger tips. I don't believe ... I never will believe she had anything to do with murdering Darnley. It would have been wonderful to fancy I was she for a little while!"

Afterwards Anne concluded that it was her guardian angel who prompted her reply.

"I'll write the part out for you, Sophy, and coach you in it. It will be good training for you. And, as we plan to give the play in other places if it goes well here, it will be just as well to have an understudy in case Jen shouldn't always be able to go. But we'll say nothing about it to any one."

Sophy had the part memorized by the next day. She went home to Windy Poplars with Anne every afternoon when school came out and rehearsed it in the tower. They had a lot of fun together, for Sophy was full of quiet vivacity. The play was to be put on the last Friday in November in the town hall; it was widely advertised and the reserved seats were sold to the last one. Anne and Katherine spent two evenings decorating the hall, the band was hired, and a noted soprano was coming up from Charlottetown to sing between the acts. The dress rehearsal was a success. Jen was really excellent and the whole cast played up to her. Friday morning Jen was not in school; and in the afternoon her mother sent word that Jen was ill with a very sore throat ... they were afraid it was tonsillitis. Everybody

concerned was very sorry, but it was out of the question that she should take part in the play that night.

Katherine and Anne stared at each other, drawn together for once in their common dismay.

“We’ll have to put it off,” said Katherine slowly. “And that means failure. Once we’re into December there’s so much going on. Well, I always thought it was foolish to try to get up a play this time of the year.”

“We are not going to postpone it,” said Anne, her eyes as green as Jen’s own. She was not going to say it to Katherine Brooke, but she knew as well as she had ever known anything in her life that Jen Pringle was in no more danger of tonsillitis than she was. It was a deliberate device, whether any of the other Pringles were a party to it or not, to ruin the play because she, Anne Shirley, had sponsored it.

“Oh, if you feel that way about it!” said Katherine with a nasty shrug. “But what do you intend to do? Get some one to read the part? That would ruin it ... Mary is the whole play.”

“Sophy Sinclair can play the part as well as Jen. The costume will fit her and, thanks be, you made it and have it, not Jen.”

The play was put on that night before a packed audience. A delighted Sophy played Mary ... was Mary, as Jen Pringle could never have been ... looked Mary in her velvet robes and ruff and jewels. Students of Summerside High, who had never seen Sophy in anything but her plain, dowdy, dark serge dresses, shapeless coat and shabby hats, stared at her in amazement. It was insisted on the spot that she become a permanent member of the Dramatic Club — Anne herself paid the membership fee — and from then on she was one of the pupils who “counted” in Summerside High. But nobody knew or dreamed, Sophy herself least of all, that she had taken the first step that night on a pathway that was to lead to the stars. Twenty years later Sophy Sinclair was to be one of the leading actresses in America. But probably no plaudits ever sounded so sweet in her ears as the wild applause amid which the curtain fell that night in Summerside town hall.

Mrs. James Pringle took a tale home to her daughter Jen which would have turned that damsel's eyes green if they had not been already so. For once, as Rebecca Dew said feelingly, Jen had got her comeuppance. And the eventual result was the insult in the composition on Important Happenings.

Anne went down to the old graveyard along a deep-rutted lane between high, mossy stone dykes, tasseled with frosted ferns. Slim, pointed lombardies, from which November winds had not yet stripped all the leaves, grew along it at intervals, coming out darkly against the amethyst of the far hills; but the old graveyard, with half its tombstones leaning at a drunken slant, was surrounded by a four-square row of tall, somber fir trees. Anne had not expected to find any one there and was a little taken aback when she met Miss Valentine Courtaloe, with her long delicate nose, her thin delicate mouth, her sloping delicate shoulders and her general air of invincible ladylikeness, just inside the gate. She knew Miss Valentine, of course, as did everyone in Summerside. She was "the" local dressmaker and what she didn't know about people, living or dead, was not worth taking into account. Anne had wanted to wander about by herself, read the odd old epitaphs and puzzle out the names of forgotten lovers under the lichens that were growing over them. But she could not escape when Miss Valentine slipped an arm through hers and proceeded to do the honors of the graveyard, where there were evidently as many Courtaloes buried as Pringles. Miss Valentine had not a drop of Pringle blood in her and one of Anne's favorite pupils was her nephew. So it was no great mental strain to be nice to her, except that one must be very careful never to hint that she "sewed for a living." Miss Valentine was said to be very sensitive on that point.

"I'm glad I happened to be here this evening," said Miss Valentine. "I can tell you all about everybody buried here. I always say you have to know the ins and outs of the corpses to find a graveyard real enjoyable. I like a walk here better than in the new. It's only the old families that are buried here but every Tom, Dick and Harry is being buried in the new. The Courtaloes are buried in this corner. My, we've had a terrible lot of funerals in our family."

“I suppose every old family has,” said Anne, because Miss Valentine evidently expected her to say something.

“Don’t tell me any family has ever had as many as ours,” said Miss Valentine jealously. “We’re very consumptive. Most of us died of a cough. This is my Aunt Bessie’s grave. She was a saint if ever there was one. But there’s no doubt her sister, Aunt Cecilia, was the more interesting to talk to. The last time I ever saw her she said to me, ‘Sit down, my dear, sit down. I’m going to die tonight at ten minutes past eleven but that’s no reason why we shouldn’t have a real good gossip for the last.’ The strange thing, Miss Shirley, is that she did die that night at ten minutes past eleven. Can you tell me how she knew it?”

Anne couldn’t.

“My Great-great-grandfather Courtaloe is buried here. He came out in 1760 and he made spinning-wheels for a living. I’ve heard he made fourteen hundred in the course of his life. When he died the minister preached from the text, ‘Their works do follow them,’ and old Myrom Pringle said in that case the road to heaven behind my great-great-grandfather would be choked with spinning-wheels. Do you think such a remark was in good taste, Miss Shirley?”

Had any one but a Pringle said it, Anne might not have remarked so decidedly, “I certainly do not,” looking at a gravestone adorned with a skull and cross-bones as if she questioned the good taste of that also.

“My cousin Dora is buried here. She had three husbands but they all died very rapidly. Poor Dora didn’t seem to have any luck picking a healthy man. Her last one was Benjamin Banning ... not buried here ... buried in Lowvale beside his first wife ... and he wasn’t reconciled to dying. Dora told him he was going to a better world. ‘Mebbe, mebbe,’ says poor Ben, ‘but I’m sorter used to the imperfections of this one.’ He took sixty-one different kinds of medicine but in spite of that he lingered for a good while. All Uncle David Courtaloe’s family are here. There’s a cabbage rose planted at the foot of every grave and, my, don’t they bloom! I come here every summer and gather them for my rose-jar. It would be a pity to let them go to waste, don’t you think?”

“I ... I suppose so.”

“My poor young sister Harriet lies here,” sighed Miss Valentine. “She had magnificent hair ... about the color of yours ... not so red perhaps. It reached to her knees. She was engaged when she died. They tell me you’re engaged. I never much wanted to be married but I think it would have been nice to be engaged. Oh, I’ve had some chances of course ... perhaps I was too fastidious ... but a Courtaloe couldn’t marry everybody, could she?”

It did not seem likely she could.

“Frank Digby ... over in that corner under the sumacs ... wanted me. I did feel a little regretful over refusing him ... but a Digby, my dear! He married Georgina Troop. She always went to church a little late to show off her clothes. My, she was fond of clothes. She was buried in such a pretty blue dress ... I made it for her to wear to a wedding but in the end she wore it to her own funeral. She had three darling little children. They used to sit in front of me at church and I always gave them candy. Do you think it wrong to give children candy in church, Miss Shirley? Not peppermints ... that would be all right ... there’s something religious about peppermints, don’t you think? But the poor things don’t like them.”

When the Courtaloe’s plots were exhausted Miss Valentine’s reminiscences became a bit spicier. It did not make so much difference if you weren’t a Courtaloe.

“Old Mrs. Russell Pringle is here. I often wonder if she’s in heaven or not.”

“But why?” gasped a rather shocked Anne.

“Well, she always hated her sister, Mary Ann, who had died a few months before. ‘If Mary Ann is in heaven I won’t stay there,’ says she. And she was a woman who always kept her word, my dear ... Pringle-like. She was born a Pringle and married her cousin Russell. This is Mrs. Dan Pringle ... Janetta Bird. Seventy to a day when she died. Folks say she would have thought it wrong to die a day older than threescore and ten because that is the Bible limit. People do say such funny things, don’t they? I’ve heard

that dying was the only thing she ever dared do without asking her husband. Do you know, my dear, what he did once when she bought a hat he didn't like?"

"I can't imagine."

"He ate it," said Miss Valentine solemnly. "Of course it was only a small hat ... lace and flowers ... no feathers. Still, it must have been rather indigestible. I understand he had gnawing pains in his stomach for quite a time. Of course I didn't see him eat it, but I've always been assured the story was true. Do you suppose it was?"

"I'd believe anything of a Pringle," said Anne bitterly.

Miss Valentine pressed her arm sympathetically.

"I feel for you ... indeed I do. It's terrible the way they're treating you. But Summerside isn't all Pringle, Miss Shirley."

"Sometimes I think it is," said Anne with a rueful smile.

"No, it isn't. And there are plenty of people who would like to see you get the better of them. Don't you give in to them no matter what they do. It's just the old Satan that's got into them. But they hang together so and Miss Sarah did want that cousin of theirs to get the school.

"The Nathan Pringles are here. Nathan always believed his wife was trying to poison him but he didn't seem to mind. He said it made life kind of exciting. Once he kind of suspected she'd put arsenic in his porridge. He went out and fed it to a pig. The pig died three weeks afterwards. But he said maybe it was only a coincidence and anyway he couldn't be sure it was the same pig. In the end she died before him and he said she'd always been a real good wife to him except for that one thing. I think it would be charitable to believe that he was mistaken about it."

"Sacred to the memory of Miss Kinsey," read Anne in amazement.

"What an extraordinary inscription! Had she no other name?"

“If she had, nobody ever knew it,” said Miss Valentine. “She came from Nova Scotia and worked for the George Pringles for forty years. She gave her name as Miss Kinsey and everybody called her that. She died suddenly and then it was discovered that nobody knew her first name and she had no relations that anybody could find. So they put that on her stone ... the George Pringles buried her very nicely and paid for the monument. She was a faithful, hardworking creature but if you’d ever seen her you’d have thought she was born Miss Kinsey. The James Morleys are here. I was at their golden wedding. Such a to-do ... gifts and speeches and flowers ... and their children all home and them smiling and bowing and just hating each other as hard as they could.”

“Hating each other?”

“Bitterly, my dear. Every one knew it. They had for years and years ... almost all their married life in fact. They quarreled on the way home from church after the wedding. I often wonder how they manage to lie here so peaceably side by side.”

Again Anne shivered. How terrible ... sitting opposite each other at table ... lying down beside each other at night ... going to church with their babies to be christened ... and hating each other through it all! Yet they must have loved to begin with. Was it possible she and Gilbert could ever ... nonsense! The Pringles were getting on her nerves.

“Handsome John MacTabb is buried here. He was always suspected of being the reason why Annetta Kennedy drowned herself. The MacTabbs were all handsome but you could never believe a word they said. There used to be a stone here for his Uncle Samuel, who was reported drowned at sea fifty years ago. When he turned up alive the family took the stone down. The man they bought it from wouldn’t take it back so Mrs. Samuel used it for a baking-board. Talk about a marble slab for mixing on! That old tombstone was just fine, she said. The MacTabb children were always bringing cookies to school with raised letters and figures on them ... scraps of the epitaph. They gave them away real generous, but I never could bring myself to eat one. I’m peculiar that way. Mr. Harley Pringle is here. He had to wheel Peter MacTabb down Main Street once, in a wheelbarrow, wearing a bonnet, for an election bet. All Summerside turned

out to see it ... except the Pringles, of course. They nearly died of shame. Milly Pringle is here. I was very fond of Milly, even if she was a Pringle. She was so pretty and as light-footed as a fairy. Sometimes I think, my dear, on nights like this she must slip out of her grave and dance like she used to do. But I suppose a Christian shouldn't be harboring such thoughts. This is Herb Pringle's grave. He was one of the jolly Pringles. He always made you laugh. He laughed right out in church once ... when the mouse dropped out of the flowers on Meta Pringle's hat when she bowed in prayer. I didn't feel much like laughing. I didn't know where the mouse had gone. I pulled my skirts tight about my ankles and held them there till church was out, but it spoiled the sermon for me. Herb sat behind me and such a shout as he gave. People who couldn't see the mouse thought he'd gone crazy. It seemed to me that laugh of his couldn't die. If he was alive he'd stand up for you, Sarah or no Sarah. This, of course, is Captain Abraham Pringle's monument."

It dominated the whole graveyard. Four receding platforms of stone formed a square pedestal on which rose a huge pillar of marble topped with a ridiculous draped urn beneath which a fat cherub was blowing a horn.

"How ugly!" said Anne candidly.

"Oh, do you think so?" Miss Valentine seemed rather shocked. "It was thought very handsome when it was erected. That is supposed to be Gabriel blowing his trumpet. I think it gives quite a touch of elegance to the graveyard. It cost nine hundred dollars. Captain Abraham was a very fine old man. It is a great pity he is dead. If he was living they wouldn't be persecuting you the way they are. I don't wonder Sarah and Ellen are proud of him, though I think they carry it a bit too far."

At the graveyard gate Anne turned and looked back. A strange, peaceful hush lay over the windless land. Long fingers of moonlight were beginning to pierce the darkling firs, touching a gravestone here and there, and making strange shadows among them. But the graveyard wasn't a sad place after all. Really, the people in it seemed alive after Miss Valentine's tales.

“I’ve heard you write,” said Miss Valentine anxiously, as they went down the lane. “You won’t put the things I’ve told you in your stories, will you?”

“You may be sure I won’t,” promised Anne.

“Do you think it is really wrong ... or dangerous ... to speak ill of the dead?” whispered Miss Valentine a bit anxiously.

“I don’t suppose it’s exactly either,” said Anne. “Only ... rather unfair ... like hitting those who can’t defend themselves. But you didn’t say anything very dreadful of anybody, Miss Courtaloe.”

“I told you Nathan Pringle thought his wife was trying to poison him ...”

“But you give her the benefit of the doubt ...” and Miss Valentine went her way reassured.

Chapter 6

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“I wended my way to the graveyard this evening,” wrote Anne to Gilbert after she got home. “I think ‘wend your way’ is a lovely phrase and I work it in whenever I can. It sounds funny to say I enjoyed my stroll in the graveyard but I really did. Miss Courtaloe’s stories were so funny. Comedy and tragedy are so mixed up in life, Gilbert. The only thing that haunts me is that tale of the two who lived together fifty years and hated each other all that time. I can’t believe they really did. Somebody has said that ‘hate is only love that has missed its way.’ I feel sure that under the hatred they really loved each other ... just as I really loved you all those years I thought I hated you ... and I think death would show it to them. I’m glad I found out in life. And I have found out there are some decent Pringles ... dead ones.

“Last night when I went down late for a drink of water I found Aunt Kate buttermilking her face in the pantry. She asked me not to tell Chatty ... she would think it so silly. I promised I wouldn’t.

“Elizabeth still comes for the milk, though the Woman is pretty well over her bronchitis. I wonder they let her, especially since old Mrs. Campbell is a Pringle. Last Saturday night Elizabeth ... she was Betty that night I think ... ran in singing when she left me and I distinctly heard the Woman say to her at the porch door, ‘It’s too near the Sabbath for you to be singing that song.’ I am sure that Woman would prevent Elizabeth from singing on any day if she could!

“Elizabeth had on a new dress that night, a dark wine color ... they do dress her nicely ... and she said wistfully, ‘I thought I looked a little bit pretty when I put it on tonight, Miss Shirley, and I wished father could see me. Of course he will see me in Tomorrow ... but it sometimes seems so slow in coming. I wish we could hurry time a bit, Miss Shirley.’

“Now, dearest, I must work out some geometrical exercises. Geometry exercises have taken the place of what Rebecca calls my ‘literary efforts.’ The specter that haunts my daily path now is the dread of an exercise popping up in class that I can’t do. And what would the Pringles say then, oh, then ... oh, what would the Pringles say then!

“Meanwhile, as you love me and the cat tribe, pray for a poor brokenhearted, illused Thomas cat. A mouse ran over Rebecca Dew’s foot in the pantry the other day and she has fumed ever since. ‘That Cat does nothing but eat and sleep and let mice overrun everything. This is the last straw.’ So she chivies him from pillar to post, routs him off his favorite cushion and ... I know, for I caught her at it ... assists him none too gently with her foot when she lets him out.”

Chapter 7

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One Friday evening, at the end of a mild, sunny December day Anne went out to Lowvale to attend a turkey supper. Wilfred Bryce’s home was in Lowvale, where he lived with an uncle, and he had asked her shyly if she would go out with him after school, go to the turkey supper in the church

and spend Saturday at his home. Anne agreed, hoping that she might be able to influence the uncle to let Wilfred keep on going to High School. Wilfred was afraid that he would not be able to go back after New Year. He was a clever, ambitious boy and Anne felt a special interest in him.

It could not be said that she enjoyed her visit overmuch, except in the pleasure it gave Wilfred. His uncle and aunt were a rather odd and uncouth pair. Saturday morning was windy and dark, with showers of snow, and at first Anne wondered how she was going to put in the day. She felt tired and sleepy after the late hours of the turkey supper; Wilfred had to help thrash; and there was not even a book in sight. Then she thought of the battered old seaman's chest she had seen in the back of the hall upstairs and recalled Mrs. Stanton's request. Mrs. Stanton was writing a history of Prince County and had asked Anne if she knew of, or could find, any old diaries or documents that might be helpful.

"The Pringles, of course, have lots that I could use," she told Anne. "But I can't ask them. You know the Pringles and Stantons have never been friends."

"I can't ask them either, unfortunately," said Anne.

"Oh, I'm not expecting you to. All I want is for you to keep your eyes open when you are visiting round in other people's homes and if you find or hear of any old diaries or maps or anything like that, try to get the loan of them for me. You've no idea what interesting things I've found in old diaries ... little bits of real life that make the old pioneers live again. I want to get things like that for my book as well as statistics and genealogical tables."

Anne asked Mrs. Bryce if they had any such old records. Mrs. Bryce shook her head.

"Not as I knows on. In course ..." brightening up ... "there's old Uncle Andy's chist up there. There might be something in it. He used to sail with old Captain Abraham Pringle. I'll go out and ask Duncan if ye kin root in it."

Duncan sent word back that she could “root” in it all she liked and if she found any “dockymints” she could have them. He’d been meaning to burn the hull contents anyway and take the chest for a tool-box. Anne accordingly rooted, but all she found was an old yellowed diary or “log” which Andy Bryce seemed to have kept all through his years at sea. Anne beguiled the stormy forenoon away by reading it with interest and amusement. Andy was learned in sea lore and had gone on many voyages with Captain Abraham Pringle, whom he evidently admired immensely. The diary was full of ill-spelled, ungrammatical tributes to the Captain’s courage and resourcefulness, especially in one wild enterprise of beating round the Horn. But his admiration had not, it seemed, extended to Abraham’s brother Myrom, who was also a captain but of a different ship.

“Up to Myrom Pringle’s tonight. His wife made him mad and he up and throwed a glass of water in her face.”

“Myrom is home. His ship was burned and they took to the boats. Nearly starved. In the end they et up Jonas Selkirk, who had shot himself. They lived on him till the Mary G. picked them up. Myrom told me this himself. Seemed to think it a good joke.”

Anne shivered over this last entry, which seemed all the more horrifying for Andy’s unimpassioned statement of the grim facts. Then she fell into a reverie. There was nothing in the book that could be of any use to Mrs. Stanton, but wouldn’t Miss Sarah and Miss Ellen be interested in it since it contained so much about their adored old father? Suppose she sent it to them? Duncan Bryce had said she could do as she liked with it.

No, she wouldn’t. Why should she try to please them or cater to their absurd pride, which was great enough now without any more food? They had set themselves to drive her out of the school and they were succeeding. They and their clan had beaten her.

Wilfred took her back to Windy Poplars that evening, both of them feeling happy. Anne had talked Duncan Bryce into letting Wilfred finish out his year in High School.

“Then I’ll manage Queen’s for a year and after that teach and educate myself,” said Wilfred. “How can I ever repay you, Miss Shirley? Uncle wouldn’t have listened to any one else, but he likes you. He said to me out in the barn, ‘Redhaired women could always do what they liked with me.’ But I don’t think it was your hair, Miss Shirley, although it is so beautiful. It was just ... you.”

At two o’clock that night Anne woke up and decided that she would send Andy Bryce’s diary to Maplehurst. After all, she had a bit of liking for the old ladies. And they had so little to make life warm ... only their pride in their father. At three she woke again and decided she wouldn’t. Miss Sarah pretending to be deaf, indeed! At four she was in the swithers again. Finally she determined she would send it to them. She wouldn’t be petty. Anne had a horror of being petty ... like the Pyes.

Having settled this, Anne went to sleep for keeps, thinking how lovely it was to wake up in the night and hear the first snowstorm of the winter around your tower and then snuggle down in your blankets and drift into dreamland again.

Monday morning she wrapped up the old diary carefully and sent it to Miss Sarah with a little note.

“DEAR MISS PRINGLE:

“I wonder if you would be interested in this old diary. Mr. Bryce gave it to me for Mrs. Stanton, who is writing a history of the county, but I don’t think it would be of any use to her and I thought you might like to have it.

“Yours sincerely,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.”

“That’s a horribly stiff note,” thought Anne, “but I can’t write naturally to them. And I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if they sent it haughtily back to me.”

In the fine blue of the early winter evening Rebecca Dew got the shock of her life. The Maplehurst carriage drove along Spook's Lane, over the powdery snow, and stopped at the front gate. Miss Ellen got out of it and then ... to every one's amazement ... Miss Sarah, who had not left Maplehurst for ten years.

"They're coming to the front door," gasped Rebecca Dew, panic-stricken.

"Where else would a Pringle come to?" asked Aunt Kate.

"Of course ... of course ... but it sticks," said Rebecca tragically. "It does stick ... you know it does. And it hasn't been opened since we housecleaned last spring. This is the last straw."

The front door did stick ... but Rebecca Dew wrenched it open with desperate violence and showed the Maplehurst ladies into the parlor.

"Thank heaven, we've had a fire in it today," she thought, "and all I hope is That Cat hasn't haired up the sofa. If Sarah Pringle got cat hairs on her dress in our parlor ..."

Rebecca Dew dared not imagine the consequences. She called Anne from the tower room, Miss Sarah having asked if Miss Shirley were in, and then betook herself to the kitchen, half mad with curiosity as to what on earth was bringing the old Pringle girls to see Miss Shirley.

"If there's any more persecution in the wind ..." said Rebecca Dew darkly.

Anne herself descended with considerable trepidation. Had they come to return the diary with icy scorn?

It was little, wrinkled, inflexible Miss Sarah who rose and spoke without preamble when Anne entered the room.

"We have come to capitulate," she said bitterly. "We can do nothing else ... of course you knew that when you found that scandalous entry about poor Uncle Myrom. It wasn't true ... it couldn't be true. Uncle Myrom was just taking a rise out of Andy Bryce ... Andy was so credulous. But

everybody outside of our family will be glad to believe it. You knew it would make us all a laughing stock ... and worse. Oh, you are very clever. We admit that. Jen will apologize and behave herself in future ... I, Sarah Pringle, assure you of that. If you will only promise not to tell Mrs. Stanton ... not to tell any one ... we will do anything ... anything."

Miss Sarah wrung her fine lace handkerchief in her little blue-veined hands. She was literally trembling.

Anne stared in amazement ... and horror. The poor old darlings! They thought she had been threatening them!

"Oh, you've misunderstood me dreadfully," she exclaimed, taking Miss Sarah's poor, piteous hands. "I ... I never dreamed you would think I was trying to ... oh, it was just because I thought you would like to have all those interesting details about your splendid father. I never dreamed of showing or telling that other little item to any one. I didn't think it was of the least importance. And I never will."

There was a moment's silence. Then Miss Sarah freed her hands gently, put her handkerchief to her eyes and sat down, with a faint blush on her fine wrinkled face.

"We ... we have misunderstood you, my dear. And we've ... we've been abominable to you. Will you forgive us?"

Half an hour later ... a half hour which nearly was the death of Rebecca Dew ... the Misses Pringle went away. It had been a half hour of friendly chat and discussion about the non-combustible items of Andy's diary. At the front door Miss Sarah ... who had not had the least trouble with her hearing during the interview ... turned back for a moment and took a bit of paper, covered with very fine, sharp writing, from her reticule.

"I had almost forgotten ... we promised Mrs. MacLean our recipe for pound cake some time ago. Perhaps you won't mind handing it to her? And tell her the sweating process is very important ... quite indispensable, indeed. Ellen, your bonnet is slightly over one ear. You had better adjust it before we leave. We ... we were somewhat agitated while dressing."

Anne told the widows and Rebecca Dew that she had given Andy Bryce's old diary to the ladies of Maplehurst and that they had come to thank her for it. With this explanation they had to be contented, although Rebecca Dew always felt that there was more behind it than that ... much more. Gratitude for an old faded, tobacco-stained diary would never have brought Sarah Pringle to the front door of Windy Poplars. Miss Shirley was deep ... very deep!

"I'm going to open that front door once a day after this," vowed Rebecca. "Just to keep it in practice. I all but went over flat when it did give way. Well, we've got the recipe for the pound cake anyway. Thirty-six eggs! If you'd dispose of That Cat and let me keep hens we might be able to afford it once a year."

Whereupon Rebecca Dew marched to the kitchen and got square with fate by giving That Cat milk when she knew he wanted liver.

The Shirley-Pringle feud was over. Nobody outside of the Pringles ever knew why, but Summerside people understood that Miss Shirley, single-handed, had, in some mysterious way, routed the whole clan, who ate out of her hand from then on. Jen came back to school the next day and apologized meekly to Anne before the whole room. She was a model pupil thereafter and every Pringle student followed her lead. As for the adult Pringles, their antagonism vanished like mist before the sun. There were no more complaints regarding "dis cip line" or home work. No more of the fine, subtle snubs characteristic of the ilk. They fairly fell over one another trying to be nice to Anne. No dance or skating party was complete without her. For, although the fatal diary had been committed to the flames by Miss Sarah herself, memory was memory and Miss Shirley had a tale to tell if she chose to tell it. It would never do to have that nosey Mrs. Stanton know that Captain Myrom Pringle had been a cannibal!

Chapter 8

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert)

“I am in my tower and Rebecca Dew is caroling Could I but climb? in the kitchen. Which reminds me that the minister’s wife has asked me to sing in the choir! Of course the Pringles have told her to do it. I may do it on the Sundays I don’t spend at Green Gables. The Pringles have held out the right hand of fellowship with a vengeance ... accepted me lock, stock and barrel. What a clan!

“I’ve been to three Pringle parties. I set nothing down in malice but I think all the Pringle girls are imitating my style of hairdressing. Well, ‘imitation is the sincerest flattery.’ And, Gilbert, I’m really liking them ... as I always knew I would if they would give me a chance. I’m even beginning to suspect that sooner or later I’ll find myself liking Jen. She can be charming when she wants to be and it is very evident she wants to be.

“Last night I bearded the lion in his den ... in other words, I went boldly up the front steps of The Evergreens to the square porch with the four whitewashed iron urns in its corners, and rang the bell. When Miss Monkman came to the door I asked her if she would lend little Elizabeth to me for a walk. I expected a refusal, but after the Woman had gone in and conferred with Mrs. Campbell, she came back and said dourly that Elizabeth could go but, please, I wasn’t to keep her out late. I wonder if even Mrs. Campbell has got her orders from Miss Sarah.

“Elizabeth came dancing down the dark stairway, looking like a pixy in a red coat and little green cap, and almost speechless for joy.

“‘I feel all squirmy and excited, Miss Shirley,’ she whispered as soon as we got away. ‘I’m Betty ... I’m always Betty when I feel like that.’

“We went as far down the Road that Leads to the End of the World as we dared and then back. Tonight the harbor, lying dark under a crimson sunset, seemed full of implications of ‘fairylands forlorn’ and mysterious isles in uncharted seas. I thrilled to it and so did the mite I held by the hand.

“‘If we ran hard, Miss Shirley, could we get into the sunset?’ she wanted to know. I remembered Paul and his fancies about the ‘sunset land.’

“‘We must wait for Tomorrow before we can do that,’ I said. ‘Look, Elizabeth, at that golden island of cloud just over the harbor mouth. Let’s pretend that’s your island of Happiness.’

“‘There is an island down there somewhere,’ said Elizabeth dreamily. ‘Its name is Flying Cloud. Isn’t that a lovely name ... a name just out of Tomorrow? I can see it from the garret windows. It belongs to a gentleman from Boston and he has a summer home there. But I pretend it’s mine.’

“At the door I stooped and kissed Elizabeth’s cheek before she went in. I shall never forget her eyes. Gilbert, that child is just starved for love.

“Tonight, when she came over for her milk, I saw that she had been crying.

“‘They ... they made me wash your kiss off, Miss Shirley,’ she sobbed. ‘I didn’t want ever to wash my face again. I vowed I wouldn’t. Because, you see, I didn’t want to wash your kiss off. I got away to school this morning without doing it, but tonight the Woman just took me and scrubbed it off.’

“I kept a straight face.

“‘You couldn’t go through life without washing your face occasionally, darling. But never mind about the kiss. I’ll kiss you every night when you come for the milk and then it won’t matter if it is washed off the next morning.’

“‘You are the only person who loves me in the world,’ said Elizabeth. ‘When you talk to me I smell violets.’

“Was anybody ever paid a prettier compliment? But I couldn’t quite let the first sentence pass.

“‘Your grandmother loves you, Elizabeth.’

“‘She doesn’t ... she hates me.’

“‘You’re just a wee bit foolish, darling. Your grandmother and Miss Monkman are both old people and old people are easily disturbed and worried. Of course you annoy them sometimes. And ... of course ... when they were young, children were brought up much more strictly than they are now. They cling to the old way.’

“But I felt I was not convincing Elizabeth. After all, they don’t love her and she knows it. She looked carefully back at the house to see if the door was shut. Then she said deliberately:

“‘Grandmother and the Woman are just two old tyrants and when Tomorrow comes I’m going to escape them forever.’

“I think she expected I’d die of horror... . I really suspect Elizabeth said it just to make a sensation. I merely laughed and kissed her. I hope Martha Monkman saw it from the kitchen window.

“I can see over Summerside from the left window in the tower. Just now it is a huddle of friendly white roofs ... friendly at last since the Pringles are my friends. Here and there a light is gleaming in gable and dormer. Here and there is a suggestion of gray-ghost smoke. Thick stars are low over it all. It is ‘a dreaming town.’ Isn’t that a lovely phrase? You remember ... ‘Galahad through dreaming towns did go’?

“I feel so happy, Gilbert. I won’t have to go home to Green Gables at Christmas, defeated and discredited. Life is good ... good!

“So is Miss Sarah’s pound cake. Rebecca Dew made one and ‘sweated’ it according to directions ... which simply means that she wrapped it in several thicknesses of brown paper and several more towels and left it for three days. I can recommend it.

“(Are there, or are there not, two ‘c’s’ in recommend’? In spite of the fact that I am a B.A. I can never be certain. Fancy if the Pringles had discovered that before I found Andy’s diary!)”

Chapter 9

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Trix Taylor was curled up in the tower one night in February, while little flurries of snow hissed against the windows and that absurdly tiny stove purred like a red-hot black cat. Trix was pouring out her woes to Anne. Anne was beginning to find herself the recipient of confidences on all sides. She was known to be engaged, so that none of the Summerside girls feared her as a possible rival, and there was something about her that made you feel it was safe to tell her secrets.

Trix had come up to ask Anne to dinner the next evening. She was a jolly, plump little creature, with twinkling brown eyes and rosy cheeks, and did not look as if life weighed too heavily on her twenty years. But it appeared that she had troubles of her own.

“Dr. Lennox Carter is coming to dinner tomorrow night. That is why we want you especially. He is the new Head of the Modern Languages Department at Redmond and dreadfully clever, so we want somebody with brains to talk to him. You know I haven’t any to boast of, nor Pringle either. As for Esme ... well, you know, Anne, Esme is the sweetest thing and she’s really clever, but she’s so shy and timid she can’t even make use of what brains she has when Dr. Carter is around. She’s so terribly in love with him. It’s pitiful. I’m very fond of Johnny ... but before I’d dissolve into such a liquid state for him!”

“Are Esme and Dr. Carter engaged?”

“Not yet” ... significantly. “But, oh, Anne, she’s hoping he means to ask her this time. Would he come over to the Island to visit his cousin right in the middle of the term if he didn’t intend to? I hope he will for Esme’s sake, because she’ll just die if he doesn’t. But between you and me and the

bedpost I'm not terribly struck on him for a brother-in-law. He's awfully fastidious, Esme says, and she's desperately afraid he won't approve of us. If he doesn't, she thinks he'll never ask her to marry him. So you can't imagine how she's hoping everything will go well at the dinner tomorrow night. I don't see why it shouldn't ... Mamma is the most wonderful cook ... and we have a good maid and I've bribed Pringle with half my week's allowance to behave himself. Of course he doesn't like Dr. Carter either ... says he's got swelled head ... but he's fond of Esme. If only Papa won't have a sulky fit on!"

"Have you any reason to fear it?" asked Anne. Every one in Summerside knew about Cyrus Taylor's sulky fits.

"You never can tell when he'll take one," said Trix dolefully. "He was frightfully upset tonight because he couldn't find his new flannel nightshirt. Esme had put it in the wrong drawer. He may be over it by tomorrow night or he may not. If he's not, he'll disgrace us all and Dr. Carter will conclude he can't marry into such a family. At least, that is what Esme says and I'm afraid she may be right. I think, Anne, that Lennox Carter is very fond of Esme ... thinks she would make a 'very suitable wife' for him ... but doesn't want to do anything rash or throw his wonderful self away. I've heard that he told his cousin a man couldn't be too careful what kind of family he married into. He's just at the point where he might be turned either way by a trifle. And, if it comes to that, one of Papa's sulky fits isn't any trifle."

"Doesn't he like Dr. Carter?"

"Oh, he does. He thinks it would be a wonderful match for Esme. But when Father has one of his spells on, nothing has any influence over him while it lasts. That's the Pringle for you, Anne. Grandmother Taylor was a Pringle, you know. You just can't imagine what we've gone through as a family. He never goes into rages, you know ... like Uncle George. Uncle George's family don't mind his rages. When he goes into a temper he blows off ... you can hear him roaring three blocks away ... and then he's like a lamb and brings every one a new dress for a peace-offering. But Father just sulks and glowers, and won't say a word to anybody at meal times. Esme says that, after all, that's better than cousin Richard Taylor,

who is always saying sarcastic things at the table and insulting his wife; but it seems to me nothing could be worse than those awful silences of Papa's. They rattle us and we're terrified to open our mouths. It wouldn't be so bad, of course, if it was only when we are alone. But it's just as apt to be where we have company. Esme and I are simply tired of trying to explain away Papa's insulting silences. She's just sick with fear that he won't have got over the nightshirt before tomorrow night ... and what will Lennox think? And she wants you to wear your blue dress. Her new dress is blue, because Lennox likes blue. But Papa hates it. Yours may reconcile him to hers."

"Wouldn't it be better for her to wear something else?"

"She hasn't anything else fit to wear at a company dinner except the green poplin Father gave her at Christmas. It's a lovely dress in itself ... Father likes us to have pretty dresses ... but you can't think of anything as awful as Esme in green. Pringle says it makes her look as if she was in the last stages of consumption. And Lennox Carter's cousin told Esme he would never marry a delicate person. I'm more than glad Johnny isn't so 'fastidious.'"

"Have you told your father about your engagement to Johnny yet?" asked Anne, who knew all about Trix's love affair.

"No," poor Trix groaned. "I can't summon up the courage, Anne. I know he'll make a frightful scene. Papa has always been so down on Johnny because he's poor. Papa forgets that he was poorer than Johnny when he started out in the hardware business. Of course he'll have to be told soon ... but I want to wait until Esme's affair is settled. I know Papa won't speak to any of us for weeks after I tell him, and Mamma will worry so ... she can't bear Father's sulky fits. We're all such cowards before Papa. Of course, Mamma and Esme are naturally timid with every one, but Pringle and I have lots of ginger. It's only Papa who can cow us. Sometimes I think if we had any one to back us up ... but we haven't, and we just feel paralyzed. You can't imagine, Anne darling, what a company dinner is like at our place when Papa is sulking. But if he only behaves tomorrow night I'll forgive him for everything. He can be very agreeable when he wants to be ... Papa is really just like Longfellow's little girl ... 'when he's good

he's very, very good and when he's bad he's horrid.' I've seen him the life of the party."

"He was very nice the night I had dinner with you last month."

"Oh, he likes you, as I've said. That's one of the reasons why we want you so much. It may have a good influence on him. We're not neglecting anything that may please him. But when he has a really bad fit of sulks on he seems to hate everything and everybody. Anyhow, we've got a bang-up dinner planned, with an elegant orange-custard dessert. Mamma wanted pie because she says every man in the world but Papa likes pie for dessert better than anything else ... even Professors of Modern Languages. But Papa doesn't, so it would never do to take a chance on it tomorrow night, when so much depends on it. Orange custard is Papa's favorite dessert. As for poor Johnny and me, I suppose I'll just have to elope with him some day and Papa will never forgive me.

"I believe if you'd just get up enough spunk to tell him and endure his resulting sulks you'd find he'd come round to it beautifully and you'd be saved months of anguish."

"You don't know Papa," said Trix darkly.

"Perhaps I know him better than you do. You've lost your perspective."

"Lost my ... what? Anne darling, remember I'm not a B.A. I only went through the High. I'd have loved to go to college, but Papa doesn't believe in the Higher Education of women."

"I only meant that you're too close to him to understand him. A stranger could very well see him more clearly ... understand him better."

"I understand that nothing can induce Papa to speak if he has made up his mind not to ... nothing. He prides himself on that."

"Then why don't the rest of you just go on and talk as if nothing was the matter?"

“We can’t ... I’ve told you he paralyzes us. You’ll find it out for yourself tomorrow night if he hasn’t got over the nightshirt. I don’t know how he does it but he does. I don’t believe we’d mind so much how cranky he was if he would only talk. It’s the silence that shatters us. I’ll never forgive Papa if he acts up tomorrow night when so much is at stake.”

“Let’s hope for the best, dear.”

“I’m trying to. And I know it will help to have you there. Mamma thought we ought to have Katherine Brooke too, but I knew it wouldn’t have a good effect on Papa. He hates her. I don’t blame him for that, I must say. I haven’t any use for her myself. I don’t see how you can be as nice to her as you are.”

“I’m sorry for her, Trix.”

“Sorry for her! But it’s all her own fault she isn’t liked. Oh, well, it takes all kinds of people to make a world ... but Summerside could spare Katherine Brooke ... glum old cat!”

“She’s an excellent teacher, Trix... .”

“Oh, do I know it? I was in her class. She did hammer things into my head ... and flayed the flesh off my bones with sarcasm as well. And the way she dresses! Papa can’t bear to see a woman badly dressed. He says he has no use for dowds and he’s sure God hasn’t either. Mamma would be horrified if she knew I told you that, Anne. She excused it in Papa because he is a man. If that was all we had to excuse in him! And poor Johnny hardly daring to come to the house now because Papa is so rude to him. I slip out on fine nights and we walk round and round the square and get half frozen.”

Anne drew what was something like a breath of relief when Trix had gone, and slipped down to coax a snack out of Rebecca Dew.

“Going to the Taylors for dinner, are you? Well, I hope old Cyrus will be decent. If his family weren’t all so afraid of him in his sulky fits he wouldn’t indulge in them so often, of that I feel certain. I tell you, Miss

Shirley, he enjoys his sulks. And now I suppose I must warm That Cat's milk. Pampered animal!"

Chapter 1 0

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When Anne arrived at the Cyrus Taylor house the next evening she felt the chill in the atmosphere as soon as she entered the door. A trim maid showed her up to the guest room but as Anne went up the stairs she caught sight of Mrs. Cyrus Taylor scuttling from the dining-room to the kitchen and Mrs. Cyrus was wiping tears away from her pale, careworn, but still rather sweet face. It was all too clear that Cyrus had not yet "got over" the nightshirt.

This was confirmed by a distressed Trix creeping into the room and whispering nervously,

"Oh, Anne, he's in a dreadful humor. He seemed pretty amiable this morning and our hopes rose. But Hugh Pringle beat him at a game of checkers this afternoon and Papa can't bear to lose a checker game. And it had to happen today, of course. He found Esme 'admiring herself in the mirror,' as he put it, and just walked her out of her room and locked the door. The poor darling was only wondering if he looked nice enough to please Lennox Carter, Ph.D. She hadn't even a chance to put her pearl string on. And look at me. I didn't dare curl my hair ... Papa doesn't like curls that are not natural ... and I look like a fright. Not that it matters about me ... only it just shows you. Papa threw out the flowers Mamma put on the dining-room table and she feels it so ... she took such trouble with them ... and he wouldn't let her put on her garnet earrings. He hasn't had such a bad spell since he came home from the west last spring and found Mamma had put red curtains in the sitting-room, when he preferred mulberry. Oh, Anne, do talk as hard as you can at dinner, if he won't. If you don't, it will be too dreadful."

“I’ll do my best,” promised Anne, who certainly had never found herself at a loss for something to say. But then never had she found herself in such a situation as presently confronted her.

They were all gathered around the table ... a very pretty and well appointed table in spite of the missing flowers. Timid Mrs. Cyrus, in a gray silk dress, had a face that was grayer than her dress. Esme, the beauty of the family ... a very pale beauty, pale gold hair, pale pink lips, pale forget-me-not eyes ... was so much paler than usual that she looked as if she were going to faint. Pringle, ordinarily a fat, cheerful urchin of fourteen, with round eyes and glasses and hair so fair it looked almost white, looked like a tied dog, and Trix had the air of a terrified schoolgirl.

Dr. Carter, who was undeniably handsome and distinguished-looking, with crisp dark hair, brilliant dark eyes and silver-rimmed glasses, but whom Anne, in the days of his Assistant Professorship at Redmond, had thought a rather pompous young bore, looked ill at ease. Evidently he felt that something was wrong somewhere ... a reasonable conclusion when your host simply stalks to the head of the table and drops into his chair without a word to you or anybody.

Cyrus would not say grace. Mrs. Cyrus, blushing beet-red, murmured almost inaudibly, “For what we are about to receive the Lord make us truly thankful.” The meal started badly by nervous Esme dropping her fork on the floor. Everybody except Cyrus jumped, because their nerves were likewise keyed up to the highest pitch. Cyrus glared at Esme out of his bulging blue eyes in a kind of enraged stillness. Then he glared at everybody and froze them into dumbness. He glared at poor Mrs. Cyrus, when she took a helping of horseradish sauce, with a glare that reminded her of her weak stomach. She couldn’t eat any of it after that ... and she was so fond of it. She didn’t believe it would hurt her. But for that matter she couldn’t eat anything, nor could Esme. They only pretended. The meal proceeded in a ghastly silence, broken by spasmodic speeches about the weather from Trix and Anne. Trix implored Anne with her eyes to talk, but Anne found herself for once in her life with absolutely nothing to say. She felt desperately that she must talk, but only the most idiotic things came into her head ... things it would be impossible to utter aloud. Was

everyone bewitched? It was curious, the effect one sulky, stubborn man had on you. Anne couldn't have believed it possible. And there was no doubt that he was really quite happy in the knowledge that he had made everybody at his table horribly uncomfortable. What on earth was going on in his mind? Would he jump if any one stuck a pin in him? Anne wanted to slap him ... rap his knuckles ... stand him in a corner ... treat him like the spoiled child he really was, in spite of his spiky gray hair and truculent mustache.

Above all she wanted to make him speak. She felt instinctively that nothing in the world would punish him so much as to be tricked into speaking when he was determined not to.

Suppose she got up and deliberately smashed that huge, hideous, old-fashioned vase on the table in the corner ... an ornate thing covered with wreaths of roses and leaves which it was most difficult to dust but which must be kept immaculately clean. Anne knew that the whole family hated it, but Cyrus Taylor would not hear of having it banished to the attic, because it had been his mother's. Anne thought she would do it fearlessly if she really believed that it would make Cyrus explode into vocal anger.

Why didn't Lennox Carter talk? If he would, she, Anne, could talk, too, and perhaps Trix and Pringle would escape from the spell that bound them and some kind of conversation would be possible. But he simply sat there and ate. Perhaps he thought it was really the best thing to do ... perhaps he was afraid of saying something that would still further enrage the evidently already enraged parent of his lady.

"Will you please start the pickles, Miss Shirley?" said Mrs. Taylor faintly.

Something wicked stirred in Anne. She started the pickles ... and something else. Without letting herself stop to think she bent forward, her great, gray-green eyes glimmering limpidly, and said gently,

"Perhaps you would be surprised to hear, Dr. Carter, that Mr. Taylor went deaf very suddenly last week?"

Anne sat back, having thrown her bomb. She could not tell precisely what she expected or hoped. If Dr. Carter got the impression that his host was deaf instead of in a towering rage of silence, it might loosen his tongue. She had not told a falsehood ... she had not said Cyrus Taylor was deaf. As for Cyrus Taylor, if she had hoped to make him speak she had failed. He merely glared at her, still in silence.

But Anne's remark had an effect on Trix and Pringle that she had never dreamed of. Trix was in a silent rage herself. She had, the moment before Anne had hurled her rhetorical question, seen Esme furtively wipe away a tear that had escaped from one of her despairing blue eyes. Everything was hopeless ... Lennox Carter would never ask Esme to marry him now ... it didn't matter any more what any one said or did. Trix was suddenly possessed with a burning desire to get square with her brutal father. Anne's speech gave her a weird inspiration, and Pringle, a volcano of suppressed impishness, blinked his white eyelashes for a dazed moment and then promptly followed her lead. Never, as long as they might live, would Anne, Esme or Mrs. Cyrus forget the dreadful quarter of an hour that followed.

"Such an affliction for poor papa," said Trix, addressing Dr. Carter across the table. "And him only sixty-eight."

Two little white dents appeared at the corners of Cyrus Taylor's nostrils when he heard his age advanced six years. But he remained silent.

"It's such a treat to have a decent meal," said Pringle, clearly and distinctly. "What would you think, Dr. Carter, of a man who makes his family live on fruit and eggs ... nothing but fruit and eggs ... just for a fad?"

"Does your father ... ?" began Dr. Carter bewilderedly.

"What would you think of a husband who bit his wife when she put up curtains he didn't like ... deliberately bit her?" demanded Trix.

"Till the blood came," added Pringle solemnly.

“Do you mean to say your father ... ?”

“What would you think of a man who would cut up a silk dress of his wife’s just because the way it was made didn’t suit him?” said Trix.

“What would you think,” said Pringle, “of a man who refuses to let his wife have a dog?”

“When she would so love to have one,” sighed Trix.

“What would you think of a man,” continued Pringle, who was beginning to enjoy himself hugely, “who would give his wife a pair of goloshes for a Christmas present ... nothing but a pair of goloshes?”

“Goloshes don’t exactly warm the heart,” admitted Dr. Carter. His eyes met Anne’s and he smiled. Anne reflected that she had never seen him smile before. It changed his face wonderfully for the better. What was Trix saying? Who would have thought she could be such a demon?

“Have you ever wondered, Dr. Carter, how awful it must be to live with a man who thinks nothing ... nothing — of picking up the roast, if it isn’t perfectly done, and hurling it at the maid?”

Dr. Carter glanced apprehensively at Cyrus Taylor, as if he feared Cyrus might throw the skeletons of the chickens at somebody. Then he seemed to remember comfortingly that his host was deaf.

“What would you think of a man who believed the earth was flat?” asked Pringle.

Anne thought Cyrus would speak then. A tremor seemed to pass over his rubicund face, but no words came. Still, she was sure his mustaches were a little less defiant.

“What would you think of a man who let his aunt ... his only aunt ... go to the poorhouse?” asked Trix.

“And pastured his cow in the graveyard?” said Pringle. “Summerside hasn’t got over that sight yet.”

“What would you think of a man who would write down in his diary every day what he had for dinner?” asked Trix.

“The great Pepys did that,” said Dr. Carter with another smile. His voice sounded as if he would like to laugh. Perhaps after all he was not pompous, thought Anne ... only young and shy and overserious. But she was feeling positively aghast. She had never meant things to go as far as this. She was finding out that it is much easier to start things than finish them. Trix and Pringle were being diabolically clever. They had not said that their father did a single one of these things. Anne could fancy Pringle saying, his round eyes rounder still with pretended innocence, “I just asked those questions of Dr. Carter for information.”

“What would you think,” kept on Trix, “of a man who opens and reads his wife’s letters?”

“What would you think of a man who would go to a funeral ... his father’s funeral ... in overalls?” asked Pringle.

What would they think of next? Mrs. Cyrus was crying openly and Esme was quite calm with despair. Nothing mattered any more. She turned and looked squarely at Dr. Carter, whom she had lost forever. For once in her life she was stung into saying a really clever thing.

“What,” she asked quietly, “would you think of a man who spent a whole day hunting for the kittens of a poor cat who had been shot, because he couldn’t bear to think of them starving to death?”

A strange silence descended on the room. Trix and Pringle looked suddenly ashamed of themselves. And then Mrs. Cyrus piped up, feeling it her wifely duty to back up Esme’s unexpected defense of her father.

“And he can crochet so beautifully ... he made the loveliest centerpiece for the parlor table last winter when he was laid up with lumbago.”

Every one has some limit of endurance and Cyrus Taylor had reached his. He gave his chair such a furious backward push that it shot instantly across the polished floor and struck the table on which the vase stood. The table went over and the vase broke in the traditional thousand pieces. Cyrus, his bushy white eyebrows fairly bristling with wrath, stood up and exploded at last.

“I don’t crochet, woman! Is one contemptible doily going to blast a man’s reputation forever? I was so bad with that blamed lumbago I didn’t know what I was doing. And I’m deaf, am I, Miss Shirley? I’m deaf?”

“She didn’t say you were, Papa,” cried Trix, who was never afraid of her father when his temper was vocal.

“Oh, no, she didn’t say it. None of you said anything! You didn’t say I was sixty-eight when I’m only sixty-two, did you? You didn’t say I wouldn’t let your mother have a dog! Good Lord, woman, you can have forty thousand dogs if you want to and you know it! When did I ever deny you anything you wanted ... when?”

“Never, Poppa, never,” sobbed Mrs. Cyrus brokenly. “And I never wanted a dog. I never even thought of wanting a dog, Poppa.”

“When did I open your letters? When have I ever kept a diary? A diary! When did I ever wear overalls to anybody’s funeral? When did I pasture a cow in the graveyard? What aunt of mine is in the poorhouse? Did I ever throw a roast at anybody? Did I ever make you live on fruit and eggs?”

“Never, Poppa, never,” wept Mrs. Cyrus. “You’ve always been a good provider ... the best.”

“Didn’t you tell me you wanted goloshes last Christmas?”

“Yes, oh, yes; of course I did, Poppa. And my feet have been so nice and warm all winter.”

“Well, then!” Cyrus threw a triumphant glance around the room. His eyes encountered Anne’s. Suddenly the unexpected happened. Cyrus chuckled. His cheeks actually dimpled. Those dimples worked a miracle with his whole expression. He brought his chair back to the table and sat down.

“I’ve got a very bad habit of sulking, Dr. Carter. Every one has some bad habit ... that’s mine. The only one. Come, come, Momma, stop crying. I admit I deserved all I got except that crack of yours about crocheting. Esme, my girl, I won’t forget that you were the only one who stood up for me. Tell Maggie to come and clear up that mess ... I know you’re all glad the darn thing is smashed ... and bring on the pudding.”

Anne could never have believed that an evening which began so terribly could end up so pleasantly. Nobody could have been more genial or better company than Cyrus: and there was evidently no aftermath of reckoning, for when Trix came down a few evenings later it was to tell Anne that she had at last scraped up enough courage to tell her father about Johnny.

“Was he very dreadful, Trix?”

“He ... he wasn’t dreadful at all,” admitted Trix sheepishly. “He just snorted and said it was about time Johnny came to the point after hanging around for two years and keeping every one else away. I think he felt he couldn’t go into another spell of sulks so soon after the last one. And you know, Anne, between sulks Papa really is an old duck.”

“I think he is a great deal better father to you than you deserve,” said Anne, quite in Rebecca Dew’s manner. “You were simply outrageous at that dinner, Trix.”

“Well, you know you started it,” said Trix. “And good old Pringle helped a bit. All’s well that ends well ... and thank goodness I’ll never have to dust that vase again.”

Chapter 1 1

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert two weeks later.)

“Esme Taylor’s engagement to Dr. Lennox Carter is announced. By all I can gather from various bits of local gossip I think he decided that fatal Friday night that he wanted to protect her, and save her from her father and her family ... and perhaps from her friends! Her plight evidently appealed to his sense of chivalry. Trix persists in thinking I was the means of bringing it about and perhaps I did take a hand, but I don’t think I’ll ever try an experiment like that again. It’s too much like picking up a lightning flash by the tail.

“I really don’t know what got into me, Gilbert. It must have been a hangover from my old detestation of anything savoring of Pringleism. It does seem old now. I’ve almost forgotten it. But other folks are still wondering. I hear Miss Valentine Courtaloe says she isn’t at all surprised I have won the Pringles over, because I have ‘such a way with me’; and the minister’s wife thinks it is an answer to the prayer she put up. Well, who knows but that it was?

“Jen Pringle and I walked part of the way home from school yesterday and talked of ‘ships and shoes and sealing wax’ ... of almost everything but geometry. We avoid that subject. Jen knows I don’t know too much about geometry, but my own wee bit of knowledge about Captain Myrom balances that. I lent Jen my Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. I hate to lend a book I love ... it never seems quite the same when it comes back to me ... but I love Foxe’s Martyrs only because dear Mrs. Allan gave it to me for a Sunday-school prize years ago. I don’t like reading about martyrs because

they always make me feel petty and ashamed ... ashamed to admit I hate to get out of bed on frosty mornings and shrink from a visit to the dentist!

“Well, I’m glad Esme and Trix are both happy. Since my own little romance is in flower I am all the more interested in other people’s. A nice interest, you know. Not curious or malicious but just glad there’s such a lot of happiness spread about.

“It’s still February and ‘on the convent roof the snows are sparkling to the moon’ ... only it isn’t a convent ... just the roof of Mr. Hamilton’s barn. But I’m beginning to think, ‘Only a few more weeks till spring ... and a few more weeks then till summer ... and holidays ... and Green Gables ... and golden sunlight on Avonlea meadows ... and a gulf that will be silver at dawn and sapphire at noon and crimson at sunset ... and you.’

“Little Elizabeth and I have no end of plans for spring. We are such good friends. I take her milk every evening and once in so long she is allowed to go for a walk with me. We have discovered that our birthdays are on the same day and Elizabeth flushed ‘divinest rosy red’ with the excitement of it. She is so sweet when she blushes. Ordinarily she is far too pale and doesn’t get any pinker because of the new milk. Only when we come back from our twilight trysts with evening winds does she have a lovely rose color in her little cheeks. Once she asked me gravely, ‘Will I have a lovely creamy skin like yours when I grow up, Miss Shirley, if I put buttermilk on my face every night?’ Buttermilk seems to be the preferred cosmetic in Spook’s Lane. I have discovered that Rebecca Dew uses it. She has bound me over to keep it secret from the widows because they would think it too frivolous for her age. The number of secrets I have to keep at Windy Poplars is aging me before my time. I wonder if I buttermilked my nose if it would banish those seven freckles. By the way, did it ever occur to you, sir, that I had a ‘lovely creamy skin’? If it did, you never told me so. And have you realized to the full that I am ‘comparatively beautiful’? Because I have discovered that I am.

“‘What is it like to be beautiful, Miss Shirley?’ asked Rebecca Dew gravely the other day ... when I was wearing my new biscuit-colored voile.

“‘I’ve often wondered,’ said I.

“‘But you are beautiful,’ said Rebecca Dew.

“‘I never thought you could be sarcastic, Rebecca,’ I said reproachfully.

“‘I did not mean to be sarcastic, Miss Shirley. You are beautiful ... comparatively.’

“‘Oh! Comparatively!’ said I.

“‘Look in the sideboard glass,’ said Rebecca Dew, pointing. ‘Compared to me, you are.’

“Well, I was!

“But I hadn’t finished with Elizabeth. One stormy evening when the wind was howling along Spook’s Lane, we couldn’t go for a walk, so we came up to my room and drew a map of fairyland. Elizabeth sat on my blue doughnut cushion to make her higher, and looked like a serious little gnome as she bent over the map. (By the way, no phonetic spelling for me! ‘Gnome’ is far eerier and fairy-er than ‘nome.’)

“Our map isn’t completed yet ... every day we think of something more to go in it. Last night we located the house of the Witch of the Snow and drew a triple hill, covered completely with wild cherry trees in bloom, behind it. (By the way, I want some wild cherry trees near our house of dreams, Gilbert.) Of course we have a Tomorrow on the map ... located east of Today and west of Yesterday ... and we have no end of ‘times’ in fairyland. Springtime, long time, short time, new-moon time, goodnight time, next time ... but no last time, because that is too sad a time for fairyland; old time, young time ... because if there is an old time there ought to be a young time, too; mountain time ... because that has such a fascinating sound; night-time and daytime ... but no bedtime or school-time; Christmas-time; no only time, because that also is too sad ... but lost time, because it is so nice to find it; some time, good time, fast time, slow time, halfpast kissing-time, going-home time, and time immemorial ... which is one of the most beautiful phrases in the world. And we have

cunning little red arrows everywhere, pointing to the different ‘times.’ I know Rebecca Dew thinks I’m quite childish. But, oh, Gilbert, don’t let’s ever grow too old and wise ... no, not too old and silly for fairyland.

“Rebecca Dew, I feel sure, is not quite certain that I am an influence for good in Elizabeth’s life. She thinks I encourage her in being ‘fanciful.’ One evening when I was away Rebecca Dew took the milk to her and found her already at the gate, looking at the sky so intently that she never heard Rebecca’s (anything but) fairy footfalls.

“‘I was listening, Rebecca,’ she explained.

“‘You do too much listening,’ said Rebecca disapprovingly.

“Elizabeth smiled, remotely, austere. (Rebecca Dew didn’t use those words but I know exactly how Elizabeth smiled.)

“‘You would be surprised, Rebecca, if you knew what I hear sometimes,’ she said, in a way that made Rebecca Dew’s flesh creep on her bones ... or so she avers.

“But Elizabeth is always touched with faery and what can be done about it?

“Your Very Anne-est ANNE.

“P.S.1. Never, never, never shall I forget Cyrus Taylor’s face when his wife accused him of crocheting. But I shall always like him because he hunted for those kittens. And I like Esme for standing up for her father under the supposed wreck of all her hopes.

“P.S.2. I have put in a new pen. And I love you because you aren’t pompous like Dr. Carter ... and I love you because you haven’t got sticky-out ears like Johnny. And ... the very best reason of all ... I love you for just being Gilbert!”

Chapter 1 2

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“May 30th.

“DEAREST-AND-THEN-MORE-DEAR:

“It’s spring!

“Perhaps you, up to your eyes in a welter of exams in Kingsport, don’t know it. But I am aware of it from the crown of my head to the tips of my toes. Summerside is aware of it. Even the most unlovely streets are transfigured by arms of bloom reaching over old board fences and a ribbon of dandelions in the grass that borders the sidewalks. Even the china lady on my shelf is aware of it and I know if I could only wake up suddenly enough some night I’d catch her dancing a pas seul in her pink, gilt-heeled shoes.

“Everything is calling ‘spring’ to me ... the little laughing brooks, the blue hazes on the Storm King, the maples in the grove when I go to read your letters, the white cherry trees along Spook’s Lane, the sleek and saucy robins hopping defiance to Dusty Miller in the back yard, the creeper hanging greenly down over the half-door to which little Elizabeth comes for milk, the fir trees preening in new tassel tips around the old graveyard ... even the old graveyard itself, where all sorts of flowers planted at the heads of the graves are budding into leaf and bloom, as if to say, ‘Even here life is triumphant over death.’ I had a really lovely prowl about the graveyard the other night. (I’m sure Rebecca Dew thinks my taste in walks frightfully morbid. ‘I can’t think why you have such a hankering after that unchancy place,’ she says.) I roamed over it in the scented green cat’s light and wondered if Nathan Pringle’s wife really had tried to poison him. Her grave looked so innocent with its new grass and its June lilies that I concluded she had been entirely maligned.

“Just another month and I’ll be home for vacation! I keep thinking of the old orchard at Green Gables with its trees now in full snow ... the old

bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters ... the murmur of the sea in your ears ... a summer afternoon in Lover's Lane ... and you!

"I have just the right kind of pen tonight, Gilbert, and so ...

(Two pages omitted.)

"I was around at the Gibsons' this evening for a call. Marilla asked me some time ago to look them up because she once knew them when they lived in White Sands. Accordingly I looked them up and have been looking them up weekly ever since because Pauline seems to enjoy my visits and I'm so sorry for her. She is simply a slave to her mother ... who is a terrible old woman.

"Mrs. Adoniram Gibson is eighty and spends her days in a wheel-chair. They moved to Summerside fifteen years ago. Pauline, who is forty-five, is the youngest of the family, all her brothers and sisters being married and all of them determined not to have Mrs. Adoniram in their homes. She keeps the house and waits on her mother hand and foot. She is a little pale, fawn-eyed thing with golden-brown hair that is still glossy and pretty. They are quite comfortably off and if it were not for her mother Pauline could have a very pleasant easy life. She just loves church work and would be perfectly happy attending Ladies' Aids and Missionary Societies, planning for church suppers and Welcome socials, not to speak of exulting proudly in being the possessor of the finest wandering-jew in town. But she can hardly ever get away from the house, even to go to church on Sundays. I can't see any way of escape for her, for old Mrs. Gibson will probably live to be a hundred. And, while she may not have the use of her legs, there is certainly nothing the matter with her tongue. It always fills me with helpless rage to sit there and hear her making poor Pauline the target for her sarcasm. And yet Pauline has told me that her mother 'thinks quite highly' of me and is much nicer to her when I am around. If this be so I shiver to think what she must be when I am not around.

"Pauline dares not do anything without asking her mother. She can't even buy her own clothes ... not so much as a pair of stockings. Everything has to be sent up for Mrs. Gibson's approval; everything has to be worn until it has been turned twice. Pauline has worn the same hat for four years.

“Mrs. Gibson can’t bear any noise in the house or a breath of fresh air. It is said she never smiled in her life... . I’ve never caught her at it, anyway, and when I look at her I find myself wondering what would happen to her face if she did smile. Pauline can’t even have a room to herself. She has to sleep in the same room with her mother and be up almost every hour of the night rubbing Mrs. Gibson’s back or giving her a pill or getting a hot-water bottle for her ... hot, not lukewarm! ... or changing her pillows or seeing what that mysterious noise is in the back yard. Mrs. Gibson does her sleeping in the afternoons and spends her nights devising tasks for Pauline.

“Yet nothing has ever made Pauline bitter. She is sweet and unselfish and patient and I am glad she has a dog to love. The only thing she has ever had her own way about is keeping that dog ... and then only because there was a burglary somewhere in town and Mrs. Gibson thought it would be a protection. Pauline never dares to let her mother see how much she loves the dog. Mrs. Gibson hates him and complains of his bringing bones in but she never actually says he must go, for her own selfish reason.

“But at last I have a chance to give Pauline something and I’m going to do it. I’m going to give her a day, though it will mean giving up my next weekend at Green Gables.

“Tonight when I went in I could see that Pauline had been crying. Mrs. Gibson did not long leave me in doubt why.

“‘Pauline wants to go and leave me, Miss Shirley,’ she said. ‘Nice, grateful daughter I’ve got, haven’t I?’

“‘Only for a day, Ma,’ said Pauline, swallowing a sob and trying to smile.

“‘Only for a day,’ says she! ‘Well, you know what my days are like, Miss Shirley ... every one knows what my days are like. But you don’t know ... yet ... Miss Shirley, and I hope you never will, how long a day can be when you are suffering.’

“I knew Mrs. Gibson didn’t suffer at all now, so I didn’t try to be sympathetic.

“‘I’d get some one to stay with you, of course, Ma,’ said Pauline. ‘You see,’ she explained to me, ‘my cousin Louisa is going to celebrate her silver wedding at White Sands next Saturday week and she wants me to go. I was her bridesmaid when she was married to Maurice Hilton. I would like to go so much if Ma would give her consent.’

“‘If I must die alone I must,’ said Mrs. Gibson. ‘I leave it to your conscience, Pauline.’

“I knew Pauline’s battle was lost the moment Mrs. Gibson left it to her conscience. Mrs. Gibson has got her way all her life by leaving things to people’s consciences. I’ve heard that years ago somebody wanted to marry Pauline and Mrs. Gibson prevented it by leaving it to her conscience.

“Pauline wiped her eyes, summoned up a piteous smile and picked up a dress she was making over ... a hideous green and black plaid.

“‘Now don’t sulk, Pauline,’ said Mrs. Gibson. ‘I can’t abide people who sulk. And mind you put a collar on that dress. Would you believe it, Miss Shirley, she actually wanted to make the dress without a collar? She’d wear a low-necked dress, that one, if I’d let her.’

“I looked at poor Pauline with her slender little throat ... which is rather plump and pretty yet ... enclosed in a high, stiff-boned net collar.

“‘Collarless dresses are coming in,’ I said.

“‘Collarless dresses,’ said Mrs. Gibson, ‘are indecent.’

“(Item: — I was wearing a collarless dress.)

“‘Moreover,’ went on Mrs. Gibson, as if it were all of a piece. ‘I never liked Maurice Hilton. His mother was a Crockett. He never had any sense of decorum ... always kissing his wife in the most unsuitable places!’

“(Are you sure you kiss me in suitable places, Gilbert? I’m afraid Mrs. Gibson would think the nape of the neck, for instance, most unsuitable.)

“‘But, Ma, you know that was the day she nearly escaped being trampled by Harvey Wither’s horse running amuck on the church green. It was only natural Maurice should feel a little excited.’

“‘Pauline, please don’t contradict me. I still think the church steps were an unsuitable place for any one to be kissed. But of course my opinions don’t matter to any one any longer. Of course every one wishes I was dead. Well, there’ll be room for me in the grave. I know what a burden I am to you. I might as well die. Nobody wants me.’

“‘Don’t say that, Ma,’ begged Pauline.

“‘I will say it. Here you are, determined to go to that silver wedding although you know I’m not willing.’

“‘Ma dear. I’m not going ... I’d never think of going if you weren’t willing. Don’t excite yourself so... .’

“‘Oh, I can’t even have a little excitement, can’t I, to brighten my dull life? Surely you’re not going so soon, Miss Shirley?’

“‘I felt that if I stayed any longer I’d either go crazy or slap Mrs. Gibson’s nutcracker face. So I said I had exam papers to correct.

“‘Ah well, I suppose two old women like us are very poor company for a young girl,’ sighed Mrs. Gibson. ‘Pauline isn’t very cheerful ... are you, Pauline? Not very cheerful. I don’t wonder Miss Shirley doesn’t want to stay long.’

“‘Pauline came out to the porch with me. The moon was shining down on her little garden and sparkling on the harbor. A soft, delightful wind was talking to a white apple tree. It was spring ... spring ... spring! Even Mrs. Gibson can’t stop plum trees from blooming. And Pauline’s soft gray-blue eyes were full of tears.

“‘I would like to go to Louie’s wedding so much,’ she said, with a long sigh of despairing resignation.

“‘You are going,’ I said.

“‘Oh, no, dear, I can’t go. Poor Ma will never consent. I’ll just put it out of my mind. Isn’t the moon beautiful tonight?’ she added, in a loud, cheerful tone.

“‘I’ve never heard of any good that came from moon gazing,’ called out Mrs. Gibson from the sitting-room. ‘Stop chirruping there, Pauline, and come in and get my red bedroom slippers with the fur round the tops for me. These shoes pinch my feet something terrible. But nobody cares how I suffer.’

“I felt that I didn’t care how much she suffered. Poor darling Pauline! But a day off is certainly coming to Pauline and she is going to have her silver wedding. I, Anne Shirley, have spoken it.

“I told Rebecca Dew and the widows all about it when I came home and we had such fun, thinking up all the lovely, insulting things I might have said to Mrs. Gibson. Aunt Kate does not think I will succeed in getting Mrs. Gibson to let Pauline go but Rebecca Dew has faith in me. ‘Anyhow, if you can’t, nobody can,’ she said.

“I was at supper recently with Mrs. Tom Pringle who wouldn’t take me to board. (Rebecca says I am the best paying boarder she ever heard of because I am invited out to supper so often.) I’m very glad she didn’t. She’s nice and purry and her pies praise her in the gates, but her home isn’t Windy Poplars and she doesn’t live in Spook’s Lane and she isn’t Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty and Rebecca Dew. I love them all three and I’m going to board here next year and the year after. My chair is always called ‘Miss Shirley’s chair’ and Aunt Chatty tells me that when I’m not here Rebecca Dew sets my place at the table just the same, so it won’t seem so lonesome.’ Sometimes Aunt Chatty’s feelings have complicated matters a bit but she says she understands me now and knows I would never hurt her intentionally.

“Little Elizabeth and I go out for a walk twice a week now. Mrs. Campbell has agreed to that, but it must not be oftener and never on Sundays. Things are better for little Elizabeth in spring. Some sunshine gets into even that

grim old house and outwardly it is even beautiful because of the dancing shadows of tree tops. Still, Elizabeth likes to escape from it whenever she can. Once in a while we go up-town so that Elizabeth can see the lighted shop windows. But mostly we go as far as we dare down the Road that Leads to the End of the World, rounding every corner adventurously and expectantly, as if we were going to find Tomorrow behind it, while all the little green evening hills neatly nestle together in the distance. One of the things Elizabeth is going to do in Tomorrow is 'go to Philadelphia and see the angel in the church.' I haven't told her ... I never will tell her ... that the Philadelphia St. John was writing about was not Phila., Pa. We lose our illusions soon enough. And anyhow, if we could get into Tomorrow, who knows what we might find there? Angels everywhere, perhaps.

"Sometimes we watch the ships coming up the harbor before a fair wind, over a glistening pathway, through the transparent spring air, and Elizabeth wonders if her father may be on board one of them. She clings to the hope that he may come some day. I can't imagine why he doesn't. I'm sure he would if he knew what a darling little daughter he has here longing for him. I suppose he never realizes she is quite a girl now ... I suppose he still thinks of her as the little baby who cost his wife her life.

"I'll soon have finished my first year in Summerside High. The first term was a nightmare, but the last two have been very pleasant. The Pringles are delightful people. How could I ever have compared them to the Pyes? Sid Pringle brought me a bunch of trilliums today. Jen is going to lead her class and Miss Ellen is reported to have said that I am the only teacher who ever really understood the child! The only fly in my ointment is Katherine Brooke, who continues unfriendly and distant. I'm going to give up trying to be friends with her. After all, as Rebecca Dew says, there are limits.

"Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you... Sally Nelson has asked me to be one of her bridesmaids. She is going to be married the last of June at Bonnyview, Dr. Nelson's summer home down at the jumping-off place. She is marrying Gordon Hill. Then Nora Nelson will be the only one of Dr. Nelson's six girls left unmarried. Jim Wilcox has been going with her for years ... 'off and on' as Rebecca Dew says ... but it never seems to come

to anything and nobody thinks it will now. I'm very fond of Sally, but I've never made much headway getting acquainted with Nora. She's a good deal older than I am, of course, and rather reserved and proud. Yet I'd like to be friends with her. She isn't pretty or clever or charming but somehow she's got a tang. I've a feeling she'd be worth while.

"Speaking of weddings, Esme Taylor was married to her Ph.D. last month. As it was on Wednesday afternoon I couldn't go to the church to see her, but every one says she looked very beautiful and happy and Lennox looked as if he knew he had done the right thing and had the approval of his conscience. Cyrus Taylor and I are great friends. He often refers to the dinner which he has come to consider a great joke on everybody. 'I've never dared sulk since,' he told me. 'Mamma might accuse me of sewing patchwork next time.' And then he tells me to be sure and give his love to 'the widows.' Gilbert, people are delicious and life is delicious and I am

"Forevermore

"Yours!

"P.S. Our old red cow down at Mr. Hamilton's has a spotted calf. We've been buying our milk for three months from Lew Hunt. Rebecca says we'll have cream again now ... and that she has always heard the Hunt well was inexhaustible and now she believes it. Rebecca didn't want that calf to be born at all. Aunt Kate had to get Mr. Hamilton to tell her that the cow was really too old to have a calf before she would consent."

Chapter 13

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“Ah, when you’ve been old and bed-ridden as long as me you’ll have more sympathy,” whined Mrs. Gibson.

“Please don’t think I’m lacking in sympathy, Mrs. Gibson,” said Anne, who, after half an hour’s vain effort, felt like wringing Mrs. Gibson’s neck. Nothing but poor Pauline’s pleading eyes in the background kept her from giving up in despair and going home. “I assure you, you won’t be lonely and neglected. I will be here all day and see that you lack nothing in any way.”

“Oh, I know I’m of no use to any one,” said Mrs. Gibson, apropos of nothing that had been said. “You don’t need to rub that in, Miss Shirley. I’m ready to go any time ... any time. Pauline can gad round all she wants to then. I won’t be here to feel neglected. None of the young people of today have any sense. Giddy ... very giddy.”

Anne didn’t know whether it was Pauline or herself who was the giddy young person without sense, but she tried the last shot in her locker.

“Well, you know, Mrs. Gibson, people will talk so terribly if Pauline doesn’t go to her cousin’s silver wedding.”

“Talk!” said Mrs. Gibson sharply. “What will they talk about?”

“Dear Mrs. Gibson ...” (‘May I be forgiven the adjective!’ thought Anne) “in your long life you have learned, I know, just what idle tongues can say.”

“You needn’t be casting my age up to me,” snapped Mrs. Gibson. “And I don’t need to be told it’s a censorious world. Too well ... too well I know it. And I don’t need to be told that this town is full of tattling toads neither. But I dunno’s I fancy them jabbering about me ... saying, I s’pose, that

I'm an old tyrant. I ain't stopping Pauline from going. Didn't I leave it to her conscience?"

"So few people will believe that," said Anne, carefully sorrowful.

Mrs. Gibson sucked a peppermint lozenge fiercely for a minute or two. Then she said,

"I hear there's mumps at White Sands."

"Ma, dear, you know I've had the mumps."

"There's folks as takes them twice. You'd be just the one to take them twice, Pauline. You always took everything that come round. The nights I've set up with you, not expecting you'd see the morning! Ah me, a mother's sacrifices ain't long remembered. Besides, how would you get to White Sands? You ain't been on a train for years. And there ain't any train back Saturday night."

"She could go on the Saturday morning train," said Anne. "And I'm sure Mr. James Gregor will bring her back."

"I never liked Jim Gregor. His mother was a Tarbush."

"He is taking his double-seated buggy and going down Friday, or else he would take her down, too. But she'll be quite safe on the train, Mrs. Gibson. Just step on at Summerside ... step off at White Sands ... no changing."

"There's something behind all this," said Mrs. Gibson suspiciously. "Why are you so set on her going, Miss Shirley? Just tell me that."

Anne smiled into the beady-eyed face.

"Because I think Pauline is a good, kind daughter to you, Mrs. Gibson, and needs a day off now and then, just as everybody does."

Most people found it hard to resist Anne's smile. Either that, or the fear of gossip vanquished Mrs. Gibson.

“I s’pose it never occurs to any one I’d like a day off from this wheel-chair if I could get it. But I can’t ... I just have to bear my affliction patiently. Well, if she must go she must. She’s always been one to get her own way. If she catches mumps or gets poisoned by strange mosquitoes, don’t blame me for it. I’ll have to get along as best I can. Oh, I s’pose you’ll be here, but you ain’t used to my ways as Pauline is. I s’pose I can stand it for one day. If I can’t ... well, I’ve been living on borrowed time many’s the year now so what’s the difference?” Not a gracious assent by any means but still an assent. Anne in her relief and gratitude found herself doing something she could never have imagined herself doing ... she bent over and kissed Mrs. Gibson’s leathery cheek. “Thank you,” she said.

“Never mind your wheedling ways,” said Mrs. Gibson. “Have a peppermint.”

“How can I ever thank you, Miss Shirley?” said Pauline, as she went a little way down the street with Anne.

“By going to White Sands with a light heart and enjoying every minute of the time.”

“Oh, I’ll do that. You don’t know what this means to me, Miss Shirley. It’s not only Louisa I want to see. The old Luckley place next to her home is going to be sold and I did so want to see it once more before it passed into the hands of strangers. Mary Luckley ... she’s Mrs. Howard Flemming now and lives out west ... was my dearest friend when I was a girl. We were like sisters. I used to be at the Luckley place so much and I loved it so. I’ve often dreamed of going back. Ma says I’m getting too old to dream. Do you think I am, Miss Shirley?”

“Nobody is ever too old to dream. And dreams never grow old.”

“I’m so glad to hear you say that. Oh, Miss Shirley, to think of seeing the gulf again. I haven’t seen it for fifteen years. The harbor is beautiful, but it isn’t the gulf. I feel as if I was walking on air. And I owe it all to you. It was just because Ma likes you she let me go. You’ve made me happy ... you are always making people happy. Why, whenever you come into a room, Miss Shirley, the people in it feel happier.”

“That’s the very nicest compliment I’ve ever had paid me, Pauline.”

“There’s just one thing, Miss Shirley ... I’ve nothing to wear but my old black taffeta. It’s too gloomy for a wedding, isn’t it? And it’s too big for me since I got thin. You see it’s six years since I got it.”

“We must try to induce your mother to let you have a new dress,” said Anne hopefully.

But that proved to be beyond her powers. Mrs. Gibson was adamant. Pauline’s black taffeta was plenty good for Louisa Hilton’s wedding.

“I paid two dollars a yard for it six years ago and three to Jane Sharp for making it. Jane was a good dressmaker. Her mother was a Smiley. The idea of you wanting something ‘light,’ Pauline Gibson! She’d go dressed in scarlet from head to foot, that one, if she was let, Miss Shirley. She’s just waiting till I’m dead to do it. Ah, well, you’ll soon be shet of all the trouble I am to you, Pauline. Then you can dress as gay and giddy as you like, but as long as I’m alive you’ll be decent. And what’s the matter with your hat? It’s time you wore a bonnet, anyhow.”

Poor Pauline had a lively horror of having to wear a bonnet. She would wear her old hat for the rest of her life before she would do that.

“I’m just going to be glad inside and forget all about my clothes,” she told Anne, when they went out to the garden to pick a bouquet of June lilies and bleeding-heart for the widows.

“I’ve a plan,” said Anne, with a cautious glance to make sure Mrs. Gibson couldn’t hear her, though she was watching from the sitting-room window. “You know that silver-gray poplin of mine? I’m going to lend you that for the wedding.”

Pauline dropped the basket of flowers in her agitation, making a pool of pink and white sweetness at Anne’s feet.

“Oh, my dear, I couldn’t... . Ma wouldn’t let me.”

“She won’t know a thing about it. Listen. Saturday morning you’ll put it on under your black taffeta. I know it will fit you. It’s a little long, but I’ll run some tucks in it tomorrow ... tucks are fashionable now. It’s collarless, with elbow sleeves so no one will suspect. As soon as you get to Gull Cove, take off the taffeta. When the day is over you can leave the poplin at Gull Cove and I can get it the next weekend I’m home.”

“But wouldn’t it be too young for me?”

“Not a bit of it. Any age can wear gray.”

“Do you think it would be ... right ... to deceive Ma?” faltered Pauline.

“In this case entirely right,” said Anne shamelessly. “You know, Pauline, it would never do to wear a black dress to a wedding. It might bring the bride bad luck.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that for anything. And of course it won’t hurt Ma. I do hope she’ll get through Saturday all right. I’m afraid she won’t eat a bite when I’m away ... she didn’t the time I went to Cousin Matilda’s funeral. Miss Prouty told me she didn’t... . Miss Prouty stayed with her. She was so provoked at Cousin Matilda for dying ... Ma was, I mean.”

“She’ll eat... . I’ll see to that.”

“I know you’ve a great knack of managing her,” conceded Pauline. “And you won’t forget to give her her medicine at the regular times, will you, dear? Oh, perhaps I oughtn’t to go after all.”

“You’ve been out there long enough to pick forty bokays,” called Mrs. Gibson irately. “I dunno what the widows want of your flowers. They’ve plenty of their own. I’d go a long time without flowers if I waited for Rebecca Dew to send me any. I’m dying for a drink of water. But then I’m of no consequence.”

Friday night Pauline telephoned Anne in terrible agitation. She had a sore throat and did Miss Shirley think it could possibly be the mumps? Anne ran down to reassure her, taking the gray poplin in a brown paper parcel.

She hid it in the lilac bush and late that night Pauline, in a cold perspiration, managed to smuggle it upstairs to the little room where she kept her clothes and dressed, though she was never permitted to sleep there. Pauline was not quite easy about the dress. Perhaps her sore throat was a judgment on her for deception. But she couldn't go to Louisa's silver wedding in that dreadful old black taffeta ... she simply couldn't.

Saturday morning Anne was at the Gibson house bright and early. Anne always looked her best on a sparkling summer morning such as this. She seemed to sparkle with it and she moved through the golden air like a slender figure on a Grecian urn. The dullest room sparkled, too ... lived ... when she came into it.

"Walking as if you owned the earth," commented Mrs. Gibson sarcastically.

"So I do," said Anne gayly.

"Ah, you're very young," said Mrs. Gibson maddeningly.

"'I withhold not my heart from any joy,'" quoted Anne. "That is Bible authority for you, Mrs. Gibson."

"'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.' That's in the Bible, too," retorted Mrs. Gibson. The fact that she had so neatly countered Miss Shirley, B.A., put her in comparatively good humor. "I never was one to flatter, Miss Shirley, but that chip hat of yours with the blue flower kind of sets you. Your hair don't look so red under it, seems to me. Don't you admire a fresh young girl like this, Pauline? Wouldn't you like to be a fresh young girl yourself, Pauline?"

Pauline was too happy and excited to want to be any one but herself just then. Anne went to the upstairs room with her to help her dress.

"It's so lovely to think of all the pleasant things that must happen today, Miss Shirley. My throat is quite well and Ma is in such a good humor. You mightn't think so, but I know she is because she is talking, even if she is sarcastic. If she was mad or riled she'd be sulking. I've peeled the potatoes

and the steak is in the ice-box and Ma's blanc mange is down cellar. There's canned chicken for supper and a sponge cake in the pantry. I'm just on tenterhooks Ma'll change her mind yet. I couldn't bear it if she did. Oh, Miss Shirley, do you think I'd better wear that gray dress ... really?"

"Put it on," said Anne in her best school-teacherish manner.

Pauline obeyed and emerged a transformed Pauline. The gray dress fitted her beautifully. It was collarless and had dainty lace ruffles in the elbow sleeves. When Anne had done her hair Pauline hardly knew herself.

"I hate to cover it up with that horrid old black taffeta, Miss Shirley."

But it had to be. The taffeta covered it very securely. The old hat went on ... but it would be taken off, too, when she got to Louisa's ... and Pauline had a new pair of shoes. Mrs. Gibson had actually allowed her to get a new pair of shoes, though she thought the heels "scandalous high." "I'll make quite a sensation going away on the train alone. I hope people won't think it's a death. I wouldn't want Louisa's silver wedding to be connected in any way with the thought of death. Oh, perfume, Miss Shirley! Apple-blossom! Isn't that lovely? Just a whiff ... so ladylike, I always think. Ma won't let me buy any. Oh, Miss Shirley, you won't forget to feed my dog, will you? I've left his bones in the pantry in the covered dish. I do hope" ... dropping her voice to a shamed whisper ... "that he won't ... misbehave ... in the house while you're here."

Pauline had to pass her mother's inspection before leaving. Excitement over her outing and guilt in regard to the hidden poplin combined to give her a very unusual flush. Mrs. Gibson gazed at her discontentedly.

"Oh me, oh my! Going to London to look at the Queen, are we? You've got too much color. People will think you're painted. Are you sure you ain't?"

"Oh, no, Ma ... no," in shocked tones.

"Mind your manners now and when you set down, cross your ankles decently. Mind you don't set in a draught or talk too much."

“I won’t, Ma,” promised Pauline earnestly, with a nervous glance at the clock.

“I’m sending Louisa a bottle of my sarsaparilla wine to drink the toasts in. I never cared for Louisa, but her mother was a Tackaberry. Mind you bring back the bottle and don’t let her give you a kitten. Louisa’s always giving people kittens.”

“I won’t, Ma.”

“You’re sure you didn’t leave the soap in the water?”

“Quite sure, Ma,” with another anguished glance at the clock.

“Are your shoelaces tied?”

“Yes, Ma.”

“You don’t smell respectable ... drenched with scent.”

“Oh, no, Ma dear ... just a little ... the tiniest bit ...”

“I said drenched and I mean drenched. There isn’t, a rip under your arm, is there?”

“Oh, no, Ma.”

“Let me see ...” inexorably.

Pauline quaked. Suppose the skirt of the gray dress showed when she lifted her arms!

“Well, go, then.” With a long sigh. “If I ain’t here when you come back, remember that I want to be laid out in my lace shawl and my black satin slippers. And see that my hair is crimped.”

“Do you feel any worse, Ma?” The poplin dress had made Pauline’s conscience very sensitive. “If you do ... I’ll not go ...”

“And waste the money for them shoes! ‘Course you’re going. And mind you don’t slide down the banister.”

But at this the worm turned.

“Ma! Do you think I would?”

“You did at Nancy Parker’s wedding.”

“Thirty-five years ago! Do you think I would do it now?”

“It’s time you were off. What are you jabbering here for? Do you want to miss your train?”

Pauline hurried away and Anne sighed with relief. She had been afraid that old Mrs. Gibson had, at the last moment, been taken with a fiendish impulse to detain Pauline until the train was gone.

“Now for a little peace,” said Mrs. Gibson. “This house is in an awful condition of untidiness, Miss Shirley. I hope you realize it ain’t always so. Pauline hasn’t known which end of her was up these last few days. Will you please set that vase an inch to the left? No, move it back again. That lamp shade is crooked. Well, that’s a little straighter. But that blind is an inch lower than the other. I wish you’d fix it.”

Anne unluckily gave the blind too energetic a twist; it escaped her fingers and went whizzing to the top.

“Ah, now you see,” said Mrs. Gibson.

Anne didn’t see but she adjusted the blind meticulously.

“And now wouldn’t you like me to make you a nice cup of tea, Mrs. Gibson?”

“I do need something... I’m clean wore out with all this worry and fuss. My stomach seems to be dropping out of me,” said Mrs. Gibson pathetically. “Kin you make a decent cup of tea? I’d as soon drink mud as the tea some folks make.”

“Marilla Cuthbert taught me how to make tea. You’ll see. But first I’m going to wheel you out to the porch so that you can enjoy the sunshine.”

“I ain’t been out on the porch for years,” objected Mrs. Gibson.

“Oh, it’s so lovely today, it can’t hurt you. I want you to see the crab tree in bloom. You can’t see it unless you go out. And the wind is south today, so you’ll get the clover scent from Norman Johnson’s field. I’ll bring you your tea and we’ll drink it together and then I’ll get my embroidery and we’ll sit there and criticize everybody who passes.”

“I don’t hold with criticizing people,” said Mrs. Gibson virtuously. “It ain’t Christian. Would you mind telling me if that is all your own hair?”

“Every bit,” laughed Anne.

“Pity it’s red. Though red hair seems to be gitting popular now. I sort of like your laugh. That nervous giggle of poor Pauline’s always gits on my nerves. Well, if I’ve got to git out, I s’pose I’ve got to. I’ll likely ketch my death of cold, but the responsibility is yours, Miss Shirley. Remember I’m eighty ... every day of it, though I hear old Davy Ackham has been telling all around Summerside I’m only seventy-nine. His mother was a Watt. The Watts were always jealous.”

Anne moved the wheel-chair deftly out, and proved that she had a knack of arranging pillows. Soon after she brought out the tea and Mrs. Gibson deigned approval.

“Yes, this is drinkable, Miss Shirley. Ah me, for one year I had to live entirely on liquids. They never thought I’d pull through. I often think it might have been better if I hadn’t. Is that the crab tree you was raving about?”

“Yes ... isn’t it lovely ... so white against that deep blue sky?”

“It ain’t poetical,” was Mrs. Gibson’s sole comment. But she became rather mellow after two cups of tea and the forenoon wore away until it was time to think of dinner.

“I’ll go and get it ready and then I’ll bring it out here on a little table.”

“No, you won’t, miss. No crazy monkey-shines like that for me! People would think it awful queer, us eating out here in public. I ain’t denying it’s kind of nice out here ... though the smell of clover always makes me kind of squalmish ... and the forenoon’s passed awful quick to what it mostly does, but I ain’t eating my dinner out-of-doors for any one. I ain’t a gypsy. Mind you wash your hands clean before you cook the dinner. My, Mrs. Storey must be expecting more company. She’s got all the spare-room bedclothes airing on the line. It ain’t real hospitality ... just a desire for sensation. Her mother was a Carey.”

The dinner Anne produced pleased even Mrs. Gibson.

“I didn’t think any one who wrote for the papers could cook. But of course Marilla Cuthbert brought you up. Her mother was a Johnson. I s’pose Pauline will eat herself sick at that wedding. She don’t know when she’s had enough ... just like her father. I’ve seen him gorge on strawberries when he knew he’d be doubled up with pain an hour afterwards. Did I ever show you his picture, Miss Shirley? Well, go to the spare-room and bring it down. You’ll find it under the bed. Mind you don’t go prying into the drawers while you’re up there. But take a peep and see if there’s any dust curls under the bureau. I don’t trust Pauline... . Ah, yes, that’s him. His mother was a Walker. There’s no men like that nowadays. This is a degenerate age, Miss Shirley.”

“Homer said the same thing eight hundred years, B.C.,” smiled Anne.

“Some of them Old Testament writers was always croaking,” said Mrs. Gibson. “I daresay you’re shocked to hear me say so, Miss Shirley, but my husband was very broad in his views. I hear you’re engaged ... to a medical student. Medical students mostly drink, I believe ... have to, to stand the dissecting-room. Never marry a man who drinks, Miss Shirley. Nor one who ain’t a good provider. Thistledown and moonshine ain’t much to live on, I kin tell you. Mind you clean the sink and rinse the dish-towels. I can’t abide greasy dish-towels. I s’pose you’ll have to feed the dog. He’s too fat now, but Pauline just stuffs him. Sometimes I think I’ll have to get rid of him.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that, Mrs. Gibson. There are always burglaries, you know ... and your house is lonely, off here by itself. You really do need protection.”

“Oh, well, have it your own way. I’d rather do anything than argue with people, ‘specially when I’ve such a queer throbbing in the back of my neck. I s’pose it means I’m going to have a stroke.”

“You need your nap. When you’ve had it you’ll feel better. I’ll tuck you up and lower your chair. Would you like to go out on the porch for your nap?”

“Sleeping in public! That’d be worse than eating. You do have the queerest ideas. You just fix me up right here in the sitting-room and draw the blinds down and shut the door to keep the flies out. I daresay you’d like a quiet spell yourself ... your tongue’s been going pretty steady.”

Mrs. Gibson had a good long nap, but woke up in a bad humor. She would not let Anne wheel her out to the porch again.

“Want me to ketch my death in the night air, I s’pose,” she grumbled, although it was only five o’clock. Nothing suited her. The drink Anne brought her was too cold ... the next one wasn’t cold enough ... of course anything would do for her. Where was the dog? Misbehaving, no doubt. Her back ached ... her knees ached ... her head ached ... her breastbone ached. Nobody sympathized with her ... nobody knew what she went through. Her chair was too high ... her chair was too low... . She wanted a shawl for her shoulders and an afghan for her knees and a cushion for her feet. And would Miss Shirley see where that awful draught was coming from? She could do with a cup of tea, but she didn’t want to be a trouble to any one and she would soon be at rest in her grave. Maybe they might appreciate her when she was gone.

“Be the day short or be the day long, at last it weareth to evening song.” There were moments when Anne thought it never would, but it did. Sunset came and Mrs. Gibson began to wonder why Pauline wasn’t coming. Twilight came ... still no Pauline. Night and moonshine and no Pauline.

“I knew it,” said Mrs. Gibson cryptically.

“You know she can’t come till Mr. Gregor comes and he’s generally the last dog hung,” soothed Anne. “Won’t you let me put you to bed, Mrs. Gibson? You’re tired ... I know it’s a bit of a strain having a stranger round instead of some one you’re accustomed to.”

The little puckery lines about Mrs. Gibson’s mouth deepened obstinately.

“I’m not going to bed till that girl comes home. But if you’re so anxious to be gone, go. I can stay alone ... or die alone.”

At half past nine Mrs. Gibson decided that Jim Gregor was not coming home till Monday.

“Nobody could ever depend on Jim Gregor to stay in the same mind twenty-four hours. And he thinks it’s wrong to travel on Sunday even to come home. He’s on your school board, ain’t he? What do you really think of him and his opinions on eddication?”

Anne went wicked. After all, she had endured a good deal at Mrs. Gibson’s hands that day.

“I think he’s a psychological anachronism,” she answered gravely.

Mrs. Gibson did not bat an eyelash.

“I agree with you,” she said. But she pretended to go to sleep after that.

Chapter 1 4

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It was ten o’clock when Pauline came at last ... a flushed, starry-eyed Pauline, looking ten years younger, in spite of the resumed taffeta and the old hat, and carrying a beautiful bouquet which she hurriedly presented to the grim lady in the wheel-chair.

“The bride sent you her bouquet, Ma. Isn’t it lovely? Twenty-five white roses.”

“Cat’s hindfoot! I don’t s’pose any one thought of sending me a crumb of wedding-cake. People nowadays don’t seem to have any family feeling. Ah, well, I’ve seen the day ...”

“But they did. I’ve a great big piece here in my bag. And everybody asked about you and sent you their love, Ma.”

“Did you have a nice time?” asked Anne.

Pauline sat down on a hard chair because she knew her mother would resent it if she sat on a soft one.

“Very nice,” she said cautiously. “We had a lovely wedding-dinner and Mr. Freeman, the Gull Cove minister, married Louisa and Maurice over again... .”

“I call that sacrilegious... .”

“And then the photographer took all our pictures. The flowers were simply wonderful. The parlor was a bower ...”

“Like a funeral I s’pose ...”

“And, oh, Ma. Mary Luckley was there from the west ... Mrs. Flemming, you know. You remember what friends she and I always were. We used to call each other Polly and Molly... .”

“Very silly names ...”

“And it was so nice to see her again and have a long talk over old times. Her sister Em was there, too, with such a delicious baby.”

“You talk as if it was something to eat,” grunted Mrs. Gibson. “Babies are common enough.”

“Oh, no, babies are never common,” said Anne, bringing a bowl of water for Mrs. Gibson’s roses. “Every one is a miracle.”

“Well, I had ten and I never saw much that was miraculous about any of them. Pauline, do sit still if you kin. You fidget me. I notice you ain’t asking how I got along. But I s’pose I couldn’t expect it.”

“I can tell how you got along without asking, Ma ... you look so bright and cheerful.” Pauline was still so uplifted by the day that she could be a little arch even with her mother. “I’m sure you and Miss Shirley had a nice time together.”

“We got on well enough. I just let her have her own way. I admit it’s the first time in years I’ve heard some interesting conversation. I ain’t so near the grave as some people would like to make out. Thank heaven I’ve never got deaf or childish. Well, I s’pose the next thing you’ll be off to the moon. And I s’pose they didn’t care for my sarsaparilla wine by any chance?”

“Oh, they did. They thought it delicious.”

“You’ve taken your own time telling me that. Did you bring back the bottle ... or would it be too much to expect you’d remember that?”

“The ... the bottle got broke,” faltered Pauline. “Some one knocked it over in the pantry. But Louisa gave me another just exactly the same, Ma, so you needn’t worry.”

“I’ve had that bottle ever since I started housekeeping. Louisa’s can’t be exactly the same. They don’t make such bottles nowadays. I wish you’d bring me another shawl. I’m sneezing ... I expect I’ve got a terrible cold. You can’t either of you seem to remember not to let the night air git at me. Likely it’ll bring my neuritis back.”

An old neighbor up the street dropped in at this Juncture and Pauline snatched at the chance to go a little way with Anne.

“Good night, Miss Shirley,” said Mrs. Gibson quite graciously. “I’m much obliged to you. If there was more people like you in this town, it would be the better for it.” She grinned toothlessly and pulled Anne down to her. “I don’t care what people say ... I think you’re real nice looking,” she whispered.

Pauline and Anne walked along the street, through the cool, green night, and Pauline let herself go, as she had not dared do before her mother.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, it was heavenly. How can I ever repay you? I’ve never spent such a wonderful day ... I’ll live on it for years. It was such fun being a bridesmaid again. And Captain Isaac Kent was groomsman. He ... he used to be an old beau of mine ... well, no, hardly a beau I don’t think he ever had any real intentions but we drove round together ... and he paid me two compliments. He said, ‘I remember how pretty you looked at Louisa’s wedding in that wine-colored dress.’ Wasn’t it wonderful his remembering the dress? And he said, ‘Your hair looks just as much like molasses taffy as it ever did.’ There wasn’t anything improper in his saying that, was there, Miss Shirley?”

“Nothing whatever.”

“Lou and Molly and I had such a nice supper together after everybody had gone. I was so hungry ... I don’t think I’ve been so hungry for years. It was so nice to eat just what I wanted and nobody to warn me about things that wouldn’t agree with my stomach. After supper Mary and I went over to her old home and wandered around the garden, talking over old times. We saw the lilac bushes we planted years ago. We had some beautiful summers together when we were girls. Then when it came sunset we went down to the dear old shore and sat there on a rock in silence. There was a bell ringing down at the harbor and it was lovely to feel the wind from the sea again and see the stars trembling in the water. I had forgotten night on the gulf could be so beautiful. When it got quite dark we went back and Mr. Gregor was ready to start ... and so,” concluded Pauline with a laugh, “The Old Woman Got Home That Night.”

“I wish ... I wish you didn’t have such a hard time at home, Pauline... .”

“Oh, dear Miss Shirley, I won’t mind it now,” said Pauline quickly. “After all, poor Ma needs me. And it’s nice to be needed, my dear.”

Yes, it was nice to be needed. Anne thought of this in her tower room, where Dusty Miller, having evaded both Rebecca Dew and the widows, was curled up on her bed. She thought of Pauline trotting back to her bondage but accompanied by “the immortal spirit of one happy day.”

“I hope some one will always need me,” said Anne to Dusty Miller. “And it’s wonderful, Dusty Miller, to be able to give happiness to somebody. It has made me feel so rich, giving Pauline this day. But, oh, Dusty Miller, you don’t think I’ll ever be like Mrs. Adoniram Gibson, even if I live to be eighty? Do you, Dusty Miller?”

Dusty Miller, with rich, throaty purrs, assured her he didn’t.

Chapter 15

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Anne went down to Bonnyview on the Friday night before the wedding. The Nelsons were giving a dinner for some family friends and wedding-guests arriving by the boat train. The big, rambling house which was Dr. Nelson's "summer home" was built among spruces on a long point with the bay on both sides and a stretch of golden-breasted dunes beyond that knew all there was to be known about winds.

Anne liked it the moment she saw it. An old stone house always looks reposeful and dignified. It fears not what rain or wind or changing fashion can do. And on this June evening it was bubbling over with young life and excitement, the laughter of girls, the greetings of old friends, buggies coming and going, children running everywhere, gifts arriving, every one in the delightful turmoil of a wedding, while Dr. Nelson's two black cats, who rejoiced in the names of Barnabas and Saul, sat on the railing of the veranda and watched everything like two imperturbable sable sphinxes.

Sally detached herself from a mob and whisked Anne upstairs.

"We've saved the north gable room for you. Of course you'll have to share it with at least three others. There's a perfect riot here. Father's having a tent put up for the boys down among the spruces and later on we can have cots in the glassed-in porch at the back. And we can pack most of the children in the hayloft of course. Oh, Anne, I'm so excited. It's really no end of fun getting married. My wedding-dress just came from Montreal today. It's a dream ... cream corded silk with a lace bertha and pearl embroidery. The loveliest gifts have come. This is your bed. Mamie Gray and Dot Fraser and Sis Palmer have the others. Mother wanted to put Amy Stewart here but I wouldn't let her. Amy hates you because she wanted to be my bridesmaid. But I couldn't have any one so fat and dumpy, could I now? Besides, she looks like somebody seasick in Nile green. Oh, Anne, Aunt Mouser is here. She came just a few minutes ago and we're simply

horror-stricken. Of course we had to invite her, but we never thought of her coming before tomorrow.”

“Who in the world is Aunt Mouser?”

“Dad’s aunt, Mrs. James Kennedy. Oh, of course she’s really Aunt Grace, but Tommy nicknamed her Aunt Mouser because she’s always mousing round pouncing on things we don’t want her to find out. There’s no escaping her. She even gets up early in the morning for fear of missing something and she’s the last to go to bed at night. But that isn’t the worst. If there’s a wrong thing to say she’s certain to say it and she’s never learned that there are questions that mustn’t be asked. Dad calls her speeches ‘Aunt Mouser’s felicities.’ I know she’ll spoil the dinner. Here she comes now.”

The door opened and Aunt Mouser came in ... a fat, brown, pop-eyed little woman, moving in an atmosphere of mothballs and wearing a chronically worried expression. Except for the expression she really did look a good deal like a hunting pussy-cat.

“So you’re the Miss Shirley I’ve always heard so much of. You ain’t a bit like a Miss Shirley I once knew. She had such beautiful eyes. Well, Sally, so you’re to be married at last. Poor Nora is the only one left. Well, your mother is lucky to be rid of five of you. Eight years ago I said to her, ‘Jane,’ sez I, ‘do you think you’ll ever get all those girls married off?’ Well, a man is nothing but trouble as I sees it and of all the uncertain things marriage is the uncertainest, but what else is there for a woman in this world? That’s what I’ve just been saying to poor Nora. ‘Mark my words, Nora,’ I said to her, ‘there isn’t much fun in being an old maid. What’s Jim Wilcox thinking of?’ I said to her.”

“Oh, Aunt Grace, I wish you hadn’t! Jim and Nora had some sort of a quarrel last January and he’s never been round since.”

“I believe in saying what I think. Things is better said. I’d heard of that quarrel. That’s why I asked her about him. ‘It’s only right,’ I told her, ‘that you should know they say he’s driving Eleanor Pringle.’ She got red and

mad and flounced off. What's Vera Johnson doing here? She ain't any relation."

"Vera's always been a great friend of mine, Aunt Grace. She's going to play the wedding-march."

"Oh, she is, is she? Well, all I hope is she won't make a mistake and play the Dead March like Mrs. Tom Scott did at Dora Best's wedding. Such a bad omen. I don't know where you're going to put the mob you've got here for the night. Some of us will have to sleep on the clothesline I reckon."

"Oh, we'll find a place for every one, Aunt Grace."

"Well, Sally, all I hope is you won't change your mind at the last moment like Helen Summers did. It clutters things up so. Your father is in terrible high spirits. I never was one to go looking for trouble but all I hope is it ain't the forerunner of a stroke. I've seen it happen that way."

"Oh, Dad's fine, Aunt Mouser. He's just a bit excited."

"Ah, you're too young, Sally, to know all that can happen. Your mother tells me the ceremony is at high noon tomorrow. The fashions in weddings are changing like everything else and not for the better. When I was married it was in the evening and my father laid in twenty gallons of liquor for the wedding. Ah, dear me, times ain't what they used to be. What's the matter with Mercy Daniels? I met her on the stairs and her complexion has got terrible muddy."

"The quality of mercy is not strained," giggled Sally, wriggling into her dinner-dress.

"Don't quote the Bible flippantly," rebuked Aunt Mouser. "You must excuse her, Miss Shirley. She just ain't used to getting married. Well, all I hope is the groom won't have a hunted look like so many of them do. I s'pose they do feel that way, but they needn't show it so plain. And I hope he won't forget the ring. Upton Hardy did. Him and Flora had to be married with a ring off one of the curtain poles. Well, I'll be taking another look at the wedding-presents. You've got a lot of nice things,

Sally. All I hope is it won't be as hard to keep the handles of them spoons polished as I think likely."

Dinner that night in the big, glassed-in porch was a gay affair. Chinese lanterns had been hung all about it, shedding mellow-tinted lights on the pretty dresses and glossy hair and white, unlined brows of girls. Barnabas and Saul sat like ebony statues on the broad arms of the Doctor's chair, where he fed them tidbits alternately.

"Just about as bad as Parker Pringle," said Aunt Mouser. "He has his dog sit at the table with a chair and napkin of his own. Well, sooner or later there'll be a judgment."

It was a large party, for all the married Nelson girls and their husbands were there, besides ushers and bridesmaids; and it was a merry one, in spite of Aunt Mouser's "felicities" ... or perhaps because of them. Nobody took Aunt Mouser very seriously; she was evidently a joke among the young fry. When she said, on being introduced to Gordon Hill, "Well, well, you ain't a bit like I expected. I always thought Sally would pick out a tall handsome man," ripples of laughter ran through the porch. Gordon Hill, who was on the short side and called no more than "pleasant-faced" by his best friends, knew he would never hear the last of it. When she said to Dot Fraser, "Well, well, a new dress every time I see you! All I hope is your father's purse will be able to stand it for a few years yet," Dot could, of course, have boiled her in oil, but some of the other girls found it amusing. And when Aunt Mouser mournfully remarked, apropos of the preparations of the wedding-dinner, "All I hope is everybody will get her teaspoons afterwards. Five were missing after Gertie Paul's wedding. They never turned up," Mrs. Nelson, who had borrowed three dozen and the sisters-in-law she had borrowed them from all looked harried. But Dr. Nelson hawhawed cheerfully.

"We'll make everyone turn out their pockets before they go, Aunt Grace."

"Ah, you may laugh, Samuel. It is no joking-matter to have anything like that happen in the family. Some one must have those teaspoons. I never go anywhere but I keep my eyes open for them. I'd know them wherever I saw them, though it was twenty-eight years ago. Poor Nora was just a baby

then. You remember you had her there, Jane, in a little white embroidered dress? Twenty-eight years! Ah, Nora, you're getting on, though in this light you don't show your age so much."

Nora did not join in the laugh that followed. She looked as if she might flash lightning at any moment. In spite of her daffodil-hued dress and the pearls in her dark hair, she made Anne think of a black moth. In direct contrast with Sally, who was a cool, snowy blonde, Nora Nelson had magnificent black hair, dusky eyes, heavy black brows and velvety red cheeks. Her nose was beginning to look a trifle hawk-like and she had never been accounted pretty, but Anne felt an odd attraction to her in spite of her sulky, smoldering expression. She felt that she would prefer Nora as a friend to the popular Sally.

They had a dance after dinner and music and laughter came tumbling out of the broad low windows of the old stone house in a flood. At ten Nora had disappeared. Anne was a little tired of the noise and merriment. She slipped through the hall to a back door that opened almost on the bay, and flitted down a flight of rocky steps to the shore, past a little grove of pointed firs. How divine the cool salt air was after the sultry evening! How exquisite the silver patterns of moonlight on the bay! How dreamlike that ship which had sailed at the rising of the moon and was now approaching the harbor bar! It was a night when you might expect to stray into a dance of mermaids.

Nora was hunched up in the grim black shadow of a rock by the water's edge, looking more like a thunderstorm than ever.

"May I sit with you for a while?" asked Anne. "I'm a little tired of dancing and it's a shame to miss this wonderful night. I envy you with the whole harbor for a back yard like this."

"What would you feel like at a time like this if you had no beau?" asked Nora abruptly and sullenly. "Or any likelihood of one," she added still more sullenly.

"I think it must be your own fault if you haven't," said Anne, sitting down beside her. Nora found herself telling Anne her troubles. There was always

something about Anne that made people tell her their troubles.

“You’re saying that to be polite of course. You needn’t. You know as well as I do that I’m not a girl men are likely to fall in love with ... I’m ‘the plain Miss Nelson.’ It isn’t my fault that I haven’t anybody. I couldn’t stand it in there any longer. I had to come down here and just let myself be unhappy. I’m tired of smiling and being agreeable to every one and pretending not to care when they give me digs about not being married. I’m not going to pretend any longer. I do care ... I care horribly. I’m the only one of the Nelson girls left. Five of us are married or will be tomorrow. You heard Aunt Mouser casting my age up to me at the dinnertable. And I heard her telling Mother before dinner that I had ‘aged quite a bit’ since last summer. Of course I have. I’m twenty-eight. In twelve more years I’ll be forty. How will I endure life at forty, Anne, if I haven’t got any roots of my own by that time?”

“I wouldn’t mind what a foolish old woman said.”

“Oh, wouldn’t you? You haven’t a nose like mine. I’ll be as beaky as Father in ten more years. And I suppose you wouldn’t care, either, if you’d waited years for a man to propose ... and he just wouldn’t?”

“Oh, yes, I think I would care about that.”

“Well, that’s my predicament exactly. Oh, I know you’ve heard of Jim Wilcox and me. It’s such an old story. He’s been hanging around me for years ... but he’s never said anything about getting married.”

“Do you care for him?”

“Of course I care. I’ve always pretended I didn’t but, as I’ve told you, I’m through with pretending. And he’s never been near me since last January. We had a fight ... but we’ve had hundreds of fights. He always came back before ... but he hasn’t come this time ... and he never will. He doesn’t want to. Look at his house across the bay, shining in the moonlight. I suppose he’s there ... and I’m here ... and all the harbor between us. That’s the way it always will be. It ... it’s terrible! And I can’t do a thing.”

“If you sent for him, wouldn’t he come back?”

“Send for him! Do you think I’d do that? I’d die first. If he wants to come, there’s nothing to prevent him coming. If he doesn’t, I don’t want him to. Yes, I do ... I do! I love Jim ... and I want to get married. I want to have a home of my own and be ‘Mrs.’ and shut Aunt Mouser’s mouth. Oh, I wish I could be Barnabas or Saul for a few moments just to swear at her! If she calls me ‘poor Nora’ again I’ll throw a scuttle at her. But after all, she only says what everybody thinks. Mother has despaired long ago of my ever marrying, so she leaves me alone, but the rest rag me. I hate Sally ... of course I’m dreadful ... but I hate her. She’s getting a nice husband and a lovely home. It isn’t fair she should have everything and I nothing. She isn’t better or cleverer or much prettier than me ... only luckier. I suppose you think I’m awful ... not that I care what you think.”

“I think you’re very, very tired, after all these weeks of preparation and strain, and that things which were always hard have become too hard all at once.”

“You understand ... oh, yes, I always knew you would. I’ve wanted to be friends with you, Anne Shirley. I like the way you laugh. I’ve always wished I could laugh like that. I’m not as sulky as I look ... it’s these eyebrows. I really think they’re what scare the men away. I never had a real girl friend in my life. But of course I always had Jim. We’ve been ... friends ... ever since we were kids. Why, I used to put a light up in that little window in the attic whenever I wanted him over particularly and he’d sail across at once. We went everywhere together. No other boy ever had a chance ... not that any one wanted it, I suppose. And now it’s all over. He was just tired of me and was glad of the excuse of a quarrel to get free. Oh, won’t I hate you tomorrow because I’ve told you this!”

“Why?”

“We always hate people who surprise our secrets, I suppose,” said Nora drearily. “But there’s something gets into you at a wedding ... and I just don’t care ... I don’t care for anything. Oh, Anne Shirley, I’m so miserable! Just let me have a good cry on your shoulder. I’ve got to smile and look happy all day tomorrow. Sally thinks it’s because I’m

superstitious that I wouldn't be her bridesmaid... . 'Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,' you know. 'Tisn't! I just couldn't endure to stand there and hear her saying, 'I will,' and know I'd never have a chance to say it for Jim. I'd have flung back my head and howled. I want to be a bride ... and have a trousseau ... and monogrammed linen ... and lovely presents. Even Aunt Mouser's silver butter-dish. She always gives a butter-dish to every bride ... awful things with tops like the dome of St. Peter's. We could have had it on the breakfast table just for Jim to make fun of. Anne, I think I'm going crazy."

The dance was over when the girls went back to the house, hand in hand. People were being stowed away for the night. Tommy Nelson was taking Barnabas and Saul to the barn. Aunt Mouser was still sitting on a sofa, thinking of all the dreadful things she hoped wouldn't happen on the morrow.

"I hope nobody will get up and give a reason why they shouldn't be joined together. That happened at Tillie Hatfield's wedding."

"No such good luck for Gordon as that," said the groomsman. Aunt Mouser fixed him with a stony brown eye.

"Young man, marriage isn't exactly a joke."

"You bet it isn't," said the unrepentant. "Hello, Nora, when are we going to have a chance to dance at your wedding?"

Nora did not answer in words. She went closer up to him and deliberately slapped him, first on one side of his face and then on the other. The slaps were not make-believe ones. Then she went upstairs without looking behind her.

"That girl," said Aunt Mouser, "is overwrought."

Chapter 16

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The forenoon of Saturday passed in a whirl of last-minute things. Anne, shrouded in one of Mrs. Nelson's aprons, spent it in the kitchen helping Nora with the salads. Nora was all prickles, evidently repenting, as she had foretold, her confidences of the night before.

"We'll be all tired out for a month," she snapped, "and Father can't really afford all this splurge. But Sally was set on having what she calls a 'pretty wedding' and Father gave in. He's always spoiled her."

"Spite and jealousy," said Aunt Mouser, suddenly popping her head out of the pantry, where she was driving Mrs. Nelson frantic with her hopings against hope.

"She's right," said Nora bitterly to Anne. "Quite right. I am spiteful and jealous ... I hate the very look of happy people. But all the same I'm not sorry I slapped Jud Taylor's face last night. I'm only sorry I didn't tweak his nose into the bargain. Well, that finishes the salads. They do look pretty. I love fussing things up when I'm normal. Oh, after all, I hope everything will go off nicely for Sally's sake. I suppose I do love her underneath everything, though just now I feel as if I hated every one and Jim Wilcox worst of all."

"Well, all I hope is the groom won't be missing just before the ceremony," floated out from the pantry in Aunt Mouser's lugubrious tones. "Austin Creed was. He just forgot he was to be married that day. The Creeds were always forgetful, but I call that carrying things too far."

The two girls looked at each other and laughed. Nora's whole face changed when she laughed ... lightened ... glowed ... rippled. And then some one came out to tell her that Barnabas had been sick on the stairs ... too many chicken livers probably. Nora rushed off to repair the damage and Aunt

Mouser came out of the pantry to hope that the wedding-cake wouldn't disappear as had happened at Alma Clark's wedding ten years before.

By noon everything was in immaculate readiness ... the table laid, the beds beautifully dressed, baskets of flowers everywhere; and in the big north room upstairs Sally and her three bridesmaids were in quivering splendor. Anne, in her Nile green dress and hat, looked at herself in the mirror, and wished that Gilbert could see her.

"You're wonderful," said Nora half enviously.

"You're looking wonderful yourself, Nora. That smoke-blue chiffon and that picture hat bring out the gloss of your hair and the blue of your eyes."

"There's nobody to care how I look," said Nora bitterly. "Well, watch me grin, Anne. I mustn't be the death's head at the feast, I suppose. I have to play the wedding-march after all ... Vera's got a terrible headache. I feel more like playing the Dead March, as Aunt Mouser foreboded."

Aunt Mouser, who had wandered round all the morning, getting in everybody's way, in a none too clean old kimono and a wilted "boudoir cap," now appeared resplendent in maroon grosgrain and told Sally one of her sleeves didn't fit and she hoped nobody's petticoat would show below her dress as had happened at Annie Crewson's wedding. Mrs. Nelson came in and cried because Sally looked so lovely in her wedding-dress.

"Now, now, don't be sentimental, Jane," soothed Aunt Mouser. "You've still got one daughter left ... and likely to have her by all accounts. Tears ain't lucky at weddings. Well, all I hope is nobody'll drop dead like old Uncle Cromwell at Roberta Pringle's wedding, right in the middle of the ceremony. The bride spent two weeks in bed from shock."

With this inspiring send-off the bridal party went downstairs, to the strains of Nora's wedding-march somewhat stormily played, and Sally and Gordon were married without anybody dropping dead or forgetting the ring. It was a pretty wedding group and even Aunt Mouser gave up worrying about the universe for a few moments. "After all," she told Sally hopefully later on, "even if you ain't very happy married, it's likely you'd

be more unhappy not.” Nora alone continued to glower from the piano stool, but she went up to Sally and gave her a fierce hug, wedding-veil and all.

“So that’s finished,” said Nora drearily, when the dinner was over and the bridal party and most of the guests had gone. She glanced around at the room which looked as forlorn and disheveled as rooms always do in the aftermath ... a faded, trampled corsage lying on the floor ... chairs awry ... a torn piece of lace ... two dropped handkerchiefs ... crumbs the children had scattered ... a dark stain on the ceiling where the water from a jug Aunt Mouser had overturned in a guestroom had seeped through.

“I must clear up this mess,” went on Nora savagely. “There’s a lot of young fry waiting for the boat train and some staying over Sunday. They’re going to wind up with a bonfire on the shore and a moonlit rock dance. You can imagine how much I feel like moonlight dancing. I want to go to bed and cry.”

“A house after a wedding is over does seem a rather forsaken place,” said Anne. “But I’ll help you clear up and then we’ll have a cup of tea.”

“Anne Shirley, do you think a cup of tea is a panacea for everything? It’s you who ought to be the old maid, not me. Never mind. I don’t want to be horrid, but I suppose it’s my native disposition. I hate the thought of this shore dance more than the wedding. Jim always used to be at our shore dances. Anne, I’ve made up my mind to go and train for a nurse. I know I’ll hate it ... and heaven help my future patients ... but I’m not going to hang around Summerside and be teased about being on the shelf any longer. Well, let’s tackle this pile of greasy plates and look as if we liked it.”

“I do like it ... I’ve always liked washing dishes. It’s fun to make dirty things clean and shining again.”

“Oh, you ought to be in a museum,” snapped Nora.

By moonrise everything was ready for the shore dance. The boys had a huge bonfire of driftwood ablaze on the point, and the waters of the harbor

were creaming and shimmering in the moonlight. Anne was expecting to enjoy herself hugely, but a glimpse of Nora's face, as the latter went down the steps carrying a basket of sandwiches, gave her pause.

"She's so unhappy. If there was anything I could do!"

An idea popped into Anne's head. She had always been a prey to impulse. Darting into the kitchen, she snatched up a little hand-lamp alight there, sped up the back stairs and up another flight to the attic. She set the light in the dormer-window that looked out across the harbor. The trees hid it from the dancers.

"He may see it and come. I suppose Nora will be furious with me, but that won't matter if he only comes. And now to wrap up a bit of wedding-cake for Rebecca Dew."

Jim Wilcox did not come. Anne gave up looking for him after a while and forgot him in the merriment of the evening. Nora had disappeared and Aunt Mouser had for a wonder gone to bed. It was eleven o'clock when the revelry ceased and the tired moonlighters yawned their way upstairs. Anne was so sleepy, she never thought of the light in the attic. But at two o'clock Aunt Mouser crept into the room and flashed a candle in the girls' faces.

"Goodness, what's the matter?" gasped Dot Fraser, sitting up in bed.

"S-s-s-sh," warned Aunt Mouser, her eyes nearly popping out of her head, "I think there's some one in the house ... I know there is. What is that noise?"

"Sounds like a cat mewling or a dog barking," giggled Dot.

"Nothing of the sort," said Aunt Mouser severely. "I know there's a dog barking in the barn, but that is not what wakened me. It was a bump ... a loud, distinct bump."

"From ghosties and ghoulies and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, good Lord, deliver us," murmured Anne.

“Miss Shirley, this ain’t any laughing-matter. There’s burglars in this house. I’m going to call Samuel.”

Aunt Mouser disappeared and the girls looked at each other.

“Do you suppose ... all the wedding-presents are down in the library ...” said Anne.

“I’m going to get up, anyhow,” said Mamie. “Anne, did you ever see anything like Aunt Mouser’s face when she held the candle low and the shadows fell upward ... and all those wisps of hair hanging about it? Talk of the Witch of Endor!”

Four girls in kimonos slipped out into the hall. Aunt Mouser was coming along it, followed by Dr. Nelson in dressing-gown and slippers. Mrs. Nelson, who couldn’t find her kimono, was sticking a terrified face out of her door.

“Oh, Samuel ... don’t take any risks ... if it’s burglars they may shoot... .”

“Nonsense! I don’t believe there’s anything,” said the Doctor.

“I tell you I heard a bump,” quavered Aunt Mouser.

A couple of boys joined the party. They crept cautiously down the stairs with the Doctor at the head and Aunt Mouser, candle in one hand and poker in the other, bringing up the rear.

There were undoubtedly noises in the library. The Doctor opened the door and walked in.

Barnabas, who had contrived to be overlooked in the library when Saul had been taken to the barn, was sitting on the back of the chesterfield, blinking amused eyes. Nora and a young man were standing in the middle of the room, which was dimly lighted by another flickering candle. The young man had his arms around Nora and was holding a large white handkerchief to her face.

“He’s chloroforming her!” shrieked Aunt Mouser, letting the poker fall with a tremendous crash.

The young man turned, dropped the handkerchief and looked foolish. Yet he was a rather nice-looking young man, with crinkly russet eyes and crinkly red-brown hair, not to mention a chin that gave the world assurance of a chin.

Nora snatched the handkerchief up and applied it to her face.

“Jim Wilcox, what does this mean?” said the Doctor, with exceeding sternness.

“I don’t know what it means,” said Jim Wilcox rather sulkily. “All I know is Nora signaled for me. I didn’t see the light till I got home at one from a Masonic banquet in Summerside. And I sailed right over.”

“I didn’t signal for you,” stormed Nora. “For pity’s sake don’t look like that, Father. I wasn’t asleep ... I was sitting at my window ... I hadn’t undressed ... and I saw a man coming up from the shore. When he got near the house I knew it was Jim, so I ran down. And I ... I ran into the library door and made my nose bleed. He’s just been trying to stop it.”

“I jumped in at the window and knocked over that bench... .”

“I told you I heard a bump,” said Aunt Mouser.

“... and now Nora says she didn’t signal for me, so I’ll just relieve you of my unwelcome presence, with apologies to all concerned.”

“It’s really too bad to have disturbed your night’s rest and brought you all the way over the bay on a wild-goose chase,” said Nora as icily as possible, consistent with hunting for a bloodless spot on Jim’s handkerchief.

“Wild- goose chase is right,” said the Doctor.

“You’d better try a door-key down your back,” said Aunt Mouser.

“It was I who put the light in the window,” said Anne shamefacedly, “and then I forgot ...”

“You dared!” cried Nora, “I’ll never forgive you ...”

“Have you all gone crazy?” said the Doctor irritably. “What’s all this fuss about, anyhow? For heaven’s sake put that window down, Jim ... there’s a wind blowing in fit to chill you to the bone. Nora, hang your head back and your nose will be all right.”

Nora was shedding tears of rage and shame. Mingled with the blood on her face they made her a fearsome sight. Jim Wilcox looked as if he wished the floor would open and gently drop him in the cellar.

“Well,” said Aunt Mouser belligerently, “all you can do now is marry her, Jim Wilcox. She’ll never get a husband if it gets round that she was found here with you at two o’clock at night.”

“Marry her!” cried Jim in exasperation. “What have I wanted all my life but to marry her ... never wanted anything else!”

“Then why didn’t you say so long ago?” demanded Nora, whirling about to face him.

“Say so? You’ve snubbed and frozen and jeered at me for years. You’ve gone out of your way times without number to show me how you despised me. I didn’t think it was the least use to ask you. And last January you said ...”

“You goaded me into saying it ...”

“I goaded you! I like that! You picked a quarrel with me just to get rid of me... .”

“I didn’t ... I ...”

“And yet I was fool enough to tear over here in the dead of night because I thought you’d put our old signal in the window and wanted me! Ask you to marry me! Well, I’ll ask you now and have done with it and you can have

the fun of turning me down before all this gang. Nora Edith Nelson, will you marry me?”

“Oh, won’t I ... won’t I!” cried Nora so shamelessly that even Barnabas blushed for her.

Jim gave her one incredulous look ... then sprang at her. Perhaps her nose had stopped bleeding ... perhaps it hadn’t. It didn’t matter.

“I think you’ve all forgotten that this is the Sabbath morn,” said Aunt Mouser, who had just remembered it herself. “I could do with a cup of tea if any one would make it. I ain’t used to demonstrations like this. All I hope is poor Nora has really landed him at last. At least, she has witnesses.”

They went to the kitchen and Mrs. Nelson came down and made tea for them ... all except Jim and Nora, who remained closeted in the library with Barnabas for chaperon. Anne did not see Nora until the morning ... such a different Nora, ten years younger, flushed with happiness.

“I owe this to you, Anne. If you hadn’t set the light ... though just for two and a half minutes last night I could have chewed your ears off!”

“And to think I slept through it all,” moaned Tommy Nelson heartbrokenly.

But the last word was with Aunt Mouser.

“Well, all I hope is it won’t be a case of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure.”

Chapter 17

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“School closed today. Two months of Green Gables and dew-wet, spicy ferns ankle-deep along the brook and lazy, dappling shadows in Lover’s Lane and wild strawberries in Mr. Bell’s pasture and the dark loveliness of firs in the Haunted Wood! My very soul has wings.

“Jen Pringle brought me a bouquet of lilies of the valley and wished me a happy vacation. She’s coming down to spend a weekend with me some time. Talk of miracles!

“But little Elizabeth is heartbroken. I wanted her for a visit, too, but Mrs. Campbell did not ‘deem it advisable.’ Luckily, I hadn’t said anything to Elizabeth about it, so she was spared that disappointment.

“‘I believe I’ll be Lizzie all the time you’re away, Miss Shirley,’ she told me. ‘I’ll feel like Lizzie anyway.’

“‘But think of the fun we’ll have when I come back,’ I said. ‘Of course you won’t be Lizzie. There’s no such person as Lizzie in you. And I’ll write you every week, little Elizabeth.’

“‘Oh, Miss Shirley, will you! I’ve never had a letter in my life. Won’t it be fun! And I’ll write you if they’ll let me have a stamp. If they don’t, you’ll know I’m thinking of you just the same. I’ve called the chipmunk in the back yard after you ... Shirley. You don’t mind, do you? I thought at first of calling it Anne Shirley ... but then I thought that mightn’t be respectful ... and, anyway, Anne doesn’t sound chipmunky. Besides, it might be a gentleman chipmunk. Chipmunks are such darling things, aren’t they? But the Woman says they eat the rosebush roots.’

“‘She would!’ I said.

“I asked Katherine Brooke where she was going to spend the summer and she briefly answered, ‘Here. Where did you suppose?’

“I felt as if I ought to ask her to Green Gables, but I just couldn’t. Of course I don’t suppose she’d have come, anyway. And she’s such a kill-joy. She’d spoil everything. But when I think of her alone in that cheap boardinghouse all summer, my conscience gives me unpleasant jabs.

“Dusty Miller brought in a live snake the other day and dropped it on the floor of the kitchen. If Rebecca Dew could have turned pale she would have. ‘This is really the last straw!’ she said. But Rebecca Dew is just a little peevish these days because she has to spend all her spare time picking big gray-green beetles off the rose trees and dropping them in a can of kerosene. She thinks there are entirely too many insects in the world.

“‘It’s just going to be eaten up by them some day,’ she predicts mournfully.

“Nora Nelson is to be married to Jim Wilcox in September. Very quietly ... no fuss, no guests, no bridesmaids. Nora told me that was the only way to escape Aunt Mouser, and she will not have Aunt Mouser to see her married. I’m to be present, however, sort of unofficially. Nora says Jim would never have come back if I hadn’t set that light in the window. He was going to sell his store and go west. Well, when I think of all the matches I’m supposed to have made ...

“Sally says they’ll fight most of their time but that they’ll be happier fighting with each other than agreeing with anybody else. But I don’t think they’ll fight ... much. I think it is just misunderstanding that makes most of the trouble in the world. You and I for so long, now ...

“Good night, belovedest. Your sleep will be sweet if there is any influence in the wishes of

“YOUR OWN.

“P.S. The above sentence is quoted verbatim from a letter of Aunt Chatty’s grandmother.”

The Second Year

Chapter 1

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“September 14th.

“I can hardly reconcile myself to the fact that our beautiful two months are over. They were beautiful, weren’t they, dearest? And now it will be only two years before ...

(Several paragraphs omitted.)

“But there has been a good deal of pleasure in coming back to Windy Poplars ... to my own private tower and my own special chair and my own lofty bed ... and even Dusty Miller basking on the kitchen windowsill.

“The widows were glad to see me and Rebecca Dew said frankly, ‘It’s good to have you back.’ Little Elizabeth felt the same way. We had a rapturous meeting at the green gate.

“‘I was a little afraid you might have got into Tomorrow before me,’ said little Elizabeth.

“‘Isn’t this a lovely evening?’ I said.

“‘Where you are it’s always a lovely evening, Miss Shirley,’ said little Elizabeth.

“Talk of compliments!

“‘How have you put in the summer, darling?’ I asked.

“‘Thinking,’ said little Elizabeth softly, ‘of all the lovely things that will happen in Tomorrow.’

“Then we went up to the tower room and read a story about elephants. Little Elizabeth is very much interested in elephants at present.

“‘There is something bewitching about the very name of elephant, isn’t there?’ she said gravely, holding her chin in her small hands after a fashion she has. ‘I expect to meet lots of elephants in Tomorrow.’

“We put an elephant park in our map of fairyland. It is no use looking superior and disdainful, my Gilbert, as I know you will be looking when you read this. Not a bit of use. The world always will have fairies. It can’t get along without them. And somebody has to supply them.

“It’s rather nice to be back in school, too. Katherine Brooke isn’t any more companionable but my pupils seemed glad to see me and Jen Pringle wants me to help her make the tin halos for the angels’ heads in a Sunday-school concert.

“I think the course of study this year will be much more interesting than last year. Canadian History has been added to the curriculum. I have to give a little ‘lecturette’ tomorrow on the War of 1812. It seems so strange to read over the stories of those old wars ... things that can never happen again. I don’t suppose any of us will ever have more than an academic interest in ‘battles long ago.’ It’s impossible to think of Canada ever being at war again. I am so thankful that phase of history is over.

“We are going to reorganize the Dramatic Club at once and canvass every family connected with the school for a subscription. Lewis Allen and I are going to take the Dawlish Road as our territory and canvass it next Saturday afternoon. Lewis will try to kill two birds with one stone, as he is competing for a prize offered by Country Homes for the best photograph of an attractive farmhouse. The prize is twenty-five dollars and that will mean a badly needed new suit and overcoat for Lewis. He worked on a farm all summer and is doing housework and waiting on the table at his boardinghouse again this year. He must hate it, but he never says a word about it. I do like Lewis ... he is so plucky and ambitious, with a charming grin in place of a smile. And he really isn’t over-strong. I was afraid last year he would break down. But his summer on the farm seems to have built him up a bit. This is his last year in High and then he hopes to achieve a year at Queen’s. The widows are going to ask him to Sunday-night supper as often as possible this winter. Aunt Kate and I have had a conference on ways and means and I persuaded her to let me put up the

extras. Of course we didn't try to persuade Rebecca Dew. I merely asked Aunt Kate in Rebecca's hearing if I could have Lewis Allen in on Sunday nights at least twice a month. Aunt Kate said coldly she was afraid they couldn't afford it, in addition to their usual lonely girl.

"Rebecca Dew uttered a cry of anguish.

"This is the last straw. Getting so poor we can't afford a bite now and again to a poor, hardworking, sober boy who is trying to get an education! You pay more for liver for That Cat and him ready to burst. Well, take a dollar off my wages and have him.'

"The gospel according to Rebecca was accepted. Lewis Allen is coming and neither Dusty Miller's liver nor Rebecca Dew's wages will be less. Dear Rebecca Dew!

"Aunt Chatty crept into my room last night to tell me she wanted to get a beaded cape but that Aunt Kate thought she was too old for it and her feelings had been hurt.

"Do you think I am, Miss Shirley? I don't want to be undignified ... but I've always wanted a beaded cape so much. I always thought they were what you might call jaunty ... and now they're in again."

"Too old! Of course you're not too old, dearest,' I assured her. 'Nobody is ever too old to wear just what she wants to wear. You wouldn't want to wear it if you were too old.' 'I shall get it and defy Kate,' said Aunt Chatty, anything but defiantly. But I think she will ... and I think I know how to reconcile Aunt Kate.

"I'm alone in my tower. Outside there is a still, still night and the silence is velvety. Not even the poplars are stirring. I have just leaned out of my window and blown a kiss in the direction of somebody not a hundred miles away from Kingsport."

Chapter 2

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The Dawlish Road was a meandering sort of road, and the afternoon was made for wanderers ... or so Anne and Lewis thought as they prowled along it, now and then pausing to enjoy a sudden sapphire glimpse of the strait through the trees or to snap a particularly lovely bit of scenery or picturesque little house in a leafy hollow. It was not, perhaps, quite so pleasant to call at the houses themselves and ask for subscriptions for the benefit of the Dramatic Club, but Anne and Lewis took turns doing the talking ... he taking on the women while Anne manipulated the men.

“Take the men if you’re going in that dress and hat,” Rebecca Dew had advised. “I’ve had a good bit of experience in canvassing in my day and it all went to show that the better-dressed and better-looking you are the more money ... or promise of it ... you’ll get, if it’s the men you have to tackle. But if it’s the women, put on the oldest and ugliest things you have.”

“Isn’t a road an interesting thing, Lewis?” said Anne dreamily. “Not a straight road, but one with ends and kinks around which anything of beauty and surprise may be lurking. I’ve always loved bends in roads.”

“Where does this Dawlish Road go to?” asked Lewis practically ... though at the same moment he was reflecting that Miss Shirley’s voice always made him think of spring.

“I might be horrid and school-teacherish, Lewis, and say that it doesn’t go anywhere ... it stays right here. But I won’t. As to where it goes or where it leads to ... who cares? To the end of the world and back, perhaps. Remember what Emerson says ... ‘Oh, what have I to do with time?’ That’s our motto for today. I expect the universe will muddle on if we let it alone for a while. Look at those cloud shadows ... and that tranquillity of green valleys ... and that house with an apple tree at each of its corners. Imagine it in spring. This is one of the days people feel alive and every wind of the world is a sister. I’m glad there are so many clumps of spice ferns along this road ... spice ferns with gossamer webs on them. It brings

back the days when I pretended ... or believed ... I think I really did believe ... that gossamer webs were fairies' tablecloths."

They found a wayside spring in a golden hollow and sat down on a moss that seemed made of tiny ferns, to drink from a cup that Lewis twisted out of birch bark.

"You never know the real joy of drinking till you're dry with thirst and find water," he said. "That summer I worked out west on the railroad they were building, I got lost on the prairie one hot day and wandered for hours. I thought I'd die of thirst and then I came to a settler's shack, and he had a little spring like this in a clump of willows. How I drank! I've understood the Bible and its love of good water better ever since."

"We're going to get some water from another quarter," said Anne rather anxiously. "There's a shower coming up and ... Lewis, I love showers, but I've got on my best hat and my second-best dress. And there isn't a house within half a mile."

"There's an old deserted blacksmith's forge over there," said Lewis, "but we'll have to run for it."

Run they did and from its shelter enjoyed the shower as they had enjoyed everything else on that carefree, gypsying afternoon. A veiled hush had fallen over the world. All the young breezes that had been whispering and rustling so importantly along the Dawlish Road had folded their wings and become motionless and soundless. Not a leaf stirred, not a shadow flickered. The maple leaves at the bend of the road turned wrong side out until the trees looked as if they were turning pale from fear. A huge cool shadow seemed to engulf them like a green wave ... the cloud had reached them. Then the rain, with a rush and sweep of wind. The shower pattered sharply down on the leaves, danced along the smoking red road and pelted the roof of the old forge right merrily.

"If this lasts ..." said Lewis.

But it didn't. As suddenly as it had come up, it was over and the sun was shining on the wet, glistening trees. Dazzling glimpses of blue sky

appeared between the torn white clouds. Far away they could see a hill still dim with rain, but below them the cup of the valley seemed to brim over with peach-tinted mists. The woods around were pranked out with a sparkle and glitter as of springtime, and a bird began to sing in the big maple over the forge as if he were cheated into believing it really was springtime, so amazingly fresh and sweet did the world seem all at once.

“Let’s explore this,” said Anne, when they resumed their tramp, looking along a little side road running between old rail fences smothered in goldenrod.

“I don’t think there’s anybody living along that road,” said Lewis doubtfully. “I think it’s only a road running down to the harbor.”

“Never mind ... let’s go along it. I’ve always had a weakness for side roads ... something off the beaten track, lost and green and lonely. Smell the wet grass, Lewis. Besides, I feel in my bones that there is a house on it ... a certain kind of house ... a very snappable house.”

Anne’s bones did not deceive her. Soon there was a house ... and a snappable house to boot. It was a quaint, old-fashioned one, low in the eaves, with square, small-paned windows. Big willows stretched patriarchal arms over it and an apparent wilderness of perennials and shrubs crowded all about it. It was weather-gray and shabby, but the big barns beyond it were snug and prosperous-looking, up-to-date in every respect. “I’ve always heard, Miss Shirley, that when a man’s barns are better than his house, it’s a sign that his income exceeds his expenditure,” said Lewis, as they sauntered up the deep-rutted grassy lane.

“I should think it was a sign that he thought more of his horses than of his family,” laughed Anne. “I’m not expecting a subscription to our club here, but that’s the most likely house for a prize contest we’ve encountered yet. It’s grayness won’t matter in a photograph.”

“This lane doesn’t look as if it were much traveled,” said Lewis with a shrug. “Evidently the folks who live here aren’t strongly sociable. I’m afraid we’ll find they don’t even know what a dramatic club is. Anyhow,

I'm going to secure my picture before we rouse any of them from their lair."

The house seemed deserted, but after the picture was taken they opened a little white gate, crossed the yard and knocked on a faded blue kitchen door, the front door evidently being like that of Windy Poplars, more for show than for use ... if a door literally hidden in Virginia creeper could be said to be for show.

They expected at least the civility which they had hitherto met in their calls, whether backed up with generosity or not. Consequently they were decidedly taken aback when the door was jerked open and on the threshold appeared, not the smiling farmer's wife or daughter they had expected to see, but a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty, with grizzled hair and bushy eyebrows, who demanded unceremoniously,

"What do you want?"

"We have called, hoping to interest you in our High School Dramatic Club," began Anne, rather lamely. But she was spared further effort.

"Never heard of it. Don't want to hear about it. Nothing to do with it," was the uncompromising interruption, and the door was promptly shut in their faces.

"I believe we've been snubbed," said Anne as they walked away.

"Nice amiable gentleman, that," grinned Lewis. "I'm sorry for his wife, if he has one."

"I don't think he can have, or she would civilize him a trifle," said Anne, trying to recover her shattered poise. "I wish Rebecca Dew had the handling of him. But we've got his house, at least, and I've a premonition that it's going to win the prize. Bother! I've just got a pebble in my shoe and I'm going to sit down on my gentleman's stone dyke, with or without his permission, and remove it."

"Luckily it's out of sight of the house," said Lewis.

Anne had just retied her shoelace when they heard something pushing softly through the jungle of shrubbery on their right. Then a small boy about eight years of age came into view and stood surveying them bashfully, with a big apple turnover clasped tightly in his chubby hands. He was a pretty child, with glossy brown curls, big trustful brown eyes and delicately modeled features. There was an air of refinement about him, in spite of the fact that he was bareheaded and bare-legged, with only a faded blue cotton shirt and a pair of threadbare velvet knickerbockers between head and legs. But he looked like a small prince in disguise.

Just behind him was a big black Newfoundland dog whose head was almost on a level with the lad's shoulder.

Anne looked at him with a smile that always won children's hearts.

"Hello, sonny," said Lewis. "Who belongs to you?"

The boy came forward with an answering smile, holding out his turnover.

"This is for you to eat," he said shyly. "Dad made it for me, but I'd rather give it to you. I've lots to eat."

Lewis, rather tactlessly, was on the point of refusing to take the little chap's snack, but Anne gave him a quick nudge. Taking the hint, he accepted it gravely and handed it to Anne, who, quite as gravely, broke it in two and gave half of it back to him. They knew they must eat it and they had painful doubts as to "Dad's" ability in the cooking line, but the first mouthful reassured them. "Dad" might not be strong on courtesy but he could certainly make turnovers.

"This is delicious," said Anne. "What is your name, dear?"

"Teddy Armstrong," said the small benefactor. "But Dad always calls me Little Fellow. I'm all he has, you know. Dad is awful fond of me and I'm awful fond of Dad. I'm afraid you think my dad is impolite 'cause he shut that door so quick, but he doesn't mean to be. I heard you asking for something to eat." ("We didn't but it doesn't matter," thought Anne.)

“I was in the garden behind the hollyhocks, so I just thought I’d bring you my turnover ‘cause I’m always so sorry for poor people who haven’t plenty to eat. I have, always. My dad is a splendid cook. You ought to see the rice puddings he can make.”

“Does he put raisins in them?” asked Lewis with a twinkle.

“Lots and lots. There’s nothing mean about my dad.”

“Haven’t you any mother, darling?” asked Anne.

“No. My mother is dead. Mrs. Merrill told me once she’d gone to heaven, but my dad says there’s no such place and I guess he ought to know. My dad is an awful wise man. He’s read thousands of books. I mean to be just ‘zackly like him when I grow up ... only I’ll always give people things to eat when they want them. My dad isn’t very fond of people, you know, but he’s awful good to me.”

“Do you go to school?” asked Lewis.

“No. My dad teaches me at home. The trustees told him I’d have to go next year, though. I think I’d like to go to school and have some other boys to play with. ‘Course I’ve got Carlo and Dad himself is splendid to play with when he has time. My dad is pretty busy, you know. He has to run the farm and keep the house clean, too. That’s why he can’t be bothered having people around, you see. When I get bigger I’ll be able to help him lots and then he’ll have more time to be polite to folks.”

“That turnover was just about right, Little Fellow,” said Lewis, swallowing the last crumb.

The Little Fellow’s eyes beamed.

“I’m so glad you liked it,” he said.

“Would you like to have your picture taken?” said Anne, feeling that it would never do to offer this generous small soul money. “If you would, Lewis will take it.”

“Oh, wouldn’t I!” said the Little Fellow eagerly. “Carlo, too?”

“Certainly Carlo, too.”

Anne posed the two prettily before a background of shrubs, the little lad standing with his arm about his big, curly playmate’s neck, both dog and boy seeming equally well pleased, and Lewis took the picture with his last remaining plate.

“If it comes out well I’ll send you one by mail,” he promised. “How shall I address it?”

“Teddy Armstrong, care of Mr. James Armstrong, Glencove Road,” said the Little Fellow. “Oh, won’t it be fun to have something coming to me mineself through the postoffice! I tell you I’ll feel awful proud. I won’t say a word to Dad about it so that it’ll be a splendid surprise for him.”

“Well, look out for your parcel in two or three weeks,” said Lewis, as they bade him good-by. But Anne suddenly stooped and kissed the little sunburned face. There was something about it that tugged at her heart. He was so sweet ... so gallant ... so motherless!

They looked back at him before a curve in the lane and saw him standing on the dyke, with his dog, waving his hand to them.

Of course Rebecca Dew knew all about the Armstrongs.

“James Armstrong has never got over his wife’s death five years ago,” she said. “He wasn’t so bad before that ... agreeable enough, though a bit of a hermit. Kind of built that way. He was just wrapped up in his bit of a wife ... she was twenty years younger than he was. Her death was an awful shock to him I’ve heard ... just seemed to change his nature completely. He got sour and cranky. Wouldn’t even get a housekeeper ... looked after his house and child himself. He kept bachelor’s hall for years before he was married, so he ain’t a bad hand at it.”

“But it’s no life for the child,” said Aunt Chatty. “His father never takes him to church or anywhere he’d see people.”

“He worships the boy, I’ve heard,” said Aunt Kate.

““Thou shalt have no other gods before me,”” quoted Rebecca Dew suddenly.

Chapter 3

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It was almost three weeks before Lewis found time to develop his pictures. He brought them up to Windy Poplars the first Sunday night he came to supper. Both the house and the Little Fellow came out splendidly. The Little Fellow smiled up from the picture “as real as life,” said Rebecca Dew.

“Why, he looks like you, Lewis!” exclaimed Anne.

“He does that,” agreed Rebecca Dew, squinting at it judicially. “The minute I saw it, his face reminded me of somebody but I couldn’t think who.”

“Why, the eyes ... the forehead ... the whole expression ... are yours, Lewis,” said Anne.

“It’s hard to believe I was ever such a goodlooking little chap,” shrugged Lewis. “I’ve got a picture of myself somewhere, taken when I was eight. I must hunt it out and compare it. You’d laugh to see it, Miss Shirley. I’m the most sober-eyed kid, with long curls and a lace collar, looking stiff as a ramrod. I suppose I had my head clamped in one of those three-clawed contraptions they used to use. If this picture really resembles me, it must be only a coincidence. The Little Fellow can’t be any relation of mine. I haven’t an relative on the Island ... now.”

“Where were you born?” asked Aunt Kate.

“N. B. Father and Mother died when I was ten and I came over here to live with a cousin of mother’s ... I called her Aunt Ida. She died too, you know

... three years ago.”

“Jim Armstrong came from New Brunswick,” said Rebecca Dew. “He ain’t a real islander ... wouldn’t be such a crank if he was. We have our peculiarities but we’re civilized.”

“I’m not sure that I want to discover a relation in the amiable Mr. Armstrong,” grinned Lewis, attacking Aunt Chatty’s cinnamon toast. “However, I think when I get the photograph finished and mounted I’ll take it out to Glencove Road myself and investigate a little. He may be a distant cousin or something. I really know nothing about my mother’s people, if she had any living. I’ve always been under the impression that she hadn’t. Father hadn’t, I know.”

“If you take the picture out in person, won’t the Little Fellow be a bit disappointed over losing his thrill of getting something through the postoffice?” said Anne.

“I’ll make it up to him ... I’ll send him something else by mail.”

The next Saturday afternoon Lewis came driving along Spook's Lane in an antiquated buggy behind a still more antiquated mare.

"I'm going out to Glencove to take little Teddy Armstrong his picture, Miss Shirley. If my dashing turn-out doesn't give you heart-failure I'd like to have you come, too. I don't think any of the wheels will fall off."

"Where on earth did you pick up that relic, Lewis?" demanded Rebecca Dew.

"Don't poke fun at my gallant steed, Miss Dew. Have some respect for age. Mr. Bender lent me both mare and buggy on condition I'd do an errand for him along the Dawlish Road. I hadn't time to walk out to Glencove today and back."

"Time!" said Rebecca Dew. "I could walk there and back myself faster than that animal."

"And carry a bag of potatoes back for Mr. Bender? You wonderful woman!"

Rebecca Dew's red cheeks grew even redder.

"It ain't nice to make fun of your elders," she said rebukingly. Then, by way of coals of fire ... "Could you do with a few doughnuts afore you start out?"

The white mare, however, developed surprising powers of locomotion when they were once more out in the open. Anne giggled to herself as they jogged along the road. What would Mrs. Gardiner or even Aunt Jamesina say if they could see her now? Well, she didn't care. It was a wonderful day for a drive through a land that was keeping its old lovely ritual of autumn, and Lewis was a good companion. Lewis would attain his ambitions. Nobody else of her acquaintance, she reflected, would dream of asking her to go driving in the Bender buggy behind the Bender mare. But it never occurred to Lewis that there was anything odd about it. What difference how you traveled as long as you got there? The calm rims of the

upland hills were as blue, the roads as red, the maples as gorgeous, no matter what vehicle you rode in. Lewis was a philosopher and cared as little what people might say as he did when some of the High School pupils called him “Sissy” because he did housework for his board. Let them call! Some day the laugh would be on the other side. His pockets might be empty but his head wasn’t. Meanwhile the afternoon was an idyl and they were going to see the Little Fellow again. They told Mr. Bender’s brother-in-law about their errand when he put the bag of potatoes in the back of the buggy.

“Do you mean to say you’ve got a photo of little Teddy Armstrong?” exclaimed Mr. Merrill.

“That I have and a good one.” Lewis unwrapped it and held it proudly out. “I don’t believe a professional photographer could have taken a better.”

Mr. Merrill slapped his leg resoundingly.

“Well, if that don’t beat all! Why, little Teddy Armstrong is dead ...”

“Dead!” exclaimed Anne in horror. “Oh, Mr. Merrill ... no ... don’t tell me ... that dear little boy ...”

“Sorry, miss, but it’s a fact. And his father is just about wild and all the worse that he hasn’t got any kind of a picture of him at all. And now you’ve got a good one. Well, well!”

“It ... it seems impossible,” said Anne, her eyes full of tears. She was seeing the slender little figure waving his farewell from the dyke.

“Sorry to say it’s only too true. He died nearly three weeks ago. Pneumonia. Suffered awful but he was just as brave and patient as any one could be, they say. I dunno what’ll become of Jim Armstrong now. They say he’s like a crazy man — just moping and muttering to himself all the time. ‘If I only had a picture of my Little Fellow,’ he keeps saying.”

“I’m sorry for that man,” said Mrs. Merrill suddenly. She had not hitherto spoken, standing by her husband, a gaunt, square-built gray woman in

wind-whipped calico and check apron. "He's well-to-do and I've always felt he looked down on us because we were poor. But we have our boy ... and it don't never matter how poor you are as long as you've got something to love."

Anne looked at Mrs. Merrill with a new respect. Mrs. Merrill was not beautiful, but as her sunken gray eyes met Anne's, something of spirit kinship was acknowledged between them. Anne had never seen Mrs. Merrill before and never saw her again, but she always remembered her as a woman who had attained to the ultimate secret of life. You were never poor as long as you had something to love.

The golden day was spoiled for Anne. Somehow, the Little Fellow had won her heart in their brief meeting. She and Lewis drove in silence down the Glencove Road and up the grassy lane. Carlo was lying on the stone before the blue door. He got up and came down over to them, as they descended from the buggy, licking Anne's hand and looking up at her with big wistful eyes as if asking for news of his little playmate. The door was open and in the dim room beyond they saw a man with his head bowed on the table.

At Anne's knock he started up and came to the door. She was shocked at the change in him. He was hollow-cheeked, haggard and unshaven, and his deep-set eyes flashed with a fitful fire.

She expected a repulse at first, but he seemed to recognize her, for he said listlessly,

"So you're back? The Little Fellow said you talked to him and kissed him. He liked you. I was sorry I'd been so churlish to you. What is it you want?"

"We want to show you something," said Anne gently.

"Will you come in and sit down?" he said drearily.

Without a word Lewis took the Little Fellow's picture from its wrappings and held it out to him. He snatched it up, gave it one amazed, hungry look, then dropped on his chair and burst into tears and sobs. Anne had never

seen a man weep so before. She and Lewis stood in mute sympathy until he had regained his self-control.

“Oh, you don’t know what this means to me,” he said brokenly at last. “I hadn’t any picture of him. And I’m not like other folks ... I can’t recall a face ... I can’t see faces as most folks can in their mind. It’s been awful since the Little Fellow died... . I couldn’t even remember what he looked like. And now you’ve brought me this ... after I was so rude to you. Sit down ... sit down. I wish I could express my thanks in some way. I guess you’ve saved my reason ... maybe my life. Oh, miss, isn’t it like him? You’d think he was going to speak. My dear Little Fellow! How am I going to live without him? I’ve nothing to live for now. First his mother ... now him.”

“He was a dear little lad,” said Anne tenderly.

“That he was. Little Teddy ... Theodore, his mother named him ... her ‘gift of Gods’ she said he was. And he was so patient and never complained. Once he smiled up in my face and said, ‘Dad, I think you’ve been mistaken in one thing ... just one. I guess there is a heaven, isn’t there? Isn’t there, Dad?’ I said to him, yes, there was... . God forgive me for ever trying to teach him anything else. He smiled again, contented like, and said, ‘Well, Dad, I’m going there and Mother and God are there, so I’ll be pretty well off. But I’m worried about you, Dad. You’ll be so awful lonesome without me. But just do the best you can and be polite to folks and come to us by and by.’ He made me promise I’d try, but when he was gone I couldn’t stand the blankness of it. I’d have gone mad if you hadn’t brought me this. It won’t be so hard now.”

He talked about his Little Fellow for some time, as if he found relief and pleasure in it. His reserve and gruffness seemed to have fallen from him like a garment. Finally Lewis produced the small faded photograph of himself and showed it to him.

“Have you ever seen anybody who looked like that, Mr. Armstrong?” asked Anne.

Mr. Armstrong peered at it in perplexity.

“It’s awful like the Little Fellow,” he said at last. “Whose might it be?”

“Mine,” said Lewis, “when I was seven years old. It was because of the strange resemblance to Teddy that Miss Shirley made me bring it to show you. I thought it possible that you and I or the Little Fellow might be some distant relation. My name is Lewis Allen and my father was George Allen. I was born in New Brunswick.”

James Armstrong shook his head. Then he said,

“What was your mother’s name?”

“Mary Gardiner.”

James Armstrong looked at him for a moment in silence.

“She was my half-sister,” he said at last. “I hardly knew her ... never saw her but once. I was brought up in an uncle’s family after my father’s death. My mother married again and moved away. She came to see me once and brought her little daughter. She died soon after and I never saw my half-sister again. When I came over to the Island to live, I lost all trace of her. You are my nephew and the Little Fellow’s cousin.”

This was surprising news to a lad who had fancied himself alone in the world. Lewis and Anne spent the whole evening with Mr. Armstrong and found him to be a well-read and intelligent man. Somehow, they both took a liking to him. His former inhospitable reception was quite forgotten and they saw only the real worth of the character and temperament below the unpromising shell that had hitherto concealed them.

“Of course the Little Fellow couldn’t have loved his father so much if it hadn’t been so,” said Anne, as she and Lewis drove back to Windy Poplars through the sunset.

When Lewis Allen went the next weekend to see his uncle, the latter said to him,

“Lad, come and live with me. You are my nephew and I can do well for you ... what I’d have done for my Little Fellow if he’d lived. You’re alone in the world and so am I. I need you. I’ll grow hard and bitter again if I live here alone. I want you to help me keep my promise to the Little Fellow. His place is empty. Come you and fill it.”

“Thank you, Uncle; I’ll try,” said Lewis, holding out his hand.

“And bring that teacher of yours here once in a while. I like that girl. The Little Fellow liked her. ‘Dad,’ he said to me, ‘I didn’t think I’d ever like anybody but you to kiss me, but I liked it when she did. There was something in her eyes, Dad.’”

Chapter 4

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“The old porch thermometer says it’s zero and the new side-door one says it’s ten above,” remarked Anne, one frosty December night. “So I don’t know whether to take my muff or not.”

“Better go by the old thermometer,” said Rebecca Dew cautiously. “It’s probably more used to our climate. Where are you going this cold night, anyway?”

“I’m going round to Temple Street to ask Katherine Brooke to spend the Christmas holidays with me at Green Gables.”

“You’ll spoil your holidays, then,” said Rebecca Dew solemnly. “She’d go about snubbing the angels, that one ... that is, if she ever condescended to enter heaven. And the worst of it is, she’s proud of her bad manners ... thinks it shows her strength of mind no doubt!”

“My brain agrees with every word you say but my heart simply won’t,” said Anne. “I feel, in spite of everything, that Katherine Brooke is only a shy, unhappy girl under her disagreeable rind. I can never make any

headway with her in Summerside, but if I can get her to Green Gables I believe it will thaw her out.”

“You won’t get her. She won’t go,” predicted Rebecca Dew. “Probably she’ll take it as an insult to be asked ... think you’re offering her charity. We asked her here once to Christmas dinner ... the year afore you came ... you remember, Mrs. MacComber, the year we had two turkeys give us and didn’t know how we was to get ‘em et ... and all she said was, ‘No, thank you. If there’s anything I hate, it’s the word Christmas!’”

“But that is so dreadful ... hating Christmas! Something has to be done, Rebecca Dew. I’m going to ask her and I’ve a queer feeling in my thumbs that tells me she will come.”

“Somehow,” said Rebecca Dew reluctantly, “when you say a thing is going to happen, a body believes it will. You haven’t got a second sight, have you? Captain MacComber’s mother had it. Useter give me the creeps.”

“I don’t think I have anything that need give you creeps. It’s only just ... I’ve had a feeling for some time that Katherine Brooke is almost crazy with loneliness under her bitter outside and that my invitation will come pat to the psychological moment, Rebecca Dew.”

“I am not a B.A.,” said Rebecca with awful humility, “and I do not deny your right to use words I cannot always understand. Neither do I deny that you can wind people round your little finger. Look how you managed the Pringles. But I do say I pity you if you take that iceberg and nutmeg grater combined home with you for Christmas.”

Anne was by no means as confident as she pretended to be during her walk to Temple Street. Katherine Brooke had really been unbearable of late. Again and again Anne, rebuffed, had said, as grimly as Poe’s raven, “Nevermore.” Only yesterday Katherine had been positively insulting at a staff meeting. But in an unguarded moment Anne had seen something looking out of the older girl’s eyes ... a passionate, half-frantic something like a caged creature mad with discontent. Anne spent the first half of the night trying to decide whether to invite Katherine Brooke to Green Gables or not. Finally she fell asleep with her mind irrevocably made up.

Katherine's landlady showed Anne into the parlor and shrugged a fat shoulder when she asked for Miss Brooke.

"I'll tell her you're here but I dunno if she'll come down. She's sulking. I told her at dinner tonight that Mrs. Rawlins says its scandalous the way she dresses, for a teacher in Summerside High, and she took it high and mighty as usual."

"I don't think you should have told Miss Brooke that," said Anne reproachfully.

"But I thought she ought to know," said Mrs. Dennis somewhat waspishly.

"Did you also think she ought to know that the Inspector said she was one of the best teachers in the Maritimes?" asked Anne. "Or didn't you know it?"

"Oh, I heard it. But she's stuck-up enough now without making her any worse. Proud's no name for it ... though what she's got to be proud of, I dunno. Of course she was mad anyhow tonight because I'd said she couldn't have a dog. She's took a notion into her head she'd like to have a dog. Said she'd pay for his rations and see he was no bother. But what'd I do with him when she was in school? I put my foot down. 'I'm boarding no dogs,' sez I."

"Oh, Mrs. Dennis, won't you let her have a dog? He wouldn't bother you ... much. You could keep him in the basement while she was in school. And a dog really is such a protection at night. I wish you would ... please."

There was always something about Anne Shirley's eyes when she said "please" that people found hard to resist. Mrs. Dennis, in spite of fat shoulders and a meddlesome tongue, was not unkind at heart. Katherine Brooke simply got under her skin at times with her ungracious ways.

"I dunno why you should worry as to her having a dog or not. I didn't know you were such friends. She hasn't any friends. I never had such an unsociable boarder."

“I think that is why she wants a dog, Mrs. Dennis. None of us can live without some kind of companionship.”

“Well, it’s the first human thing I’ve noticed about her,” said Mrs. Dennis. “I dunno’s I have any awful objection to a dog, but she sort of vexed me with her sarcastic way of asking ... ‘I s’pose you wouldn’t consent if I asked you if I might have a dog, Mrs. Dennis,’ she sez, haughty like. Set her up with it! ‘You’re s’posing right,’ sez I, as haughty as herself. I don’t like eating my words any more than most people, but you can tell her she can have a dog if she’ll guarantee he won’t misbehave in the parlor.”

Anne did not think the parlor could be much worse if the dog did misbehave. She eyed the dingy lace curtains and the hideous purple roses on the carpet with a shiver.

“I’m sorry for any one who has to spend Christmas in a boardinghouse like this,” she thought. “I don’t wonder Katherine hates the word. I’d like to give this place a good airing ... it smells of a thousand meals. Why does Katherine go on boarding here when she has a good salary?”

“She says you can come up,” was the message Mrs. Dennis brought back, rather dubiously, for Miss Brooke had run true to form.

The narrow, steep stair was repellent. It didn’t want you. Nobody would go up who didn’t have to. The linoleum in the hall was worn to shreds. The little back hall-bedroom where Anne presently found herself was even more cheerless than the parlor. It was lighted by one glaring unshaded gas jet. There was an iron bed with a valley in the middle of it and a narrow, sparsely draped window looking out on a backyard garden where a large crop of tin cans flourished. But beyond it was a marvelous sky and a row of lombardies standing out against long, purple, distant hills.

“Oh, Miss Brooke, look at that sunset,” said Anne rapturously from the squeaky, cushionless rocker to which Katherine had ungraciously pointed her.

“I’ve seen a good many sunsets,” said the latter coldly, without moving. (“Condescending to me with your sunsets!” she thought bitterly.)

“You haven’t seen this one. No two sunsets are alike. Just sit down here and let us let it sink into our souls,” said Anne. Thought Anne, “Do you ever say anything pleasant?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, please.”

The most insulting words in the world! With an added edge of insult in Katherine’s contemptuous tones. Anne turned from her sunset and looked at Katherine, much more than half inclined to get up and walk out. But Katherine’s eyes looked a trifle strange. Had she been crying? Surely not ... you couldn’t imagine Katherine Brooke crying.

“You don’t make me feel very welcome,” Anne said slowly.

“I can’t pretend things. I haven’t your notable gift for doing the queen act ... saying exactly the right thing to every one. You’re not welcome. What sort of room is this to welcome any one to?”

Katherine made a scornful gesture at the faded walls, the shabby bare chairs and the wobbly dressing-table with its petticoat of limp muslin.

“It isn’t a nice room, but why do you stay here if you don’t like it?”

“Oh ... why ... Why? You wouldn’t understand. It doesn’t matter. I don’t care what anybody thinks. What brought you here tonight? I don’t suppose you came just to soak in the sunset.”

“I came to ask if you would spend the Christmas holidays with me at Green Gables.”

(“Now,” thought Anne, “for another broadside of sarcasm! I do wish she’d sit down at least. She just stands there as if waiting for me to go.”)

But there was silence for a moment. Then Katherine said slowly,

“Why do you ask me? It isn’t because you like me ... even you couldn’t pretend that.”

“It’s because I can’t bear to think of any human being spending Christmas in a place like this,” said Anne candidly.

The sarcasm came then.

“Oh, I see. A seasonable outburst of charity. I’m hardly a candidate for that yet, Miss Shirley.”

Anne got up. She was out of patience with this strange, aloof creature. She walked across the room and looked Katherine squarely in the eye.

“Katherine Brooke, whether you know it or not, what you want is a good spanking.”

They gazed at each other for a moment.

“It must have relieved you to say that,” said Katherine. But somehow the insulting tone had gone out of her voice. There was even a faint twitch at the corner of her mouth.

“It has,” said Anne. “I’ve been wanting to tell you just that for some time. I didn’t ask you to Green Gables out of charity ... you know that perfectly well. I told you my true reason. Nobody ought to spend Christmas here ... the very idea is indecent.”

“You asked me to Green Gables just because you are sorry for me.”

“I am sorry for you. Because you’ve shut out life ... and now life is shutting you out. Stop, it, Katherine. Open your doors to life ... and life will come in.”

“The Anne Shirley version of the old bromide, ‘If you bring a smiling visage to the glass you meet a smile,’” said Katherine with a shrug.

“Like all bromides, that’s absolutely true. Now, are you coming to Green Gables or are you not?”

“What would you say if I accepted ... to yourself, not to me?”

“I’d say you were showing the first faint glimmer of common sense I’d ever detected in you,” retorted Anne.

Katherine laughed ... surprisingly. She walked across to the window, scowled at the fiery streak which was all that was left of the scorned sunset and then turned.

“Very well ... I’ll go. Now you can go through the motions of telling me you’re delighted and that we’ll have a jolly time.”

“I am delighted. But I don’t know if you’ll have a jolly time or not. That will depend a good deal on yourself, Miss Brooke.”

“Oh, I’ll behave myself decently. You’ll be surprised. You won’t find me a very exhilarating guest, I suppose, but I promise you I won’t eat with my knife or insult people when they tell me it’s a fine day. I tell you frankly that the only reason I’m going is because even I can’t stick the thought of spending the holidays here alone. Mrs. Dennis is going to spend Christmas week with her daughter in Charlottetown. It’s a bore to think of getting my own meals. I’m a rotten cook. So much for the triumph of matter over mind. But will you give me your word of honor that you won’t wish me a merry Christmas? I just don’t want to be merry at Christmas.”

“I won’t. But I can’t answer for the twins.”

“I’m not going to ask you to sit down here ... you’d freeze ... but I see that there’s a very fine moon in place of your sunset and I’ll walk home with you and help you to admire it if you like.”

“I do like,” said Anne, “but I want to impress on your mind that we have much finer moons in Avonlea.”

“So she’s going?” said Rebecca Dew as she filled Anne’s hot-water bottle. “Well, Miss Shirley, I hope you’ll never try to induce me to turn Mohammedan ... because you’d likely succeed. Where is That Cat? Out frisking round Summerside and the weather at zero.”

“Not by the new thermometer. And Dusty Miller is curled up on the rocking-chair by my stove in the tower, snoring with happiness.”

“Ah well,” said Rebecca Dew with a little shiver as she shut the kitchen door, “I wish every one in the world was as warm and sheltered as we are tonight.”

Chapter 5

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Anne did not know that a wistful little Elizabeth was watching out of one of the mansard windows of The Evergreens as she drove away from Windy Poplars ... an Elizabeth with tears in her eyes who felt as if everything that made life worth living had gone out of her life for the time being and that she was the very Lizziest of Lizzies. But when the livery sleigh vanished from her sight around the corner of Spook's Lane Elizabeth went and knelt down by her bed.

"Dear God," she whispered, "I know it isn't any use to ask You for a merry Christmas for me because Grandmother and The Woman couldn't be merry, but please let my dear Miss Shirley have a merry, merry Christmas and bring her back safe to me when it's over.

"Now," said Elizabeth, getting up from her knees, "I've done all that I can."

Anne was already tasting Christmas happiness. She fairly sparkled as the train left the station. The ugly streets slipped past her ... she was going home ... home to Green Gables. Out in the open country the world was all golden-white and pale violet, woven here and there with the dark magic of spruces and the leafless delicacy of birches. The low sun behind the bare woods seemed rushing through the trees like a splendid god, as the train sped on. Katherine was silent but did not seem ungracious.

"Don't expect me to talk," she had warned Anne curtly.

"I won't. I hope you don't think I'm one of those terrible people who make you feel that you have to talk to them all the time. We'll just talk when we feel like it. I admit I'm likely to feel like it a good part of the time, but you're under no obligation to take any notice of what I'm saying."

Davy met them at Bright River with a big two-seated sleigh full of furry robes ... and a bear hug for Anne. The two girls snuggled down in the back seat. The drive from the station to Green Gables had always been a very pleasant part of Anne's weekends home. She always recalled her first drive home from Bright River with Matthew. That had been in spring and this was December, but everything along the road kept saying to her, "Do you remember?" The snow crisped under the runners; the music of the bells tinkled through the ranks of tall pointed firs, snow-laden. The White Way of Delight had little festoons of stars tangled in the trees. And on the last hill but one they saw the great gulf, white and mystical under the moon but not yet ice-bound.

"There's just one spot on this road where I always feel suddenly ... 'I'm home,'" said Anne. "It's the top of the next hill, where we'll see the lights of Green Gables. I'm just thinking of the supper Marilla will have ready for us. I believe I can smell it here. Oh, it's good ... good ... good to be home again!"

At Green Gables every tree in the yard seemed to welcome her back ... every lighted window was beckoning. And how good Marilla's kitchen smelled as they opened the door. There were hugs and exclamations and laughter. Even Katherine seemed somehow no outsider, but one of them. Mrs. Rachel Lynde had set her cherished parlor lamp on the supper-table and lighted it. It was really a hideous thing with a hideous red globe, but what a warm rosy becoming light it cast over everything! How warm and friendly were the shadows! How pretty Dora was growing! And Davy really seemed almost a man.

There was news to tell. Diana had a small daughter ... Josie Pye actually had a young man ... and Charlie Sloane was said to be engaged. It was all just as exciting as news of empire could have been. Mrs. Lynde's new patchwork quilt, just completed, containing five thousand pieces, was on display and received its meed of praise.

"When you come home, Anne," said Davy, "everything seems to come alive."

"Ah, this is how life should be," purred Dora's kitten.

“I’ve always found it hard to resist the lure of a moonlight night,” said Anne after supper. “How about a snowshoe tramp, Miss Brooke? I think that I’ve heard that you snowshoe.”

“Yes ... it’s the only thing I can do ... but I haven’t done it for six years,” said Katherine with a shrug.

Anne rooted out her snowshoes from the garret and Davy shot over to Orchard Slope to borrow an old pair of Diana’s for Katherine. They went through Lover’s Lane, full of lovely tree shadows, and across fields where little fir trees fringed the fences and through woods which were full of secrets they seemed always on the point of whispering to you but never did ... and through open glades that were like pools of silver.

They did not talk or want to talk. It was as if they were afraid to talk for fear of spoiling something beautiful. But Anne had never felt so near Katherine Brooke before. By some magic of its own the winter night had brought them together ... almost together but not quite.

When they came out to the main road and a sleigh flashed by, bells ringing, laughter tinkling, both girls gave an involuntary sigh. It seemed to both that they were leaving behind a world that had nothing in common with the one to which they were returning ... a world where time was not ... which was young with immortal youth ... where souls communed with each other in some medium that needed nothing so crude as words.

“It’s been wonderful,” said Katherine so obviously to herself that Anne made no response.

They went down the road and up the long Green Gables lane but just before they reached the yard gate, they both paused as by a common impulse and stood in silence, leaning against the old mossy fence and looked at the brooding, motherly old house seen dimly through its veil of trees. How beautiful Green Gables was on a winter night!

Below it the Lake of Shining Waters was locked in ice, patterned around its edges with tree shadows. Silence was everywhere, save for the staccato clip of a horse trotting over the bridge. Anne smiled to recall how often

she had heard that sound as she lay in her gable room and pretended to herself that it was the gallop of fairy horses passing in the night.

Suddenly another sound broke the stillness.

“Katherine ... you’re ... why, you’re not crying!”

Somehow, it seemed impossible to think of Katherine crying. But she was. And her tears suddenly humanized her. Anne no longer felt afraid of her.

“Katherine ... dear Katherine ... what is the matter? Can I help?”

“Oh ... you can’t understand!” gasped Katherine. “Things have always been made easy for you. You ... you seem to live in a little enchanted circle of beauty and romance. ‘I wonder what delightful discovery I’ll make today’ ... that seems to be your attitude to life, Anne. As for me, I’ve forgotten how to live ... no, I never knew how. I’m ... I’m like a creature caught in a trap. I can never get out ... and it seems to me that somebody is always poking sticks at me through the bars. And you ... you have more happiness than you know what to do with ... friends everywhere, a lover! Not that I want a lover ... I hate men ... but if I died tonight, not one living soul would miss me. How would you like to be absolutely friendless in the world?”

Katherine’s voice broke in another sob.

“Katherine, you say you like frankness. I’m going to be frank. If you are as friendless as you say, it is your own fault. I’ve wanted to be friends with you. But you’ve been all prickles and stings.”

“Oh, I know ... I know. How I hated you when you came first! Flaunting your circlet of pearls ...”

“Katherine, I didn’t ‘flaunt’ it!”

“Oh, I suppose not. That’s just my natural hatefulness. But it seemed to flaunt itself ... not that I envied you your beau ... I’ve never wanted to be married ... I saw enough of that with father and mother ... but I hated your

being over me when you were younger than I ... I was glad when the Pringles made trouble for you. You seemed to have everything I hadn't ... charm ... friendship ... youth. Youth! I never had anything but starved youth. You know nothing about it. You don't know ... you haven't the least idea what it is like not to be wanted by any one ... any one!"

"Oh, haven't I?" cried Anne.

In a few poignant sentences she sketched her childhood before coming to Green Gables.

"I wish I'd known that," said Katherine. "It would have made a difference. To me you seemed one of the favorites of fortune. I've been eating my heart out with envy of you. You got the position I wanted ... oh, I know you're better qualified than I am, but there it was. You're pretty ... at least you make people believe you're pretty. My earliest recollection is of some one saying, 'What an ugly child!' You come into a room delightfully ... oh, I remember how you came into school that first morning. But I think the real reason I've hated you so is that you always seemed to have some secret delight ... as if every day of life was an adventure. In spite of my hatred there were times when I acknowledged to myself that you might just have come from some far-off star."

"Really, Katherine, you take my breath with all these compliments. But you don't hate me any longer, do you? We can be friends now."

"I don't know ... I've never had a friend of any kind, much less one of anything like my own age. I don't belong anywhere ... never have belonged. I don't think I know how to be a friend. No, I don't hate you any longer ... I don't know how I feel about you ... oh, I suppose it's your noted charm beginning to work on me. I only know that I feel I'd like to tell you what my life has been like. I could never have told you if you hadn't told me about your life before you came to Green Gables. I want you to understand what has made me as I am. I don't know why I should want you to understand ... but I do."

"Tell me, Katherine dear. I do want to understand you."

“You do know what it is like not to be wanted, I admit ... but not what it is like to know that your father and mother don’t want you. Mine didn’t. They hated me from the moment I was born ... and before ... and they hated each other. Yes, they did. They quarreled continually ... just mean, nagging, petty quarrels. My childhood was a nightmare. They died when I was seven and I went to live with Uncle Henry’s family. They didn’t want me either. They all looked down on me because I was ‘living on their charity.’ I remember all the snubs I got ... every one. I can’t remember a single kind word. I had to wear my cousins’ castoff clothes. I remember one hat in particular ... it made me look like a mushroom. And they made fun of me whenever I put it on. One day I tore it off and threw it on the fire. I had to wear the most awful old tam to church all the rest of the winter. I never even had a dog ... and I wanted one so. I had some brains ... I longed so for a B.A. course ... but naturally I might just as well have yearned for the moon. However, Uncle Henry agreed to put me through Queen’s if I would pay him back when I got a school. He paid my board in a miserable third-rate boardinghouse where I had a room over the kitchen that was ice cold in winter and boiling hot in summer, and full of stale cooking smells in all seasons. And the clothes I had to wear to Queen’s! But I got my license and I got the second room in Summerside High ... the only bit of luck I’ve ever had. Even since then I’ve been pinching and scrimping to pay Uncle Henry ... not only what he spent putting me through Queen’s, but what my board through all the years I lived there cost him. I was determined I would not owe him one cent. That is why I’ve boarded with Mrs. Dennis and dressed shabbily. And I’ve just finished paying him. For the first time in my life I feel free. But meanwhile I’ve developed the wrong way. I know I’m unsocial ... I know I can never think of the right thing to say. I know it’s my own fault that I’m always neglected and overlooked at social functions. I know I’ve made being disagreeable into a fine art. I know I’m sarcastic. I know I’m regarded as a tyrant by my pupils. I know they hate me. Do you think it doesn’t hurt me to know it? They always look afraid of me ... I hate people who look as if they were afraid of me. Oh, Anne ... hate’s got to be a disease with me. I do want to be like other people ... and I never can now. That is what makes me so bitter.”

“Oh, but you can!” Anne put her arm about Katherine. “You can put hate out of your mind ... cure yourself of it. Life is only beginning for you now ... since at last you’re quite free and independent. And you never know what may be around the next bend in the road.”

“I’ve heard you say that before ... I’ve laughed at your ‘bend in the road.’ But the trouble is there aren’t any bends in my road. I can see it stretching straight out before me to the sky-line ... endless monotony. Oh, does life ever frighten you, Anne, with its blankness ... its swarms of cold, uninteresting people? No, of course it doesn’t. You don’t have to go on teaching all the rest of your life. And you seem to find everybody interesting, even that little round red being you call Rebecca Dew. The truth is, I hate teaching ... and there’s nothing else I can do. A schoolteacher is simply a slave of time. Oh, I know you like it ... I don’t see how you can. Anne, I want to travel. It’s the one thing I’ve always longed for. I remember the one and only picture that hung on the wall of my attic room at Uncle Henry’s ... a faded old print that had been discarded from the other rooms with scorn. It was a picture of palms around a spring in the desert, with a string of camels marching away in the distance. It literally fascinated me. I’ve always wanted to go and find it ... I want to see the Southern Cross and the Taj Mahal and the pillars of Karnak. I want to know ... not just believe ... that the world is round. And I can never do it on a teacher’s salary. I’ll just have to go on forever, prating of King Henry the Eighth’s wives and the inexhaustible resources of the Dominion.”

Anne laughed. It was safe to laugh now, for the bitterness had gone out of Katherine’s voice. It sounded merely rueful and impatient.

“Anyhow, we’re going to be friends ... and we’re going to have a jolly ten days here to begin our friendship. I’ve always wanted to be friends with you, Katherine ... spelled with a K! I’ve always felt that underneath all your prickles was something that would make you worth while as a friend.”

“So that is what you’ve really thought of me? I’ve often wondered. Well, the leopard will have a go at changing its spots if it’s at all possible. Perhaps it is. I can believe almost anything at this Green Gables of yours.

It's the first place I've ever been in that felt like a home. I should like to be more like other people ... if it isn't too late. I'll even practice a sunny smile for that Gilbert of yours when he arrives tomorrow night. Of course I've forgotten how to talk to young men ... if I ever knew. He'll just think me an old-maid gooseberry. I wonder if, when I go to bed tonight, I'll feel furious with myself for pulling off my mask and letting you see into my shivering soul like this."

"No, you won't. You'll think, 'I'm glad she's found out I'm human.' We're going to snuggle down among the warm fluffy blankets, probably with two hot-water bottles, for likely Marilla and Mrs. Lynde will each put one in for us for fear the other has forgotten it. And you'll feel deliciously sleepy after this walk in the frosty moonshine ... and first thing you'll know, it will be morning and you'll feel as if you were the first person to discover that the sky is blue. And you'll grow learned in lore of plum puddings because you're going to help me make one for Tuesday ... a great big plummy one."

Anne was amazed at Katherine's good looks when they went in. Her complexion was radiant after her long walk in the keen air and color made all the difference in the world to her.

"Why, Katherine would be handsome if she wore the right kind of hats and dresses," reflected Anne, trying to imagine Katherine with a certain dark, richly red velvet hat she had seen in a Summerside shop, on her black hair and pulled over her amber eyes. "I've simply got to see what can be done about it."

Chapter 6

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Saturday and Monday were full of gay doings at Green Gables. The plum pudding was concocted and the Christmas tree brought home. Katherine and Anne and Davy and Dora went to the woods for it ... a beautiful little fir to whose cutting down Anne was only reconciled by the fact that it was

in a little clearing of Mr. Harrison's which was going to be stumped and plowed in the spring anyhow.

They wandered about, gathering creeping spruce and ground pine for wreaths ... even some ferns that kept green in a certain deep hollow of the woods all winter ... until day smiled back at night over white-bosomed hills and they came back to Green Gables in triumph ... to meet a tall young man with hazel eyes and the beginnings of a mustache which made him look so much older and maturer that Anne had one awful moment of wondering if it were really Gilbert or a stranger.

Katherine, with a little smile that tried to be sarcastic but couldn't quite succeed, left them in the parlor and played games with the twins in the kitchen all the evening. To her amazement she found she was enjoying it. And what fun it was to go down cellar with Davy and find that there were really such things as sweet apples still left in the world.

Katherine had never been in a country cellar before and had no idea what a delightful, spooky, shadowy place it could be by candlelight. Life already seemed warmer. For the first time it came home to Katherine that life might be beautiful, even for her.

Davy made enough noise to wake the Seven Sleepers, at an unearthly hour Christmas morning, ringing an old cowbell up and down the stairs. Marilla was horrified at his doing such a thing when there was a guest in the house, but Katherine came down laughing. Somehow, an odd camaraderie had sprung up between her and Davy. She told Anne candidly that she had no use for the impeccable Dora but that Davy was somehow tarred with her own brush.

They opened the parlor and distributed the gifts before breakfast because the twins, even Dora, couldn't have eaten anything if they hadn't. Katherine, who had not expected anything except, perhaps, a duty gift from Anne, found herself getting presents from every one. A gay, crocheted afghan from Mrs. Lynde ... a sachet of orris root from Dora ... a paper-knife from Davy ... a basketful of tiny jars of jam and jelly from Marilla ... even a little bronze chessy cat for a paper-weight from Gilbert.

And, tied under the tree, curled up on a bit of warm and woolly blanket, a dear little brown-eyed puppy, with alert, silken ears and an ingratiating tail. A card tied to his neck bore the legend, "From Anne, who dares, after all, to wish you a Merry Christmas."

Katherine gathered his wriggling little body up in her arms and spoke shakily.

"Anne ... he's a darling! But Mrs. Dennis won't let me keep him. I asked her if I might get a dog and she refused."

"I've arranged it all with Mrs. Dennis. You'll find she won't object. And, anyway, Katherine, you're not going to be there long. You must find a decent place to live, now that you've paid off what you thought were your obligations. Look at the lovely box of stationery Diana sent me. Isn't it fascinating to look at the blank pages and wonder what will be written on them?"

Mrs. Lynde was thankful it was a white Christmas ... there would be no fat graveyards when Christmas was white ... but to Katherine it seemed a purple and crimson and golden Christmas. And the week that followed was just as beautiful. Katherine had often wondered bitterly just what it would be like to be happy and now she found out. She bloomed out in the most astonishing way. Anne found herself enjoying their companionship.

"To think I was afraid she would spoil my Christmas holiday!" she reflected in amazement.

"To think," said Katherine to herself, "that I was on the verge of refusing to come here when Anne invited me!"

They went for long walks ... through Lover's Lane and the Haunted Wood, where the very silence seemed friendly ... over hills where the light snow whirled in a winter dance of goblins ... through old orchards full of violet shadows ... through the glory of sunset woods. There were no birds to chirp or sing, no brooks to gurgle, no squirrels to gossip. But the wind made occasional music that had in quality what it lacked in quantity.

“One can always find something lovely to look at or listen to,” said Anne.

They talked of “cabbages and kings,” and hitched their wagons to stars, and came home with appetites that taxed even the Green Gables pantry. One day it stormed and they couldn’t go out. The east wind was beating around the eaves and the gray gulf was roaring. But even a storm at Green Gables had charms of its own. It was cozy to sit by the stove and dreamily watch the firelight flickering over the ceiling while you munched apples and candy. How jolly supper was with the storm wailing outside!

One night Gilbert took them to see Diana and her new baby daughter.

“I never held a baby in my life before,” said Katherine as they drove home. “For one thing, I didn’t want to, and for another I’d have been afraid of it going to pieces in my grasp. You can’t imagine how I felt ... so big and clumsy with that tiny, exquisite thing in my arms. I know Mrs. Wright thought I was going to drop it every minute. I could see her striving heroically to conceal her terror. But it did something to me ... the baby I mean ... I haven’t decided just what.”

“Babies are such fascinating creatures,” said Anne dreamily. “They are what I heard somebody at Redmond call ‘terrific bundles of potentialities.’ Think of it, Katherine ... Homer must have been a baby once ... a baby with dimples and great eyes full of light ... he couldn’t have been blind then, of course.”

“What a pity his mother didn’t know he was to be Homer,” said Katherine.

“But I think I’m glad Judas’ mother didn’t know he was to be Judas,” said Anne softly. “I hope she never did know.”

There was a concert in the hall one night, with a party at Abner Sloane’s after it, and Anne persuaded Katherine to go to both.

“I want you to give us a reading for our program, Katherine. I’ve heard you read beautifully.”

“I used to recite ... I think I rather liked doing it. But the summer before last I recited at a shore concert which a party of summer resorters got up ... and I heard them laughing at me afterwards.”

“How do you know they were laughing at you?”

“They must have been. There wasn’t anything else to laugh at.”

Anne hid a smile and persisted in asking for the reading.

“Give Geneva for an encore. I’m told you do that splendidly. Mrs. Stephen Pringle told me she never slept a wink the night after she heard you give it.”

“No; I’ve never liked Geneva. It’s in the reading, so I try occasionally to show the class how to read it. I really have no patience with Geneva. Why didn’t she scream when she found herself locked in? When they were hunting everywhere for her, surely somebody would have heard her.”

Katherine finally promised the reading but was dubious about the party. “I’ll go, of course. But nobody will ask me to dance and I’ll feel sarcastic and prejudiced and ashamed. I’m always miserable at parties ... the few I’ve ever gone to. Nobody seems to think I can dance ... and you know I can fairly well, Anne. I picked it up at Uncle Henry’s, because a poor bit of a maid they had wanted to learn, too, and she and I used to dance together in the kitchen at night to the music that went on in the parlor. I think I’d like it ... with the right kind of partner.”

“You won’t be miserable at this party, Katherine. You won’t be outside looking in. There’s all the difference in the world, you know, between being inside looking out and outside looking in. You have such lovely hair, Katherine. Do you mind if I try a new way of doing it?”

Katherine shrugged.

“Oh, go ahead. I suppose my hair does look dreadful ... but I’ve no time to be always primping. I haven’t a party dress. Will my green taffeta do?”

“It will have to do ... though green is the one color above all others that you should never wear, my Katherine. But you’re going to wear a red, pintucked chiffon collar I’ve made for you. Yes, you are. You ought to have a red dress, Katherine.”

“I’ve always hated red. When I went to live with Uncle Henry, Aunt Gertrude always made me wear aprons of bright Turkey-red. The other children in school used to call out ‘Fire,’ when I came in with one of those aprons on. Anyway, I can’t be bothered with clothes.”

“Heaven grant me patience! Clothes are very important,” said Anne severely, as she braided and coiled. Then she looked at her work and saw that it was good. She put her arm about Katherine’s shoulders and turned her to the mirror.

“Don’t you truly think we are a pair of quite goodlooking girls?” she laughed. “And isn’t it really nice to think people will find some pleasure in looking at us? There are so many homely people who would actually look quite attractive if they took a little pains with themselves. Three Sundays ago in church ... you remember the day poor old Mr. Milvain preached and had such a terrible cold in his head that nobody could make out what he was saying? ... well, I passed the time making the people around me beautiful. I gave Mrs. Brent a new nose, I waved Mary Addison’s hair and gave Jane Marden’s a lemon rinse ... I dressed Emma Dill in blue instead of brown ... I dressed Charlotte Blair in stripes instead of checks ... I removed several moles ... and I shaved off Thomas Anderson’s long, sandy Piccadilly weepers. You couldn’t have known them when I got through with them. And, except perhaps for Mrs. Brent’s nose, they could have done everything I did, themselves. Why, Katherine, your eyes are just the color of tea ... amber tea. Now, live up to your name this evening ... a brook should be sparkling ... limpid ... merry.”

“Everything I’m not.”

“Everything you’ve been this past week. So you can be it.”

“That’s only the magic of Green Gables. When I go back to Summerside, twelve o’clock will have struck for Cinderella.”

“You’ll take the magic back with you. Look at yourself ... looking for once as you ought to look all the time.”

Katherine gazed at her reflection in the mirror as if rather doubting her identity.

“I do look years younger,” she admitted. “You were right ... clothes do do things to you. Oh, I know I’ve been looking older than my age. I didn’t care. Why should I? Nobody else cared. And I’m not like you, Anne. Apparently you were born knowing how to live. And I don’t know anything about it ... not even the A B C. I wonder if it’s too late to learn. I’ve been sarcastic so long, I don’t know if I can be anything else. Sarcasm seemed to me to be the only way I could make any impression on people. And it seems to me, too, that I’ve always been afraid when I was in the company of other people ... afraid of saying something stupid ... afraid of being laughed at.”

“Katherine Brooke, look at yourself in that mirror; carry that picture of yourself with you ... magnificent hair framing your face instead of trying to pull it backward ... eyes sparkling like dark stars ... a little flush of excitement on your cheeks ... and you won’t feel afraid. Come, now. We’re going to be late, but fortunately all the performers have what I heard Dora referring to as ‘preserved’ seats.”

Gilbert drove them to the hall. How like old times it was ... only Katherine was with her in place of Diana. Anne sighed. Diana had so many other interests now. No more running round to concerts and parties for her.

But what an evening it was! What silvery satin roads with a pale green sky in the west after a light snowfall! Orion was treading his stately march across the heavens, and hills and fields and woods lay around them in a pearly silence.

Katherine’s reading captured her audience from the first line, and at the party she could not find dances for all her would-be partners. She suddenly found herself laughing without bitterness. Then home to Green Gables, warming their toes at the sitting-room fire by the light of two friendly candles on the mantel; and Mrs. Lynde tiptoeing into their room, late as it

was, to ask them if they'd like another blanket and assure Katherine that her little dog was snug and warm in a basket behind the kitchen stove.

"I've got a new outlook on life," thought Katherine as she drifted off to slumber. "I didn't know there were people like this."

"Come again," said Marilla when she left.

Marilla never said that to any one unless she meant it.

"Of course she's coming again," said Anne. "For weekends ... and for weeks in the summer. We'll build bonfires and hoe in the garden ... and pick apples and go for the cows ... and row on the pond and get lost in the woods. I want to show you Little Hester Gray's garden, Katherine, and Echo Lodge and Violet Vale when it's full of violets."

Chapter 7

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“Windy Poplars,
“January 5th,
“The street where ghosts (should) walk.

“MY ESTEEMED FRIEND:

“That isn’t anything Aunt Chatty’s grandmother wrote. It’s only something she would have written if she’d thought of it.

“I’ve made a New Year resolution to write sensible love-letters. Do you suppose such a thing is possible?

“I have left dear Green Gables but I have returned to dear Windy Poplars. Rebecca Dew had a fire lighted in the tower room for me and a hot-water bottle in the bed.

“I’m so glad I like Windy Poplars. It would be dreadful to live in a place I didn’t like ... that didn’t seem friendly to me ... that didn’t say, ‘I’m glad you’re back.’ Windy Poplars does. It’s a bit old-fashioned and a bit prim, but it likes me.

“And I was glad to see Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty and Rebecca Dew again. I can’t help seeing their funny sides but I love them well for all that.

“Rebecca Dew said such a nice thing to me yesterday.

“‘Spook’s Lane has been a different place since you came here, Miss Shirley.’

“I’m glad you liked Katherine, Gilbert. She was surprisingly nice to you. It’s amazing to find how nice she can be when she tries. And I think she is

just as much amazed at it herself as any one else. She had no idea it would be so easy.

“It’s going to make so much difference in school, having a Vice you can really work with. She is going to change her boardinghouse, and I have already persuaded her to get that velvet hat and have not yet given up hope of persuading her to sing in the choir.

“Mr. Hamilton’s dog came down yesterday and chivied Dusty Miller. ‘This is the last straw,’ said Rebecca Dew. And with her red cheeks redder still, her chubby back shaking with anger, and in such a hurry that she put her hat on hindside before and never knew it, she toddled up the road and gave Mr. Hamilton quite a large piece of her mind. I can just see his foolish, amiable face while he was listening to her.

“‘I do not like That Cat,’ she told me, ‘but he is OURS and no Hamilton dog is going to come here and give him impudence in his own back yard. ‘He only chased your cat in fun,’ said Jabez Hamilton. “The Hamilton ideas of fun are different from the MacComber ideas of fun or the MacLean ideas of fun or, if it comes to that, the Dew ideas of fun,” I told him. “Tut, tut, you must have had cabbage for dinner, Miss Dew,” said he. “No,” I said, “but I could have had. Mrs. Captain MacComber didn’t sell all her cabbages last fall and leave her family without any because the price was so good. There are some people,” sez I, “that can’t hear anything because of the jingle in their pocket.” And I left that to sink in. But what could you expect from a Hamilton? Low scum!’

“There is a crimson star hanging low over the white Storm King. I wish you were here to watch it with me. If you were, I really think it would be more than a moment of esteem and friendship.”

“January 12th.

“Little Elizabeth came over two nights ago to find out if I could tell her what peculiar kind of terrible animals Papal bulls were, and to tell me tearfully that her teacher had asked her to sing at a concert the public school is getting up but that Mrs. Campbell put her foot down and said

‘no’ most decidedly. When Elizabeth attempted to plead, Mrs. Campbell said,

“‘Have the goodness not to talk back to me, Elizabeth, if you please.’

“Little Elizabeth wept a few bitter tears in the tower room that night and said she felt it would make her Lizzie forever. She could never be any of her other names again.

“‘Last week I loved God, this week I don’t,’ she said defiantly.

“All her class were taking part in the program and she felt ‘like a leopard.’ I think the sweet thing meant she felt like a leper and that was sufficiently dreadful. Darling Elizabeth must not feel like a leper.

“So I manufactured an errand to The Evergreens next evening. The Woman ... who might really have lived before the flood, she looks so ancient ... gazed at me coldly out of great gray, expressionless eyes, showed me grimly into the drawing-room and went to tell Mrs. Campbell that I had asked for her.

“I don’t think there has been any sunshine in that drawing-room since the house was built. There was a piano, but I’m sure it could never have been played on. Stiff chairs, covered with silk brocade, stood against the wall ... All the furniture stood against the wall except a central marble-topped table, and none of it seemed to be acquainted with the rest.

“Mrs. Campbell came in. I had never seen her before. She has a fine, sculptured old face that might have been a man’s, with black eyes and black bushy brows under frosty hair. She has not quite eschewed all vain adornment of the body, for she wore large black onyx earrings that reached to her shoulders. She was painfully polite to me and I was painlessly polite to her. We sat and exchanged civilities about the weather for a few moments ... both, as Tacitus remarked a few thousand years ago, ‘with countenances adjusted to the occasion.’ I told her, truthfully, that I had come to see if she would lend me the Rev. James Wallace Campbell’s Memoirs for a short time, because I understood there was a good deal

about the early history of Prince County in them which I wished to make use of in school.

“Mrs. Campbell thawed quite markedly and summoning Elizabeth, told her to go up to her room and bring down the Memoirs. Elizabeth’s face showed signs of tears and Mrs. Campbell condescended to explain that it was because little Elizabeth’s teacher had sent another note begging that she be allowed to sing at the concert, and that she, Mrs. Campbell, had written a very stinging reply which little Elizabeth would have to carry to her teacher the next morning.

“‘I do not approve of children of Elizabeth’s age singing in public,’ said Mrs. Campbell. ‘It tends to make them bold and forward.’

“As if anything could make little Elizabeth bold and forward!

“‘I think perhaps you are wise, Mrs. Campbell,’ I remarked in my most patronizing tone. ‘In any event Mabel Phillips is going to sing, and I am told that her voice is really so wonderful that she will make all the others seem as nothing. No doubt it is much better that Elizabeth should not appear in competition with her.’

“Mrs. Campbell’s face was a study. She may be Campbell outside but she is Pringle at the core. She said nothing, however, and I knew the psychological moment for stopping. I thanked her for the Memoirs and came away.

“The next evening when little Elizabeth came to the garden gate for her milk, her pale, flowerlike face was literally a-star. She told me that Mrs. Campbell had told her she might sing after all, if she were careful not to let herself get puffed up about it.

“You see, Rebecca Dew had told me that the Phillips and the Campbell clans have always been rivals in the matter of good voices!

“I gave Elizabeth a bit of a picture for Christmas to hang above her bed ... just a light-dappled woodland path leading up a hill to a quaint little house among some trees. Little Elizabeth says she is not so frightened now to go

to sleep in the dark, because as soon as she gets into bed she pretends that she is walking up the path to the house and that she goes inside and it is all lighted and her father is there.

“Poor darling! I can’t help detesting that father of hers!”

“January 19th.

“There was a dance at Carry Pringle’s last night. Katherine was there in a dark red silk with the new side flounces and her hair had been done by a hairdresser. Would you believe it, people who had known her ever since she came to teach in Summerside actually asked one another who she was when she came into the room. But I think it was less the dress and hair that made the difference than some indefinable change in herself.

“Always before, when she was out with people, her attitude seemed to be, ‘These people bore me. I expect I bore them and I hope I do.’ But last night it was as if she had set lighted candles in all the windows of her house of life.

“I’ve had a hard time winning Katherine’s friendship. But nothing worth while is ever easy come by and I have always felt that her friendship would be worth while.

“Aunt Chatty has been in bed for two days with a feverish cold and thinks she may have the doctor tomorrow, in case she is taking pneumonia. So Rebecca Dew, her head tied up in a towel, has been cleaning the house madly all day to get it in perfect order before the doctor’s possible visit. Now she is in the kitchen ironing Aunt Chatty’s white cotton nighty with the crochet yoke, so that it will be ready for her to slip over her flannel one. It was spotlessly clean before, but Rebecca Dew thought it was not quite a good color from lying in the bureau drawer.”

“January 28th.

“January so far has been a month of cold gray days, with an occasional storm whirling across the harbor and filling Spook’s Lane with drifts. But last night we had a silver thaw and today the sun shone. My maple grove

was a place of unimaginable splendors. Even the commonplaces had been made lovely. Every bit of wire fencing was a wonder of crystal lace.

“Rebecca Dew has been poring this evening over one of my magazines containing an article on ‘Types of Fair Women,’ illustrated by photographs.

“‘Wouldn’t it be lovely, Miss Shirley, if some one could just wave a wand and make everybody beautiful?’ she said wistfully. ‘Just fancy my feelings, Miss Shirley, if I suddenly found myself beautiful! But then’ ... with a sigh ... ‘if we were all beauties who would do the work?’”

Chapter 8

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“I’m so tired,” sighed Cousin Ernestine Bugle, dropping into her chair at the Windy Poplars supper-table. “I’m afraid sometimes to sit down for fear I’ll never be able to git up again.”

Cousin Ernestine, a cousin three times removed of the late Captain MacComber, but still, as Aunt Kate used to reflect, much too close, had walked in from Lowvale that afternoon for a visit to Windy Poplars. It cannot be said that either of the widows had welcomed her very heartily, in spite of the sacred ties of family. Cousin Ernestine was not an exhilarating person, being one of those unfortunates who are constantly worrying not only about their own affairs but everybody else’s as well and will not give themselves or others any rest at all. The very look of her, Rebecca Dew declared, made you feel that life was a vale of tears.

Certainly Cousin Ernestine was not beautiful and it was extremely doubtful if she ever had been. She had a dry, pinched little face, faded, pale blue eyes, several badly placed moles and a whining voice. She wore a rusty black dress and a decrepit neck-piece of Hudson seal which she would not remove even at the table, because she was afraid of draughts.

Rebecca Dew might have sat at the table with them had she wished, for the widows did not regard Cousin Ernestine as any particular “company.” But Rebecca always declared she couldn’t “savor her victuals” in that old kill-joy’s society. She preferred to “eat her morsel” in the kitchen, but that did not prevent her from saying her say as she waited on the table.

“Likely it’s the spring getting into your bones,” she remarked unsympathetically.

“Ah, I hope it’s only that, Miss Dew. But I’m afraid I’m like poor Mrs. Oliver Gage. She et mushrooms last summer but there must-a been a toadstool among them, for she’s never felt the same since.

“But you can’t have been eating mushrooms as early as this,” said Aunt Chatty.

“No, but I’m afraid I’ve et something else. Don’t try to cheer me up, Charlotte. You mean well, but it ain’t no use. I’ve been through too much. Are you sure there ain’t a spider in that cream jug, Kate? I’m afraid I saw one when you poured my cup.”

“We never have spiders in our cream jugs,” said Rebecca Dew ominously, and slammed the kitchen door.

“Mebbe it was only a shadder,” said Cousin Ernestine meekly. “My eyes ain’t what they were. I’m afraid I’ll soon be blind. That reminds me ... I dropped in to see Martha MacKay this afternoon and she was feeling feverish and all out in some kind of a rash. ‘Looks to me as though you had the measles,’ I told her. ‘Likely they’ll leave you almost blind. Your family all have weak eyes.’ I thought she ought to be prepared. Her mother isn’t well either. The doctor says it’s indigestion, but I’m afraid it’s a growth. ‘And if you have to have an operation and take chloroform,’ I told her, ‘I’m afraid you’ll never come out of it. Remember you’re a Hillis and the Hillises all had weak hearts. Your father died of heart-failure, you know.’”

“At eighty-seven!” said Rebecca Dew, whisking away a plate.

“And you know three score and ten is the Bible limit,” said Aunt Chatty cheerfully.

Cousin Ernestine helped herself to a third teaspoonful of sugar and stirred her tea sadly.

“So King David said, Charlotte, but I’m afraid David wasn’t a very nice man in some respects.”

Anne caught Aunt Chatty’s eye and laughed before she could help herself.

Cousin Ernestine looked at her disapprovingly.

“I’ve heerd you was a great girl to laugh. Well, I hope it’ll last, but I’m afraid it won’t. I’m afraid you’ll find out all too soon that life’s a melancholy business. Ah well, I was young myself once.”

“Was you really?” inquired Rebecca Dew sarcastically, bringing in the muffins. “Seems to me you must always have been afraid to be young. It takes courage, I can tell you that, Miss Bugle.”

“Rebecca Dew has such an odd way of putting things,” complained Cousin Ernestine. “Not that I mind her of course. And it’s well to laugh when you can, Miss Shirley, but I’m afraid you’re tempting Providence by being so happy. You’re awful like our last minister’s wife’s aunt ... she was always laughing and she died of a parralattic stroke. The third one kills you. I’m afraid our new minister out at Lowvale is inclined to be frivolous. The minute I saw him I sez to Louisy, ‘I’m afraid a man with legs like that must be addicted to dancing.’ I s’pose he’s give it up since he turned minister, but I’m afraid the strain will come out in his family. He’s got a young wife and they say she’s scandalously in love with him. I can’t seem to git over the thought of any one marrying a minister for love. I’m afraid it’s awful irreverent. He preaches pretty fair sermons, but I’m afraid from what he said of Elijah the Tidbit last Sunday that he’s far too liberal in his views of the Bible.”

“I see by the papers that Peter Ellis and Fanny Bugle were married last week,” said Aunt Chatty.

“Ah, yes. I’m afraid that’ll be a case of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure. They’ve only known each other three years. I’m afraid Peter’ll find out that fine feathers don’t always make fine birds. I’m afraid Fanny’s very shiftless. She irons her table napkins on the right side first and only. Not much like her sainted mother. Ah, she was a thorough woman if ever there was one. When she was in mourning she always wore black nightgowns. Said she felt as bad in the night as in the day. I was down at Andy Bugle’s, helping them with the cooking, and when I come downstairs on the wedding morning if there wasn’t Fanny eating an egg for her breakfast ... and her gitting married that day. I don’t s’pose you’ll believe that ... I wouldn’t if I hadn’t a-seen it with my own eyes. My poor dead sister never et a thing for three days afore she was married. And after her husband died we was all afraid she was never going to eat again. There are times when I feel I can’t understand the Bugles any longer. There was a time when you knew where you was with your own connection, but it ain’t that way now.”

“Is it true that Jean Young is going to be married again?” asked Aunt Kate.

“I’m afraid it is. Of course Fred Young is supposed to be dead, but I’m dreadful afraid he’ll turn up yet. You could never trust that man. She’s going to marry Ira Roberts. I’m afraid he’s only marrying her to make her happy. His Uncle Philip once wanted to marry me, but I sez to him, sez I, ‘Bugle I was born and Bugle I will die. Marriage is a leap in the dark,’ sez I, ‘and I ain’t going to be drug into it.’ There’s been an awful lot of weddings in Lowvale this winter. I’m afraid there’ll be funerals all summer to make up for it. Annie Edwards and Chris Hunter were married last month. I’m afraid they won’t be as fond of each other in a few years’ time as they are now. I’m afraid she was just swept off her feet by his dashing ways. His Uncle Hiram was crazy ... he belieft he was a dog for years.”

“If he did his own barking nobody need have grudged him the fun of it,” said Rebecca Dew, bringing in the pear preserves and the layer cake.

“I never heerd that he barked,” said Cousin Ernestine. “He just gnawed bones and buried them when nobody was looking. His wife felt it.”

“Where is Mrs. Lily Hunter this winter?” asked Aunt Chatty.

“She’s been spending it with her son in San Francisco and I’m awful afraid there’ll be another earthquake afore she gits out of it. If she does, she’ll likely try to smuggle and have trouble at the border. If it ain’t one thing, it’s another when you’re traveling. But folks seem to be crazy for it. My cousin Jim Bugle spent the winter in Florida. I’m afraid he’s gitting rich and worldly. I said to him afore he went, sez I ... I remember it was the night afore the Colemans’ dog died ... or was it? ... yes, it was ... ‘Pride goeth afore destruction and a haughty spirit afore a fall,’ sez I. His daughter is teaching over in the Bugle Road school and she can’t make up her mind which of her beaus to take. ‘There’s one thing I can assure you of, Mary Annetta,’ sez I, ‘and that is you’ll never git the one you love best. So you’d better take the one as loves you ... if you kin be sure he does.’ I hope she’ll make a better choice than Jessie Chipman did. I’m afraid she’s just going to marry Oscar Green because he was always round. ‘Is that what you’ve picked out?’ I sez to her. His brother died of galloping consumption. ‘And don’t be married in May,’ sez I, ‘for May’s awful unlucky for a wedding.’”

“How encouraging you always are!” said Rebecca Dew, bringing in a plate of macaroons.

“Can you tell me,” said Cousin Ernestine, ignoring Rebecca Dew and taking a second helping of pears, “if a calceolaria is a flower or a disease?”

“A flower,” said Aunt Chatty.

Cousin Ernestine looked a little disappointed.

“Well, whatever it is, Sandy Bugle’s widow’s got it. I heerd her telling her sister in church last Sunday that she had a calceolaria at last. Your geraniums are dreadful scraggy, Charlotte. I’m afraid you don’t fertilize them properly. Mrs. Sandy’s gone out of mourning and poor Sandy only dead four years. Ah well, the dead are soon forgot nowadays. My sister wore crape for her husband twenty-five years.”

“Did you know your placket was open?” said Rebecca, setting a coconut pie before Aunt Kate.

“I haven’t time to be always staring at my face in the glass,” said Cousin Ernestine acidly. “What if my placket is open? I’ve got three petticoats on, haven’t I? They tell me the girls nowadays only wear one. I’m afraid the world is gitting dreadful gay and giddy. I wonder if they ever think of the judgment day.”

“Do you s’pose they’ll ask us at the judgment day how many petticoats we’ve got on?” asked Rebecca Dew, escaping to the kitchen before any one could register horror. Even Aunt Chatty thought Rebecca Dew really had gone a little too far.

“I s’pose you saw old Alec Crowdy’s death last week in the paper,” sighed Cousin Ernestine. “His wife died two years ago, lit’rally harried into her grave, poor creetur. They say he’s been awful lonely since she died, but I’m afraid that’s too good to be true. And I’m afraid they’re not through with their troubles with him yet, even if he is buried. I hear he wouldn’t make a will and I’m afraid there’ll be awful ructions over the estate. They say Annabel Crowdy is going to marry a jack-of-all-trades. Her mother’s first husband was one, so mebbe it’s heredit’ry. Annabel’s had a hard life of it, but I’m afraid she’ll find it’s out of the frying-pan into the fire, even if it don’t turn out he’s got a wife already.”

“What is Jane Goldwin doing with herself this winter?” asked Aunt Kate. “She hasn’t been in to town for a long time.”

“Ah, poor Jane! She’s just pining away mysteriously. They don’t know what’s the matter with her, but I’m afraid it’ll turn out to be an alibi. What is Rebecca Dew laughing like a hyenus out in the kitchen for? I’m afraid you’ll have her on your hands yet. There’s an awful lot of weak minds among the Dews.”

“I see Thyra Cooper has a baby,” said Aunt Chatty.

“Ah, yes, poor little soul. Only one, thank mercy. I was afraid it would be twins. Twins run so in the Coopers.”

“Thyra and Ned are such a nice young couple,” said Aunt Kate, as if determined to salvage something from the wreck of the universe.

But Cousin Ernestine would not admit that there was any balm in Gilead much less in Lowvale.

“Ah, she was real thankful to git him at last. There was a time she was afraid he wouldn’t come back from the west. I warned her. ‘You may be sure he’ll disappoint you,’ I told her. ‘He’s always disappointed people. Every one expected him to die afore he was a year old, but you see he’s alive yet.’ When he bought the Holly place I warned her again. ‘I’m afraid that well is full of typhoid,’ I told her. ‘The Holly hired man died of typhoid there five years ago.’ They can’t blame me if anything happens. Joseph Holly has some misery in his back. He calls it lumbago, but I’m afraid it’s the beginning of spinal meningitis.”

“Old Uncle Joseph Holly is one of the best men in the world,” said Rebecca Dew, bringing in a replenished teapot.

“Ah, he’s good,” said Cousin Ernestine lugubriously. “Too good! I’m afraid his sons will all go to the bad. You see it like that so often. Seems as if an average has to be struck. No, thank you, Kate, I won’t have any more tea ... well, mebbe a macaroon. They don’t lie heavy on the stomach, but I’m afraid I’ve et far too much. I must be taking French leave, for I’m afraid it’ll be dark afore I git home. I don’t want to git my feet wet; I’m so afraid of ammonia. I’ve had something traveling from my arm to my lower limbs all winter. Night after night I’ve laid awake with it. Ah, nobody knows what I’ve gone through, but I ain’t one of the complaining sort. I was determined I’d git up to see you once more, for I may not be here another spring. But you’ve both failed terrible, so you may go afore me yet. Ah well, it’s best to go while there’s some one of your own left to lay you out. Dear me, how the wind is gitting up! I’m afraid our barn roof will blow off if it comes to a gale. We’ve had so much wind this spring I’m afraid the climate is changing. Thank you, Miss Shirley ...” as Anne helped her into her coat ... “Be careful of yourself. You look awful washed out. I’m afraid people with red hair never have real strong constitutions.”

“I think my constitution is all right,” smiled Anne, handing Cousin Ernestine an indescribable bit of millinery with a stringy ostrich feather dripping from its back. “I have a touch of sore throat tonight, Miss Bugle, that’s all.”

“Ah!” Another of Cousin Ernestine’s dark forebodings came to her. “You want to watch a sore throat. The symptoms of diphtheria and tonsillitis are exactly the same till the third day. But there’s one consolation ... you’ll be spared an awful lot of trouble if you die young.”

Chapter 9

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“Tower Room,
“Windy Poplars,
“April 20th.

“POOR DEAR GILBERT:

“‘I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it?’ I’m afraid I’ll turn gray young ... I’m afraid I’ll end up in the poorhouse ... I’m afraid none of my pupils will pass their finals ... Mr. Hamilton’s dog barked at me Saturday night and I’m afraid I’ll have hydrophobia ... I’m afraid my umbrella will turn inside out when I keep a tryst with Katherine tonight ... I’m afraid Katherine likes me so much now that she can’t always like me as much ... I’m afraid my hair isn’t auburn after all ... I’m afraid I’ll have a mole on the end of my nose when I’m fifty ... I’m afraid my school is a fire-trap ... I’m afraid I’ll find a mouse in my bed tonight ... I’m afraid you got engaged to me just because I was always around ... I’m afraid I’ll soon be picking at the counterpane.

“No, dearest, I’m not crazy ... not yet. It’s only that Cousin Ernestine Bugle is catching.

“I know now why Rebecca Dew has always called her ‘Miss Much-afraid.’ The poor soul has borrowed so much trouble, she must be hopelessly in

debt to fate.

“There are so many Bugles in the world ... not many quite so far gone in Buglism as Cousin Ernestine, perhaps, but so many kill-joys, afraid to enjoy today because of what tomorrow will bring.

“Gilbert darling, don’t let’s ever be afraid of things. It’s such dreadful slavery. Let’s be daring and adventurous and expectant. Let’s dance to meet life and all it can bring to us, even if it brings scads of trouble and typhoid and twins!

“Today has been a day dropped out of June into April. The snow is all gone and the fawn meadows and golden hills just sing of spring. I know I heard Pan piping in the little green hollow in my maple bush and my Storm King was bannered with the airiest of purple hazes. We’ve had a great deal of rain lately and I’ve loved sitting in my tower in the still, wet hours of the spring twilights. But tonight is a gusty, hurrying night ... even the clouds racing over the sky are in a hurry and the moonlight that gushes out between them is in a hurry to flood the world.

“Suppose, Gilbert, we were walking hand in hand down one of the long roads in Avonlea tonight!

“Gilbert, I’m afraid I’m scandalously in love with you. You don’t think it’s irreverent, do you? But then, you’re not a minister.”

Chapter 10

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“I’m so different,” sighed Hazel.

It was really dreadful to be so different from other people ... and yet rather wonderful, too, as if you were a being strayed from another star. Hazel would not have been one of the common herd for anything ... no matter what she suffered by reason of her differentness.

“Everybody is different,” said Anne amusedly.

“You are smiling.” Hazel clasped a pair of very white, very dimpled hands and gazed adoringly at Anne. She emphasized at least one syllable in every word she uttered. “You have such a fascinating smile ... such a haunting smile. I knew the moment I first saw you that you would understand everything. We are on the same plane. Sometimes I think I must be psychic, Miss Shirley. I always know so instinctively the moment I meet any one whether I’m going to like them or not. I felt at once that you were sympathetic ... that you would understand. It’s so sweet to be understood. Nobody understands me, Miss Shirley ... nobody. But when I saw you, some inner voice whispered to me, ‘She will understand ... with her you can be your real self.’ Oh, Miss Shirley, let’s be real ... let’s always be real. Oh, Miss Shirley, do you love me the leastest, tiniest bit?”

“I think you’re a dear,” said Anne, laughing a little and ruffling Hazel’s golden curls with her slender fingers. It was quite easy to be fond of Hazel.

Hazel had been pouring out her soul to Anne in the tower room, from which they could see a young moon hanging over the harbor and the twilight of a late May evening filling the crimson cups of the tulips below the windows.

“Don’t let’s have any light yet,” Hazel had begged, and Anne had responded,

“No ... it’s lovely here when the dark is your friend, isn’t it? When you turn on the light, it makes the dark your enemy ... and it glowers in at you resentfully.”

“I can think things like that but I can never express them so beautifully,” moaned Hazel in an anguish of rapture. “You talk in the language of the violets, Miss Shirley.”

Hazel couldn’t have explained in the least what she meant by that, but it didn’t matter. It sounded so poetic.

The tower room was the only peaceful room in the house. Rebecca Dew had said that morning, with a hunted look, “We must get the parlor and spare-room papered before the Ladies’ Aid meets here,” and had forthwith removed all the furniture from both to make way for a paperhanger who then refused to come until the next day. Windy Poplars was a wilderness of confusion, with one sole oasis in the tower room.

Hazel Marr had a notorious “crush” on Anne. The Marrs were newcomers in Summerside, having moved there from Charlottetown during the winter. Hazel was an “October blonde,” as she liked to describe herself, with hair of golden bronze and brown eyes, and, so Rebecca Dew declared, had never been much good in the world since she found out she was pretty. But Hazel was popular, especially among the boys, who found her eyes and curls a quite irresistible combination.

Anne liked her. Earlier in the evening she had been tired and a trifle pessimistic, with the fag that comes with late afternoon in a schoolroom, but she felt rested now; whether as a result of the May breeze, sweet with apple blossom, blowing in at the window, or of Hazel’s chatter, she could not have told. Perhaps both. Somehow, to Anne, Hazel recalled her own early youth, with all its raptures and ideals and romantic visions.

Hazel caught Anne’s hand and pressed her lips to it reverently.

“I hate all the people you have loved before me, Miss Shirley. I hate all the other people you love now. I want to possess you exclusively.”

“Aren’t you a bit unreasonable, honey? You love other people besides me. How about Terry, for example?”

“Oh, Miss Shirley! It’s that I want to talk to you about. I can’t endure it in silence any longer ... I cannot. I must talk to some one about it ... some one who understands. I went out the night before last and walked round and round the pond all night ... well, nearly ... till twelve, anyhow. I’ve suffered everything ... everything.”

Hazel looked as tragic as a round, pink-and-white face, long-lashed eyes and a halo of curls would let her.

“Why, Hazel dear, I thought you and Terry were so happy ... that everything was settled.”

Anne could not be blamed for thinking so. During the preceding three weeks, Hazel had raved to her about Terry Garland, for Hazel’s attitude was, what was the use of having a beau if you couldn’t talk to some one about him?

“Everybody thinks that,” retorted Hazel with great bitterness. “Oh, Miss Shirley, life seems so full of perplexing problems. I feel sometimes as if I wanted to lie down somewhere ... anywhere ... and fold my hands and never think again.”

“My dear girl, what has gone wrong?”

“Nothing ... and everything. Oh, Miss Shirley, can I tell you all about it ... can I pour out my whole soul to you?”

“Of course, dear.”

“I have really no place to pour out my soul,” said Hazel pathetically.

“Except in my journal, of course. Will you let me show you my journal some day, Miss Shirley? It is a self-revelation. And yet I cannot write out what burns in my soul. It ... it stifles me!” Hazel clutched dramatically at her throat.

“Of course I’d like to see it if you want me to. But what is this trouble between you and Terry?”

“Oh, Terry!! Miss Shirley, will you believe me when I tell you that Terry seems like a stranger to me? A stranger! Some one I’d never seen before,” added Hazel, so that there might be no mistake.

“But, Hazel ... I thought you loved him ... you said ...”

“Oh, I know. I thought I loved him, too. But now I know it was all a terrible mistake. Oh, Miss Shirley, you can’t dream how difficult my life is ... how impossible.”

“I know something about it,” said Anne sympathetically, remembering Roy Gardiner.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, I’m sure I don’t love him enough to marry him. I realize that now ... now that it is too late. I was just moonlighted into thinking I loved him. If it hadn’t been for the moon I’m sure I would have asked for time to think it over. But I was swept off my feet ... I can see that now. Oh, I’ll run away ... I’ll do something desperate!”

“But, Hazel dear, if you feel you’ve made a mistake, why not just tell him ...”

“Oh, Miss Shirley, I couldn’t! It would kill him. He simply adores me. There isn’t any way out of it really. And Terry’s beginning to talk of getting married. Think of it ... a child like me ... I’m only eighteen. All the friends I’ve told about my engagement as a secret are congratulating me ... and it’s such a farce. They think Terry is a great catch because he comes into ten thousand dollars when he is twenty-five. His grandmother left it to him. As if I cared about such a sordid thing as money! Oh, Miss Shirley, why is it such a mercenary world ... why?”

“I suppose it is mercenary in some respects, but not in all, Hazel. And if you feel like this about Terry ... we all make mistakes ... it’s very hard to know our own minds sometimes... .”

“Oh, isn’t it? I knew you’d understand. I did think I cared for him, Miss Shirley. The first time I saw him I just sat and gazed at him the whole evening. Waves went over me when I met his eyes. He was so handsome ... though I thought even then that his hair was too curly and his eyelashes too white. That should have warned me. But I always put my soul into everything, you know ... I’m so intense. I felt little shivers of ecstasy whenever he came near me. And now I feel nothing ... nothing! Oh, I’ve grown old these past few weeks, Miss Shirley ... old! I’ve hardly eaten anything since I got engaged. Mother could tell you. I’m sure I don’t love him enough to marry him. Whatever else I may be in doubt about, I know that.”

“Then you shouldn’t ...”

“Even that moonlight night he proposed to me, I was thinking of what dress I’d wear to Joan Pringle’s fancy dress party. I thought it would be lovely to go as Queen of the May in pale green, with a sash of darker green and a cluster of pale pink roses in my hair. And a May-pole decked with tiny roses and hung with pink and green ribbons. Wouldn’t it have been fetching? And then Joan’s uncle had to go and die and Joan couldn’t have the party after all, so it all went for nothing. But the point is ... I really couldn’t have loved him when my thoughts were wandering like that, could I?”

“I don’t know ... our thoughts play us curious tricks some times.”

“I really don’t think I ever want to get married at all, Miss Shirley. Do you happen to have an orangewood stick handy? Thanks. My half-moons are getting ragged. I might as well do them while I’m talking. Isn’t it just lovely to be exchanging confidences like this? It’s so seldom one gets the opportunity ... the world intrudes itself so. Well, what was I talking of ... oh, yes, Terry. What am I to do, Miss Shirley? I want your advice. Oh, I feel like a trapped creature!”

“But, Hazel, it’s so very simple ...”

“Oh, it isn’t simple at all, Miss Shirley! It’s dreadfully complicated. Mamma is so outrageously pleased, but Aunt Jean isn’t. She doesn’t like

Terry, and everybody says she has such good judgment. I don't want to marry anybody. I'm ambitious ... I want a career. Sometimes I think I'd like to be a nun. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be the bride of heaven? I think the Catholic church is so picturesque, don't you? But of course I'm not a Catholic ... and anyway, I suppose you could hardly call it a career. I've always felt I'd love to be a nurse. It's such a romantic profession, don't you think? Smoothing fevered brows and all that ... and some handsome millionaire patient falling in love with you and carrying you off to spend a honeymoon in a villa on the Riviera, facing the morning sun and the blue Mediterranean. I've seen myself in it. Foolish dreams, perhaps, but, oh, so sweet. I can't give them up for the prosaic reality of marrying Terry Garland and settling down in Summerside!"

Hazel shivered at the very idea and scrutinized a half-moon critically.

"I suppose ..." began Anne.

"We haven't anything in common, you know, Miss Shirley. He doesn't care for poetry and romance, and they're my very life. Sometimes I think I must be a reincarnation of Cleopatra ... or would it be Helen of Troy? ... one of those languorous, seductive creatures, anyhow. I have such wonderful thoughts and feelings ... I don't know where I get them if that isn't the explanation. And Terry is so terribly matter-of-fact ... he can't be a reincarnation of anybody. What he said when I told him about Vera Fry's quill pen proves that, doesn't it?"

"But I never heard of Vera Fry's quill pen," said Anne patiently.

"Oh, haven't you? I thought I'd told you. I've told you so much. Vera's fiance gave her a quill pen he'd made out of a feather he'd picked up that had fallen from a crow's wing. He said to her, 'Let your spirit soar to heaven with it whenever you use it, like the bird who once bore it.' Wasn't that just wonderful? But Terry said the pen would wear out very soon, especially if Vera wrote as much as she talked, and anyway he didn't think crows ever soared to heaven. He just missed the meaning of the whole thing completely ... it's very essence."

"What was its meaning?"

“Oh ... why ... why ... soaring, you know ... getting away from the clods of earth. Did you notice Vera’s ring? A sapphire. I think sapphires are too dark for engagement rings. I’d rather have your dear, romantic little hoop of pearls. Terry wanted to give me my ring right away ... but I said not yet a while ... it would seem like a fetter ... so irrevocable, you know. I wouldn’t have felt like that if I’d really loved him, would I?”

“No, I’m afraid not ...”

“It’s been so wonderful to tell somebody what I really feel like. Oh, Miss Shirley, if I could only find myself free again ... free to seek the deeper meaning of life! Terry wouldn’t understand what I meant if I said that to him. And I know he has a temper ... all the Garlands have. Oh, Miss Shirley ... if you would just talk to him ... tell him what I feel like ... he thinks you’re wonderful ... he’d be guided by what you say.”

“Hazel, my dear little girl, how could I do that?”

“I don’t see why not.” Hazel finished the last new moon and laid the orangewood stick down tragically. “If you can’t, there isn’t any help anywhere. But I can never, never, NEVER marry Terry Garland.”

“If you don’t love Terry, you ought to go to him and tell him so ... no matter how badly it will make him feel. Some day you’ll meet some one you can really love, Hazel dear ... you won’t have any doubts then ... you’ll know.”

“I shall never love anybody again,” said Hazel, stonily calm. “Love brings only sorrow. Young as I am I have learned that. This would make a wonderful plot for one of your stories, wouldn’t it, Miss Shirley? I must be going ... I’d no idea it was so late. I feel so much better since I’ve confided in you ... ‘touched your soul in shadowland,’ as Shakespeare says.”

“I think it was Pauline Johnson,” said Anne gently.

“Well, I knew it was somebody ... somebody who had lived. I think I shall sleep tonight, Miss Shirley. I’ve hardly slept since I found myself engaged

to Terry, without the least notion how it had all come about.”

Hazel fluffed out her hair and put on her hat, a hat with a rosy lining to its brim and rosy blossoms around it. She looked so distractingly pretty in it that Anne kissed her impulsively. “You’re the prettiest thing, darling,” she said admiringly.

Hazel stood very still.

Then she lifted her eyes and stared clear through the ceiling of the tower room, clear through the attic above it, and sought the stars.

“I shall never, never forget this wonderful moment, Miss Shirley,” she murmured rapturously. “I feel that my beauty ... if I have any ... has been consecrated. Oh, Miss Shirley, you don’t know how really terrible it is to have a reputation for beauty and to be always afraid that when people meet you they will not think you as pretty as you were reported to be. It’s torture. Sometimes I just die of mortification because I fancy I can see they’re disappointed. Perhaps it’s only my imagination ... I’m so imaginative ... too much so for my own good, I fear. I imagined I was in love with Terry, you see. Oh, Miss Shirley, can you smell the apple-blossom fragrance?”

Having a nose, Anne could.

“Isn’t it just divine? I hope heaven will be all flowers. One could be good if one lived in a lily, couldn’t one?”

“I’m afraid it might be a little confining,” said Anne perversely.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, don’t ... don’t be sarcastic with your little adorer. Sarcasm just shrivels me up like a leaf.”

“I see she hasn’t talked you quite to death,” said Rebecca Dew, when Anne had come back after seeing Hazel to the end of Spook’s Lane. “I don’t see how you put up with her.”

“I like her, Rebecca, I really do. I was a dreadful little chatterbox when I was a child. I wonder if I sounded as silly to the people who had to listen to me as Hazel does sometimes.”

“I didn’t know you when you was a child but I’m sure you didn’t,” said Rebecca. “Because you would mean what you said no matter how you expressed it and Hazel Marr doesn’t. She’s nothing but skim milk pretending to be cream.”

“Oh, of course she dramatizes herself a bit as most girls do, but I think she means some of the things she says,” said Anne, thinking of Terry. Perhaps it was because she had a rather poor opinion of the said Terry that she believed Hazel was quite in earnest in all she said about him. Anne thought Hazel was throwing herself away on Terry in spite of the ten thousand he was “coming into.” Anne considered Terry a goodlooking, rather weak youth who would fall in love with the first pretty girl who made eyes at him and would, with equal facility, fall in love with the next one if Number One turned him down or left him alone too long.

Anne had seen a good deal of Terry that spring, for Hazel had insisted on her playing gooseberry frequently; and she was destined to see more of him, for Hazel went to visit friends in Kingsport and during her absence Terry rather attached himself to Anne, taking her out for rides and “seeing her home” from places. They called each other “Anne” and “Terry,” for they were about the same age, although Anne felt quite motherly towards him. Terry felt immensely flattered that “the clever Miss Shirley” seemed to like his companionship and he became so sentimental the night of May Connelly’s party, in a moonlit garden, where the shadows of the acacias blew crazily about, that Anne amusedly reminded him of the absent Hazel.

“Oh, Hazel!” said Terry. “That child!”

“You’re engaged to ‘that child,’ aren’t you?” said Anne severely.

“Not really engaged ... nothing but some boy-and-girl nonsense. I ... I guess I was just swept off my feet by the moonlight.”

Anne did a bit of rapid thinking. If Terry really cared so little for Hazel as this, the child was far better freed from him. Perhaps this was a heavensent opportunity to extricate them both from the silly tangle they had got themselves into and from which neither of them, taking things with all the deadly seriousness of youth, knew how to escape.

“Of course,” went on Terry, misinterpreting her silence. “I’m in a bit of a predicament, I’ll own. I’m afraid Hazel has taken me a little bit too seriously, and I don’t just know the best way to open her eyes to her mistake.”

Impulsive Anne assumed her most maternal look.

“Terry, you are a couple of children playing at being grown up. Hazel doesn’t really care anything more for you than you do for her. Apparently the moonlight affected both of you. She wants to be free but is afraid to tell you so for fear of hurting your feelings. She’s just a bewildered, romantic girl and you’re a boy in love with love, and some day you’ll both have a good laugh at yourselves.”

(“I think I’ve put that very nicely,” thought Anne complacently.)

Terry drew a long breath.

“You’ve taken a weight off my mind, Anne. Hazel’s a sweet little thing, of course, I hated to think of hurting her, but I’ve realized my ... our ... mistake for some weeks. When one meets a woman ... the woman ... you’re not going in yet, Anne? Is all this good moonlight to be wasted? You look like a white rose in the moonlight ... Anne... .”

But Anne had flown.

Chapter 1 1

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Anne, correcting examination papers in the tower room one mid-June evening, paused to wipe her nose. She had wiped it so often that evening that it was rosy-red and rather painful. The truth was that Anne was the victim of a very severe and very unromantic cold in the head. It would not allow her to enjoy the soft green sky behind the hemlocks of The Evergreens, the silver-white moon hanging over the Storm King, the haunting perfume of the lilacs below her window or the frosty, blue-penciled irises in the vase on her table. It darkened all her past and overshadowed all her future.

“A cold in the head in June is an immoral thing,” she told Dusty Miller, who was meditating on the windowsill. “But in two weeks from today I’ll be in dear Green Gables instead of stewing here over examination papers full of howlers and wiping a worn-out nose. Think of it, Dusty Miller.”

Apparently Dusty Miller thought of it. He may also have thought that the young lady who was hurrying along Spook’s Lane and down the road and along the perennial path looked angry and disturbed and un-June-like. It was Hazel Marr, only a day back from Kingsport, and evidently a much disturbed Hazel Marr, who, a few minutes later, burst stormily into the tower room without waiting for a reply to her sharp knock.

“Why, Hazel dear ...” (Kershoo!) ... “are you back from Kingsport already? I didn’t expect you till next week.”

“No, I suppose you didn’t,” said Hazel sarcastically. “Yes, Miss Shirley, I am back. And what do I find? That you have been doing your best to lure Terry away from me ... and all but succeeding.”

“Hazel!” (Kershoo!)

“Oh, I know it all! You told Terry I didn’t love him ... that I wanted to break our engagement ... our sacred engagement!”

“Hazel ... child!” (Kershoo!)

“Oh, yes, sneer at me ... sneer at everything. But don’t try to deny it. You did it ... and you did it deliberately.”

“Of course, I did. You asked me to.”

“I ... asked ... you ... to!”

“Here, in this very room. You told me you didn’t love him and could never marry him.”

“Oh, just a mood, I suppose. I never dreamed you’d take me seriously. I thought you would understand the artistic temperament. You’re ages older than I am, of course, but even you can’t have forgotten the crazy ways girls talk ... feel. You who pretended to be my friend!”

“This must be a nightmare,” thought poor Anne, wiping her nose. “Sit down, Hazel ... do.”

“Sit down!” Hazel flew wildly up and down the room. “How can I sit down ... how can anybody sit down when her life is in ruins all about her? Oh, if that is what being old does to you ... jealous of younger people’s happiness and determined to wreck it ... I shall pray never to grow old.”

Anne’s hand suddenly tingled to box Hazel’s ears with a strange horrible primitive tingle of desire. She slew it so instantly that she would never believe afterwards that she had really felt it. But she did think a little gentle chastisement was indicated.

“If you can’t sit down and talk sensibly, Hazel, I wish you would go away.” (A very violent kershoo.) “I have work to do.” (Sniff ... sniff ... snuffle!)

“I am not going away till I have told you just what I think of you. Oh, I know I’ve only myself to blame ... I should have known ... I did know. I felt instinctively the first time I saw you that you were dangerous. That red hair and those green eyes! But I never dreamed you’d go so far as to make trouble between me and Terry. I thought you were a Christian at least. I never heard of any one doing such a thing. Well, you’ve broken my heart, if that is any satisfaction to you.”

“You little goose ...”

“I won’t talk to you! Oh, Terry and I were so happy before you spoiled everything. I was so happy ... the first girl of my set to be engaged. I even had my wedding all planned out ... four bridesmaids in lovely pale blue silk dresses with black velvet ribbon on the flounces. So chic! Oh, I don’t know if I hate you the most or pity you the most! Oh, how could you treat me like this ... after I’ve loved you so ... trusted you so ... believed in you so!”

Hazel’s voice broke ... her eyes filled with tears ... she collapsed on a rocking-chair.

“You can’t have many exclamation points left,” thought Anne, “but no doubt the supply of italics is inexhaustible.”

“This will just about kill poor Momma,” sobbed Hazel. “She was so pleased ... everybody was so pleased ... they all thought it an ideal match. Oh, can anything ever again be like it used to be?”

“Wait till the next moonlight night and try,” said Anne gently.

“Oh, yes, laugh, Miss Shirley ... laugh at my suffering. I have not the least doubt that you find it all very amusing ... very amusing indeed! You don’t know what suffering is! It is terrible ... terrible!”

Anne looked at the clock and sneezed.

“Then don’t suffer,” she said unpityingly.

“I will suffer. My feelings are very deep. Of course a shallow soul wouldn’t suffer. But I am thankful I am not shallow whatever else I am. Have you any idea what it means to be in love, Miss Shirley? Really, terribly deeply, wonderfully in love? And then to trust and be deceived? I went to Kingsport so happy ... loving all the world! I told Terry to be good to you while I was away ... not to let you be lonesome. I came home last night so happy. And he told me he didn’t love me any longer ... that it was all a mistake ... a mistake! ... and that you had told him I didn’t care for him any longer, and wanted to be free!”

“My intentions were honorable,” said Anne, laughing. Her impish sense of humor had come to her rescue and she was laughing as much at herself as at Hazel.

“Oh, how did I live through the night?” said Hazel wildly. “I just walked the floor. And you don’t know ... you can’t even imagine what I’ve gone through today. I’ve had to sit and listen ... actually listen ... to people talking about Terry’s infatuation for you. Oh, people have been watching you! They know what you’ve been doing. And why ... why! That is what I cannot understand. You had your own lover ... why couldn’t you have left me mine? What had you against me? What had I ever done to you?”

“I think,” said Anne, thoroughly exasperated, “that you and Terry both need a good spanking. If you weren’t too angry to listen to reason ...”

“Oh, I’m not angry, Miss Shirley ... only hurt ... terribly hurt,” said Hazel in a voice positively foggy with tears. “I feel that I have been betrayed in everything ... in friendship as well as in love. Well, they say after your heart is broken you never suffer any more. I hope it’s true, but I fear it isn’t.”

“What has become of your ambition, Hazel? And what about the millionaire patient and the honeymoon villa on the blue Mediterranean?”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about, Miss Shirley. I’m not a bit ambitious ... I’m not one of those dreadful new women. My highest ambition was to be a happy wife and make a happy home for my husband. Was ... was! To think it should be in the past tense! Well, it doesn’t do to trust any one. I’ve learned that. A bitter, bitter lesson!”

Hazel wiped her eyes and Anne wiped her nose, and Dusty Miller glared at the evening star with the expression of a misanthrope.

“You’d better go, I think, Hazel. I’m really very busy and I can’t see that there is anything to be gained by prolonging this interview.”

Hazel walked to the door with the air of Mary Queen of Scots advancing to the scaffold, and turned there dramatically.

“Farewell, Miss Shirley. I leave you to your conscience.”

Anne, left alone with her conscience, laid down her pen, sneezed three times and gave herself a plain talking-to.

“You may be a B.A., Anne Shirley, but you have a few things to learn yet ... things that even Rebecca Dew could have told you ... did tell you. Be honest with yourself, my dear girl, and take your medicine like a gallant lady. Admit that you were carried off your feet by flattery. Admit that you really liked Hazel’s professed adoration for you. Admit you found it pleasant to be worshiped. Admit that you liked the idea of being a sort of dea ex machina ... saving people from their own folly when they didn’t in the least want to be saved from it. And having admitted all this and feeling wiser and sadder and a few thousand years older, pick up your pen and proceed with your examination papers, pausing to note in passing that Myra Pringle thinks a seraph is ‘an animal that abounds in Africa.’”

Chapter 1 2

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A week later a letter came for Anne, written on pale blue paper edged with silver.

“DEAR MISS SHIRLEY:

“I am writing this to tell you that all misunderstanding is cleared away between Terry and me and we are so deeply, intensely, wonderfully happy that we have decided we can forgive you. Terry says he was just moonlighted into making love to you but that his heart never really swerved in its allegiance to me. He says he really likes sweet, simple girls ... that all men do ... and has no use for intriguing, designing ones. We don’t understand why you behaved to us as you did ... we never will understand. Perhaps you just wanted material for a story and thought you could find it in tampering with the first sweet, tremulous love of a girl. But we thank you for revealing us to ourselves. Terry says he never realized the deeper meaning of life before. So really it was all for the best.

We are so sympathetic ... we can feel each other's thoughts. Nobody understands him but me and I want to be a source of inspiration to him forever. I am not clever like you but I feel I can be that, for we are soul-mates and have vowed eternal truth and constancy to each other, no matter how many jealous people and false friends may try to make trouble between us.

"We are going to be married as soon as I have my trousseau ready. I am going up to Boston to get it. There really isn't anything in Summerside. My dress is to be white moire and my traveling-suit will be dove gray with hat, gloves and blouse of delphinium blue. Of course I'm very young, but I want to be married when I am young, before the bloom goes off life.

"Terry is all that my wildest dreams could picture and every thought of my heart is for him alone. I know we are going to be rapturously happy. Once I believed all my friends would rejoice with me in my happiness, but I have learned a bitter lesson in worldly wisdom since then.

"Yours truly,

"HAZEL MARR.

"P.S. 1. You told me Terry had such a temper. Why, he's a perfect lamb, his sister says.

"H.M.

"P.S. 2. I've heard that lemon juice will bleach freckles. You might try it on your nose.

"H.M."

"To quote Rebecca Dew," remarked Anne to Dusty Miller, "postscript Number Two is the last straw."

Chapter 13

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Anne went home for her second Summerside vacation with mixed feelings. Gilbert was not to be in Avonlea that summer. He had gone west to work on a new railroad that was being built. But Green Gables was still Green Gables and Avonlea was still Avonlea. The Lake of Shining Waters shone and sparkled as of old. The ferns still grew as thickly over the Dryad's Bubble, and the log-bridge, though it was a little crumblier and mossier every year, still led up to the shadows and silences and wind-songs of the Haunted Wood.

And Anne had prevailed on Mrs. Campbell to let little Elizabeth go home with her for a fortnight ... no more. But Elizabeth, looking forward to two whole weeks with Miss Shirley, asked no more of life.

"I feel like Miss Elizabeth today," she told Anne with a sigh of delightful excitement, as they drove away from Windy Poplars. "Will you please call me 'Miss Elizabeth' when you introduce me to your friends at Green Gables? It would make me feel so grown up."

"I will," promised Anne gravely, remembering a small, redheaded damsel who had once begged to be called Cordelia.

Elizabeth's drive from Blight River to Green Gables, over a road which only Prince Edward Island in June can show, was almost as ecstatic a thing for her as it had been for Anne that memorable spring evening so many years ago. The world was beautiful, with windrippled meadows on every hand and surprises lurking around every corner. She was with her beloved Miss Shirley; she would be free from the Woman for two whole weeks; she had a new pink gingham dress and a pair of lovely new brown boots. It was almost as if Tomorrow were already there ... with fourteen Tomorrows to follow. Elizabeth's eyes were shining with dreams when they turned into the Green Gables lane where the pink wild roses grew.

Things seemed to change magically for Elizabeth the moment she got to Green Gables. For two weeks she lived in a world of romance. You couldn't step outside the door without stepping into something romantic.

Things were just bound to happen in Avonlea ... if not today, then tomorrow. Elizabeth knew she hadn't quite got into Tomorrow yet, but she knew she was on the very fringes of it.

Everything in and about Green Gables seemed to be acquainted with her. Even Marilla's pink rosebud tea-set was like an old friend. The rooms looked at her as if she had always known and loved them; the very grass was greener than grass anywhere else; and the people who lived at Green Gables were the kind of people who lived in Tomorrow. She loved them and was beloved by them. Davy and Dora adored her and spoiled her; Marilla and Mrs. Lynde approved of her. She was neat, she was ladylike, she was polite to her elders. They knew Anne did not like Mrs. Campbell's methods, but it was plain to be seen that she had trained her great-granddaughter properly.

"Oh, I don't want to sleep, Miss Shirley," Elizabeth whispered when they were in bed in the little porch gable, after a rapturous evening. "I don't want to sleep away a single minute of these wonderful two weeks. I wish I could get along without any sleep while I'm here."

For a while she didn't sleep. It was heavenly to lie there and listen to the splendid low thunder Miss Shirley had told her was the sound of the sea. Elizabeth loved it and the sigh of the wind around the eaves as well. Elizabeth had always been "afraid of the night." Who knew what queer thing might jump at you out of it? But now she was afraid no longer. For the first time in her life the night seemed like a friend to her.

They would go to the shore tomorrow, Miss Shirley had promised, and have a dip in those silver-tipped waves they had seen breaking beyond the green dunes of Avonlea when they drove over the last hill. Elizabeth could see them coming in, one after the other. One of them was a great dark wave of sleep ... it rolled right over her ... Elizabeth drowned in it with a delicious sigh of surrender.

"It's ... so ... easy ... to ... love ... God ... here," was her last conscious thought.

But she lay awake for a while every night of her stay at Green Gables, long after Miss Shirley had gone to sleep, thinking over things. Why couldn't life at The Evergreens be like life at Green Gables?

Elizabeth had never lived where she could make a noise if she wanted to. Everybody at The Evergreens had to move softly ... speak softly ... even, so Elizabeth felt, think softly. There were times when Elizabeth desired perversely to yell loud and long.

"You may make all the noise you want to here," Anne had told her. But it was strange ... she no longer wanted to yell, now that there was nothing to prevent her. She liked to go quietly, stepping gently among all the lovely things around her. But Elizabeth learned to laugh during that sojourn at Green Gables. And when she went back to Summerside she carried delightful memories with her and left equally delightful ones behind her. To the Green Gables folks Green Gables seemed for months full of memories of little Elizabeth. For "little Elizabeth" she was to them in spite of the fact that Anne had solemnly introduced her as "Miss Elizabeth." She was so tiny, so golden, so elf-like, that they couldn't think of her as anything but little Elizabeth ... little Elizabeth dancing in a twilight garden among the white June lilies ... coiled up on a bough of the big Duchess apple tree reading fairy tales, unlet and unhindered ... little Elizabeth half drowned in a field of buttercups where her golden head seemed just a larger buttercup ... chasing silver-green moths or trying to count the fireflies in Lover's Lane ... listening to the bumblebees zooming in the canterbury-bells ... being fed strawberries and cream by Dora in the pantry or eating red currants with her in the yard ... "Red currants are such beautiful things, aren't they, Dora? It's just like eating jewels, isn't it?" ... little Elizabeth singing to herself in the haunted dusk of the firs ... with fingers sweet from gathering the big, fat, pink "cabbage roses" ... gazing at the great moon hanging over the brook valley ... "I think the moon has worried eyes, don't you, Mrs. Lynde?" ... crying bitterly because a chapter in the serial story in Davy's magazine left the hero in a sad predicament ... "Oh, Miss Shirley, I'm sure he can never live through it!" ... little Elizabeth curled up, all flushed and sweet like a wild rose, for an afternoon nap on the kitchen sofa with Dora's kittens cuddled about her ... shrieking with laughter to see the wind blowing the dignified old hens' tails over

their backs ... could it be little Elizabeth laughing like that? ... helping Anne frost cupcakes, Mrs. Lynde cut the patches for a new “double Irish chain” quilt, and Dora rub the old brass candlesticks till they could see their faces in them ... cutting out tiny biscuits with a thimble under Marilla’s tutelage. Why, the Green Gables folks could hardly look at a place or thing without being reminded of little Elizabeth.

“I wonder if I’ll ever have such a happy fortnight again,” thought little Elizabeth, as she drove away from Green Gables. The road to the station was just as beautiful as it had been two weeks before, but half the time little Elizabeth couldn’t see it for tears.

“I couldn’t have believed I’d miss a child so much,” said Mrs. Lynde.

When little Elizabeth went, Katherine Brooke and her dog came for the rest of the summer. Katherine had resigned from the staff of the High School at the close of the year and meant to go to Redmond in the fall to take a secretarial course at Redmond University. Anne had advised this.

“I know you’d like it and you’ve never liked teaching,” said the latter, as they sat one evening in a ferny corner of a clover field and watched the glories of a sunset sky.

“Life owes me something more than it has paid me and I’m going out to collect it,” said Katherine decidedly. “I feel so much younger than I did this time last year,” she added with a laugh.

“I’m sure it’s the best thing for you to do, but I hate to think of Summerside and the High without you. What will the tower room be like next year without our evenings of confab and argument, and our hours of foolishness, when we turned everybody and everything into a joke?”

The Third Year

Chapter 1

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“September 8th.

“Dearest:

“The summer is over ... the summer in which I have seen you only that weekend in May. And I am back at Windy Poplars for my third and last year in Summerside High. Katherine and I had a delightful time together at Green Gables and I’m going to miss her dreadfully this year. The new Junior teacher is a jolly little personage, chubby and rosy and friendly as a puppy ... but somehow, there’s nothing more to her than that. She has sparkling shallow blue eyes with no thought behind them. I like her ... I’ll always like her ... neither more nor less ... there’s nothing to discover in her. There was so much to discover in Katherine, when you once got past her guard.

“There is no change at Windy Poplars ... yes there is. The old red cow has gone to her long home, so Rebecca Dew sadly informed me when I came down to supper Monday night. The widows have decided not to bother with another one but to get milk and cream from Mr. Cherry. This means that little Elizabeth will come no more to the garden gate for her new milk. But Mrs. Campbell seems to have grown reconciled to her coming over here when she wants to, so that does not make so much difference now.

“And another change is brewing. Aunt Kate told me, much to my sorrow, that they have decided to give Dusty Miller away as soon as they can find a suitable home for him. When I protested, she said they were really

driven to it for peace' sake. Rebecca Dew has been constantly complaining about him all summer and there seems to be no other way of satisfying her. Poor Dusty Miller ... and he is such a nice, prowly, purry darling!

“Tomorrow, being Saturday, I’m going to look after Mrs. Raymond’s twins while she goes to Charlottetown to the funeral of some relative. Mrs. Raymond is a widow who came to our town last winter. Rebecca Dew and the Windy Poplars widows ... really, Summerside is a great place for widows ... think her a ‘little too grand’ for Summerside, but she was really a wonderful help to Katherine and me in our Dramatic Club activities. One good turn deserves another.

“Gerald and Geraldine are eight and are a pair of angelic-looking youngsters, but Rebecca Dew ‘pulled a mouth,’ to use one of her own expressions, when I told her what I was going to do.

“‘But I love children, Rebecca.’

“‘Children, yes, but them’s holy terrors, Miss Shirley. Mrs. Raymond doesn’t believe in punishing children no matter what they do. She says she’s determined they’ll have a “natural” life. They take people in by that saintly look of theirs, but I’ve heard what her neighbors have to say of them. The minister’s wife called one afternoon ... well, Mrs. Raymond was sweet as sugar pie to her, but when she was leaving a shower of Spanish onions came flying down the stairs and one of them knocked her hat off. “Children always behave so abominably when you ‘specially want them to be good,” was all Mrs. Raymond said ... kinder as if she was rather proud of them being so unmanageable. They’re from the States, you know’ ... as if that explained everything. Rebecca has about as much use for ‘Yankees’ as Mrs. Lynde has.”

Chapter 2

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Saturday forenoon Anne betook herself to the pretty, old-fashioned cottage on a street that straggled out into the country, where Mrs. Raymond and

her famous twins lived. Mrs. Raymond was all ready to depart ... rather gayly dressed for a funeral, perhaps ... especially with regard to the beflowered hat perched on top of the smooth brown waves of hair that flowed around her head ... but looking very beautiful. The eight-year-old twins, who had inherited her beauty, were sitting on the stairs, their delicate faces wreathed with a quite cherubic expression. They had complexions of pink and white, large China-blue eyes and aureoles of fine, fluffy, pale yellow hair.

They smiled with engaging sweetness when their mother introduced them to Anne and told them that dear Miss Shirley had been so kind as to come and take care of them while Mother was away at dear Auntie Ella's funeral, and of course they would be good and not give her one teeny-weeny bit of trouble, wouldn't they, darlings?

The darlings nodded gravely and contrived, though it hadn't seemed possible, to look more angelic than ever.

Mrs. Raymond took Anne down the walk to the gate with her.

"They're all I've got ... now," she said pathetically. "Perhaps I may have spoiled them a little ... I know people say I have ... people always know so much better how you ought to bring up your children than you know yourself, haven't you noticed, Miss Shirley? But I think loving is better than spanking any day, don't you, Miss Shirley? I'm sure you will have no trouble with them. Children always know whom they can play on and whom they can't, don't you think? That poor old Miss Prouty up the street ... I had her to stay with them one day, but the poor darlings couldn't bear her. So of course they teased her a good bit ... you know what children are. She has revenged herself by telling the most ridiculous tales about them all over town. But they'll just love you and I know they'll be angels. Of course, they have high spirits ... but children should have, don't you think? It's so pitiful to see children with a cowed appearance, isn't it? I like them to be natural, don't you? Too good children don't seem natural, do they? Don't let them sail their boats in the bathtub or go wading in the pond, will you? I'm so afraid of them catching cold ... their father died of pneumonia."

Mrs. Raymond's large blue eyes looked as if they were going to overflow, but she gallantly blinked the tears away.

"Don't worry if they quarrel a little — children always do quarrel, don't you think? But if any outsider attacks them ... my dear!! They really just worship each other, you know. I could have taken one of them to the funeral, but they simply wouldn't hear of it. They've never been separated a day in their lives. And I couldn't look after twins at a funeral, could I now?"

"Don't worry, Mrs. Raymond," said Anne kindly. "I'm sure Gerald and Geraldine and I will have a beautiful day together. I love children."

"I know it. I felt sure the minute I saw you that you loved children. One can always tell, don't you think? There's something about a person who loves children. Poor old Miss Prouty detests them. She looks for the worst in children and so of course she finds it. You can't conceive what a comfort it is to me to reflect that my darlings are under the care of one who loves and understands children. I'm sure I'll quite enjoy the day."

"You might take us to the funeral," shrieked Gerald, suddenly sticking his head out of an upstairs window. "We never have any fun like that."

"Oh, they're in the bathroom!" exclaimed Mrs. Raymond tragically. "Dear Miss Shirley, please go and take them out. Gerald darling, you know mother couldn't take you both to the funeral. Oh, Miss Shirley, he's got that coyote skin from the parlor floor tied round his neck by the paws again. He'll ruin it. Please make him take it off at once. I must hurry or I'll miss the train."

Mrs. Raymond sailed elegantly away and Anne ran upstairs to find that the angelic Geraldine had grasped her brother by the legs and was apparently trying to hurl him bodily out of the window.

"Miss Shirley, make Gerald stop putting out his tongue at me," she demanded fiercely.

"Does it hurt you?" asked Anne smilingly.

“Well, he’s not going to put out his tongue at me,” retorted Geraldine, darting a baleful look at Gerald, who returned it with interest.

“My tongue’s my own and you can’t stop me from putting it out when I like ... can she, Miss Shirley?”

Anne ignored the question.

“Twins dear, it’s just an hour till lunch-time. Shall we go and sit in the garden and play games and tell stories? And, Gerald, won’t you put that coyote skin back on the floor?”

“But I want to play wolf,” said Gerald.

“He wants to play wolf,” cried Geraldine, suddenly aligning herself on her brother’s side.

“We want to play wolf,” they both cried together.

A peal from the doorbell cut the knot of Anne’s dilemma.

“Come on and see who it is,” cried Geraldine. They flew to the stairs and by reason of sliding down the banisters, got to the front door much quicker than Anne, the coyote skin coming unloosed and drifting away in the process.

“We never buy anything from peddlers,” Gerald told the lady standing on the doorstep.

“Can I see your mother?” asked the caller.

“No, you can’t. Mother’s gone to Aunt Ella’s funeral. Miss Shirley’s looking after us. That’s her coming down the stairs. She’ll make you scat.”

Anne did feel rather like making the caller “scat” when she saw who it was. Miss Pamela Drake was not a popular caller in Summerside. She was always “canvassing” for something and it was generally quite impossible to get rid of her unless you bought it, since she was utterly impervious to

snubs and hints and had apparently all the time in the world at her command.

This time she was “taking orders” for an encyclopedia ... something no schoolteacher could afford to be without. Vainly Anne protested that she did not need an encyclopedia ... the High School already possessed a very good one.

“Ten years out of date,” said Miss Pamela firmly. “We’ll just sit down here on this rustic bench, Miss Shirley, and I’ll show you my prospectus.”

“I’m afraid I haven’t time, Miss Drake. I have the children to look after.”

“It won’t take but a few minutes. I’ve been meaning to call on you, Miss Shirley, and I call it real fortunate to find you here. Run away and play, children, while Miss Shirley and I skim over this beautiful prospectus.”

“Mother’s hired Miss Shirley to look after us,” said Geraldine, with a toss of her aerial curls. But Gerald had tugged her backward and they slammed the door shut.

“You see, Miss Shirley, what this encyclopedia means. Look at the beautiful paper ... feel it ... the splendid engravings ... no other encyclopedia on the market has half the number of engravings ... the wonderful print — a blind man could read it — and all for eighty dollars ... eight dollars down and eight dollars a month till it’s all paid. You’ll never have such another chance ... we’re just doing this to introduce it ... next year it will be a hundred and twenty.”

“But I don’t want an encyclopedia, Miss Drake,” said Anne desperately.

“Of course you want an encyclopedia ... every one wants an encyclopedia ... a National encyclopedia. I don’t know how I lived before I became acquainted with the National encyclopedia. Live! I didn’t live ... I merely existed. Look at that engraving of the cassowary, Miss Shirley. Did you ever really see a cassowary before?”

“But, Miss Drake, I ...”

“If you think the terms a little too onerous I feel sure I can make a special arrangement for you, being a schoolteacher ... six a month instead of eight. You simply can’t refuse an offer like that, Miss Shirley.”

Anne almost felt she couldn’t. Wouldn’t it be worth six dollars a month to get rid of this terrible woman who had so evidently made up her mind not to go until she had got an order? Besides, what were the twins doing? They were alarmingly quiet. Suppose they were sailing their boats in the bathtub. Or had sneaked out of the back door and gone wading in the pond.

She made one more pitiful effort to escape.

“I’ll think this over, Miss Drake, and let you know ...”

“There’s no time like the present,” said Miss Drake, briskly getting out her fountain-pen. “You know you’re going to take the National, so you might just as well sign for it now as any other time. Nothing is ever gained by putting things off. The price may go up any moment and then you’d have to pay a hundred and twenty. Sign here, Miss Shirley.”

Anne felt the fountain-pen being forced into her hand ... another moment ... and then there was such a bloodcurdling shriek from Miss Drake that Anne dropped the fountain-pen under the clump of golden glow that flanked the rustic seat, and gazed in amazed horror at her companion.

Was that Miss Drake ... that indescribable object, hatless, spectacleless, almost hairless? Hat, spectacles, false front were floating in the air above her head halfway up to the bathroom window, out of which two golden heads were hanging. Gerald was grasping a fishing-rod to which were tied two cords ending in fish-hooks. By what magic he had contrived to make a triple catch, only he could have told. Probably it was sheer luck.

Anne flew into the house and upstairs. By the time she reached the bathroom the twins had fled. Gerald had dropped the fishing-rod and a peep from the window revealed a furious Miss Drake retrieving her belongings, including the fountain-pen, and marching to the gate. For once in her life Miss Pamela Drake had failed to land her order.

Anne discovered the twins seraphically eating apples on the back porch. It was hard to know what to do. Certainly, such behavior could not be allowed to pass without a rebuke ... but Gerald had undoubtedly rescued her from a difficult position and Miss Drake was an odious creature who needed a lesson. Still ...

“You’ve et a great big worm!” shrieked Gerald. “I saw it disappear down your throat.”

Geraldine laid down her apple and promptly turned sick ... very sick. Anne had her hands full for some time. And when Geraldine was better, it was lunch-hour and Anne suddenly decided to let Gerald off with a very

mild reproof. After all, no lasting harm had been done Miss Drake, who would probably hold her tongue religiously about the incident for her own sake.

“Do you think, Gerald,” she said gently, “that what you did was a gentlemanly action?”

“Nope,” said Gerald, “but it was good fun. Gee, I’m some fisherman, ain’t I?”

The lunch was excellent. Mrs. Raymond had prepared it before she left and whatever her shortcomings as a disciplinarian might be, she was a good cook. Gerald and Geraldine, being occupied with gorging, did not quarrel or display worse table manners than the general run of children. After lunch Anne washed the dishes, getting Geraldine to help dry them and Gerald to put them carefully away in the cupboard. They were both quite knacky at it and Anne reflected complacently that all they needed was wise training and a little firmness.

Chapter 3

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At two o’clock Mr. James Grand called. Mr. Grand was the chairman of the High School board of trustees and had matters of importance to talk of, which he wished to discuss fully before he left on Monday to attend an educational conference in Kingsport. Could he come to Windy Poplars in the evening? asked Anne. Unfortunately he couldn’t.

Mr. Grand was a good sort of man in his own fashion, but Anne had long ago found out that he must be handled with gloves. Moreover, Anne was very anxious to get him on her side in a battle royal over new equipment that was looming up. She went out to the twins.

“Darlings, will you play nicely out in the back yard while I have a little talk with Mr. Grand? I won’t be very long ... and then we’ll have an

afternoon-tea picnic on the banks of the pond ... and I'll teach you to blow soap-bubbles with red dye in them ... the loveliest things!"

"Will you give us a quarter apiece if we behave?" demanded Gerald.

"No, Gerald dear," said Anne firmly, "I'm not going to bribe you. I know you are going to be good, just because I ask you, as a gentleman should."

"We'll be good, Miss Shirley," promised Gerald solemnly.

"Awful good," echoed Geraldine, with equal solemnity.

It is possible they would have kept their promise if Ivy Trent had not arrived almost as soon as Anne was closeted with Mr. Grand in the parlor. But Ivy Trent did arrive and the Raymond twins hated Ivy Trent ... the impeccable Ivy Trent who never did anything wrong and always looked as if she had just stepped out of a bandbox.

On this particular afternoon there was no doubt that Ivy Trent had come over to show off her beautiful new brown boots and her sash and shoulder bows and hair bows of scarlet ribbon. Mrs. Raymond, whatever she lacked in some respects, had fairly sensible ideas about dressing children. Her charitable neighbors said she put so much money on herself that she had none to spend on the twins ... and Geraldine never had a chance to parade the street in the style of Ivy Trent, who had a dress for every afternoon in the week. Mrs. Trent always arrayed her in "spotless white." At least, Ivy was always spotless when she left home. If she were not quite so spotless when she returned that, of course, was the fault of the "jealous" children with whom the neighborhood abounded.

Geraldine was jealous. She longed for scarlet sash and shoulder bows and white embroidered dresses. What would she not have given for buttoned brown boots like those?

"How do you like my new sash and shoulder bows?" asked Ivy proudly.

"How do you like my new sash and shoulder bows?" mimicked Geraldine tauntingly.

“But you haven’t got shoulder bows,” said Ivy grandly.

“But you haven’t got shoulder bows,” squeaked Geraldine.

Ivy looked puzzled.

“I have so. Can’t you see them?”

“I have so. Can’t you see them?” mocked Geraldine, very happy in this brilliant idea of repeating everything Ivy said scornfully.

“They ain’t paid for,” said Gerald.

Ivy Trent had a temper. It showed itself in her face, which grew as red as her shoulder bows.

“They are, too. My mother always pays her bills.”

“My mother always pays her bills,” chanted Geraldine.

Ivy was uncomfortable. She didn’t know exactly how to cope with this. So she turned to Gerald, who was undoubtedly the handsomest boy on the street. Ivy had made up her mind about him.

“I came over to tell you I’m going to have you for my beau,” she said, looking eloquently at him out of a pair of brown eyes that, even at seven, Ivy had learned had a devastating effect on most of the small boys of her acquaintance.

Gerald turned crimson.

“I won’t be your beau,” he said.

“But you’ve got to be,” said Ivy serenely.

“But you’ve got to be,” said Geraldine, wagging her head at him.

“I won’t be,” shouted Gerald furiously. “And don’t you give me any more of your lip, Ivy Trent.”

“You have to be,” said Ivy stubbornly.

“You have to be,” said Geraldine.

Ivy glared at her.

“You just shut up, Geraldine Raymond!”

“I guess I can talk in my own yard,” said Geraldine.

“Course she can,” said Gerald. “And if you don’t shut up, Ivy Trent, I’ll just go over to your place and dig the eyes out of your doll.”

“My mother would spank you if you did,” cried Ivy.

“Oh, she would, would she? Well, do you know what my mother would do to her if she did? She’d just sock her on the nose.”

“Well, anyway, you’ve got to be my beau,” said Ivy, returning calmly to the vital subject.

“I’ll ... I’ll duck your head in the rain-barrel,” yelled the maddened Gerald ... “I’ll rub your face in an ant’s nest ... I’ll ... I’ll tear them bows and sash off you ...” triumphantly, for this at least was feasible.

“Let’s do it,” squealed Geraldine.

They pounced like furies on the unfortunate Ivy, who kicked and shrieked and tried to bite but was no match for the two of them. Together they hauled her across the yard and into the woodshed, where her howls could not be heard.

“Hurry,” gasped Geraldine, “fore Miss Shirley comes out.”

No time was to be lost. Gerald held Ivy’s legs while Geraldine held her wrists with one hand and tore off her hair bow and shoulder bows and sash with the other.

“Let’s paint her legs,” shouted Gerald, his eyes falling on a couple of cans of paint left there by some workmen the previous week. “I’ll hold her and you paint her.”

Ivy shrieked vainly in despair. Her stockings were pulled down and in a few moments her legs were adorned with wide stripes of red and green paint. In the process a good deal of the paint got spattered over her embroidered dress and new boots. As a finishing touch they filled her curls with burrs.

She was a pitiful sight when they finally released her. The twins howled mirthfully as they looked at her. Long weeks of airs and condescensions from Ivy had been avenged.

“Now you go home,” said Gerald. “This’ll teach you to go ‘round telling people they have to be your beaus.”

“I’ll tell my mother,” wept Ivy. “I’ll go straight home and tell my mother on you, you horrid, horrid, hateful, ugly boy!”

“Don’t you call my brother ugly, you stuck-up thing,” cried Geraldine. “You and your shoulder bows! Here, take them with you. We don’t want them cluttering up our woodshed.”

Ivy, pursued by the bows, which Geraldine pelted after her, ran sobbing out of the yard and down the street.

“Quick ... let’s sneak up the back stairs to the bathroom and clean up ‘fore Miss Shirley sees us,” gasped Geraldine.

Chapter 4

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Mr. Grand had talked himself out and bowed himself away. Anne stood for a moment on the doorstone, wondering uneasily where her charges were.

Up the street and in at the gate came a wrathful lady, leading a forlorn and still sobbing atom of humanity by the hand.

“Miss Shirley, where is Mrs. Raymond?” demanded Mrs. Trent.

“Mrs. Raymond is ...”

“I insist on seeing Mrs. Raymond. She shall see with her own eyes what her children have done to poor, helpless, innocent Ivy. Look at her, Miss Shirley ... just look at her!”

“Oh, Mrs. Trent ... I’m so sorry! It is all my fault. Mrs. Raymond is away ... and I promised to look after them ... but Mr. Grand came ...”

“No, it isn’t your fault, Miss Shirley. I don’t blame you. No one can cope with those diabolical children. The whole street knows them. If Mrs. Raymond isn’t here, there is no point in my remaining. I shall take my poor child home. But Mrs. Raymond shall hear of this ... indeed she shall. Listen to that, Miss Shirley. Are they tearing each other limb from limb?”

“That” was a chorus of shrieks, howls and yells that came echoing down the stairs. Anne ran upwards. On the hall floor was a twisting, writhing, biting, tearing, scratching mass. Anne separated the furious twins with difficulty and, holding each firmly by a squirming shoulder, demanded the meaning of such behavior.

“She says I’ve got to be Ivy Trent’s beau,” snarled Gerald.

“So he has got to be,” screamed Geraldine.

“I won’t be!”

“You’ve got to be!”

“Children!” said Anne. Something in her tone quelled them. They looked at her and saw a Miss Shirley they had not seen before. For the first time in their young lives they felt the force of authority.

“You, Geraldine,” said Anne quietly, “will go to bed for two hours. You, Gerald, will spend the same length of time in the hall closet. Not a word. You have behaved abominably and you must take your punishment. Your mother left you in my charge and you will obey me.”

“Then punish us together,” said Geraldine, beginning to cry.

“Yes ... you’ve no right to sep’rate us ... we’ve never been sep’rated,” muttered Gerald.

“You will be now.” Anne was still very quiet. Meekly Geraldine took off her clothes and got into one of the cots in their room. Meekly Gerald entered the hall closet. It was a large airy closet with a window and a chair and nobody could have called the punishment an unduly severe one. Anne locked the door and sat down with a book by the hall window. At least, for two hours she would know a little peace of mind.

A peep at Geraldine a few minutes later showed her to be sound asleep, looking so lovely in her sleep that Anne almost repented her sternness. Well, a nap would be good for her, anyway. When she wakened she should be permitted to get up, even if the two hours had not expired.

At the end of an hour Geraldine was still sleeping. Gerald had been so quiet that Anne decided that he had taken his punishment like a man and might be forgiven. After all, Ivy Trent was a vain little monkey and had probably been very irritating.

Anne unlocked the closet door and opened it.

There was no Gerald in the closet. The window was open and the roof of the side porch was just beneath it. Anne’s lips tightened. She went downstairs and out into the yard. No sign of Gerald. She explored the woodshed and looked up and down the street. Still no sign.

She ran through the garden and through the gate into the lane that led through a patch of scrub woodland to the little pond in Mr. Robert Creedmore’s field. Gerald was happily poling himself about on it in the small flat Mr. Creedmore kept there. Just as Anne broke through the trees

Gerald's pole, which he had stuck rather deep in the mud, came away with unexpected ease at his third tug and Gerald promptly shot heels over head backward into the water.

Anne gave an involuntary shriek of dismay, but there was no real cause for alarm. The pond at its deepest would not come up to Gerald's shoulders and where he had gone over, it was little deeper than his waist. He had somehow got on his feet and was standing there rather foolishly, with his aureole plastered drippingly down on his head, when Anne's shriek was reechoed behind her, and Geraldine, in her nightgown, tore through the trees and out to the edge of the little wooden platform to which the flat was commonly moored.

With a despairing shriek of "Gerald!" she took a flying leap that landed her with a tremendous splash by Gerald's side and almost gave him another ducking.

"Gerald, are you drowned?" cried Geraldine. "Are you drowned, darling?"

"No ... no ... darling," Gerald assured her through his chattering teeth.

They embraced and kissed passionately.

"Children, come in here this minute," said Anne.

They waded to the shore. The September day, warm in the morning, had turned cold and windy in the late afternoon. They shivered terribly ... their faces were blue. Anne, without a word of censure, hurried them home, got off their wet clothes and got them into Mrs. Raymond's bed, with hot-water bottles at their feet. They still continued to shiver. Had they got a chill? Were they headed for pneumonia?

"You should have taken better care of us, Miss Shirley," said Gerald, still chattering.

"Course you should," said Geraldine.

A distracted Anne flew downstairs and telephoned for the doctor. By the time he came the twins had got warm, and he assured Anne that they were in no danger. If they stayed in bed till tomorrow they would be all right.

He met Mrs. Raymond coming up from the station on the way back, and it was a pale, almost hysterical lady who presently rushed in.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, how could you have let my little treasures get into such danger!”

“That’s just what we told her, Mother,” chorused the twins.

“I trusted you ... I told you ...”

“I hardly see how I was to blame, Mrs. Raymond,” said Anne, with eyes as cold as gray mist. “You will realize this, I think, when you are calmer. The children are quite all right ... I simply sent for the doctor as a precautionary measure. If Gerald and Geraldine had obeyed me, this would not have happened.”

“I thought a teacher would have a little authority over children,” said Mrs. Raymond bitterly.

“Over children perhaps ... but not young demons,” thought Anne. She said only,

“Since you are here, Mrs. Raymond, I think I will go home. I don’t think I can be of any further service and I have some school work to do this evening.”

As one child the twins hurled themselves out of bed and flung their arms around her.

“I hope there’ll be a funeral every week,” cried Gerald. “‘Cause I like you, Miss Shirley, and I hope you’ll come and look after us every time Mother goes away.”

“So do I,” said Geraldine.

“I like you ever so much better than Miss Prouty.”

“Oh, ever so much,” said Geraldine.

“Will you put us in a story?” demanded Gerald.

“Oh, do,” said Geraldine.

“I’m sure you meant well,” said Mrs. Raymond tremulously.

“Thank you,” said Anne icily, trying to detach the twins’ clinging arms.

“Oh, don’t let’s quarrel about it,” begged Mrs. Raymond, her enormous eyes filling with tears. “I can’t endure quarreling with anybody.”

“Certainly not.” Anne was at her stateliest and Anne could be very stately. “I don’t think there is the slightest necessity for quarreling. I think Gerald and Geraldine have quite enjoyed the day, though I don’t suppose poor little Ivy Trent did.”

Anne went home feeling years older.

“To think I ever thought Davy was mischievous,” she reflected.

She found Rebecca in the twilight garden gathering late pansies.

“Rebecca Dew, I used to think the adage, ‘Children should be seen and not heard,’ entirely too harsh. But I see its points now.”

“My poor darling. I’ll get you a nice supper,” said Rebecca Dew. And did not say, “I told you so.”

Chapter 5

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“Mrs. Raymond came down last night and, with tears in her eyes, begged me to forgive her for her ‘hasty behavior.’ ‘If you knew a mother’s heart, Miss Shirley, you would not find it hard to forgive.’

“I didn’t find it hard to forgive as it was ... there is really something about Mrs. Raymond I can’t help liking and she was a duck about the Dramatic Club. Just the same I did not say, ‘Any Saturday you want to be away, I’ll look after your offspring.’ One learns by experience ... even a person so incorrigibly optimistic and trustful as myself.

“I find that a certain section of Summerside society is at present very much exercised over the loves of Jarvis Morrow and Dovie Westcott ... who, as Rebecca Dew says, have been engaged for over a year but can’t get any ‘forrader.’ Aunt Kate, who is a distant aunt of Dovie’s ... to be exact, I think she’s the aunt of a second cousin of Dovie’s on the mother’s side ... is deeply interested in the affair because she thinks Jarvis is such an excellent match for Dovie ... and also, I suspect, because she hates Franklin Westcott and would like to see him routed, horse, foot and artillery. Not that Aunt Kate would admit she ‘hated’ anybody, but Mrs. Franklin Westcott was a very dear girlhood friend of hers and Aunt Kate solemnly avers that he murdered her.

“I am interested in it, partly because I’m very fond of Jarvis and moderately fond of Dovie and partly, I begin to suspect, because I am an inveterate meddler in other people’s business ... always with excellent intentions, of course.

“The situation is briefly this: — Franklin Westcott is a tall, somber, hard-bitten merchant, close and unsociable. He lives in a big, old-fashioned house called Elmcroft just outside the town on the upper harbor road. I have met him once or twice but really know very little about him, except that he has an uncanny habit of saying something and then going off into a long chuckle of soundless laughter. He has never gone to church since hymns came in and he insists on having all his windows open even in winter storms. I confess to a sneaking sympathy with him in this, but I am probably the only person in Summerside who would. He has got into the habit of being a leading citizen and nothing municipal dares to be done without his approval.

“His wife is dead. It is common report that she was a slave, unable to call her soul her own. Franklin told her, it is said, when he brought her home that he would be master.

“Dovie, whose real name is Sibyl, is his only child ... a very pretty, plump, lovable girl of nineteen, with a red mouth always falling a little open over her small white teeth, glints of chestnut in her brown hair, alluring blue eyes and sooty lashes so long you wonder if they can be real. Jen Pringle says it is her eyes Jarvis is really in love with. Jen and I have actually talked the affair over. Jarvis is her favorite cousin.

“(In passing, you wouldn’t believe how fond Jen is of me ... and I of Jen. She’s really the cutest thing.)

“Franklin Westcott has never allowed Dovie to have any beaus and when Jarvis Morrow began to ‘pay her attention,’ he forbade him the house and told Dovie there was to be no more ‘running round with that fellow.’ But the mischief had been done. Dovie and Jarvis were already fathoms deep in love.

“Everybody in town is in sympathy with the lovers. Franklin Westcott is really unreasonable. Jarvis is a successful young lawyer, of good family, with good prospects, and a very nice, decent lad in himself.

“‘Nothing could be more suitable,’ declares Rebecca Dew. ‘Jarvis Morrow could have any girl he wanted in Summerside. Franklin Westcott has just made up his mind that Dovie is to be an old maid. He wants to be sure of a housekeeper when Aunt Maggie dies.’

“‘Isn’t there any one who has any influence with him?’ I asked.

“‘Nobody can argue with Franklin Westcott. He’s too sarcastical. And if you get the better of him he throws a tantrum. I’ve never seen him in one of his tantrums but I’ve heard Miss Prouty describe how he acted one time she was there sewing. He got mad over something ... nobody knew what. He just grabbed everything in sight and flung it out of the window. Milton’s poems went flying clean over the fence into George Clarke’s lily pond. He’s always kind of had a grudge at life. Miss Prouty says her

mother told her that the yelps of him when he was born passed anything she ever heard. I suppose God has some reason for making men like that, but you'd wonder. No, I can't see any chance for Jarvis and Dovie unless they elope. It's a kind of low-down thing to do, though there's been a terrible lot of romantic nonsense talked about eloping. But this is a case where anybody would excuse it.'

"I don't know what to do but I must do something. I simply can't sit still and see people make a mess of their lives under my very nose, no matter how many tantrums Franklin Westcott takes. Jarvis Morrow is not going to wait forever ... rumor has it that he is getting out of patience already and has been seen savagely cutting Dovie's name out of a tree on which he had cut it. There is an attractive Palmer girl who is reported to be throwing herself at his head, and his sister is said to have said that his mother has said that her son has no need to dangle for years at any girl's apron-string.

"Really, Gilbert, I'm quite unhappy about it.

"It's moonlight tonight, beloved ... moonlight on the poplars of the yard ... moonlit dimples all over the harbor where a phantom ship is drifting outwards ... moonlight on the old graveyard ... on my own private valley ... on the Storm King. And it will be moonlight in Lover's Lane and on the Lake of Shining Waters and the old Haunted Wood and Violet Vale. There should be fairy dances on the hills tonight. But, Gilbert dear, moonlight with no one to share it is just ... just moonshine.

"I wish I could take little Elizabeth for a walk. She loves a moonlight walk. We had some delightful ones when she was at Green Gables. But at home Elizabeth never sees moonlight except from the window.

"I am beginning to be a little worried about her, too. She is going on ten now and those two old ladies haven't the least idea what she needs, spiritually and emotionally. As long as she has good food and good clothes, they cannot imagine her needing anything more. And it will be worse with every succeeding year. What kind of girlhood will the poor child have?"

Chapter 6

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Jarvis Morrow walked home from the High School Commencement with Anne and told her his woes.

“You’ll have to run away with her, Jarvis. Everybody says so. As a rule I don’t approve of elopements” (“I said that like a teacher of forty years’ experience,” thought Anne with an unseen grin) “but there are exceptions to all rules.”

“It takes two to make a bargain, Anne. I can’t elope alone. Dovie is so frightened of her father, I can’t get her to agree. And it wouldn’t be an elopement ... really. She’d just come to my sister Julia’s ... Mrs. Stevens, you know ... some evening. I’d have the minister there and we could be married respectably enough to please anybody and go over to spend our honeymoon with Aunt Bertha in Kingsport. Simple as that. But I can’t get Dovie to chance it. The poor darling has been giving in to her father’s whims and crotchets so long, she hasn’t any will-power left.”

“You’ll simply have to make her do it, Jarvis.”

“Great Peter, you don’t suppose I haven’t tried, do you, Anne? I’ve begged till I was black in the face. When she’s with me she’ll almost promise it, but the minute she’s home again she sends me word she can’t. It seems odd, Anne, but the poor child is really fond of her father and she can’t bear the thought of his never forgiving her.”

“You must tell her she has to choose between her father and you.”

“And suppose she chooses him?”

“I don’t think there’s any danger of that.”

“You can never tell,” said Jarvis gloomily. “But something has to be decided soon. I can’t go on like this forever. I’m crazy about Dovie ... everybody in Summerside knows that. She’s like a little red rose just out of reach ... I must reach her, Anne.”

“Poetry is a very good thing in its place, but it won’t get you anywhere in this instance, Jarvis,” said Anne coolly. “That sounds like a remark Rebecca Dew would make, but it’s quite true. What you need in this affair is plain, hard common sense. Tell Dovie you’re tired of shillyshallying and that she must take you or leave you. If she doesn’t care enough for you to leave her father for you, it’s just as well for you to realize it.”

Jarvis groaned.

“You haven’t been under the thumb of Franklin Westcott all your life, Anne. You haven’t any realization of what he’s like. Well, I’ll make a last and final effort. As you say, if Dovie really cares for me she’ll come to me ... and if she doesn’t, I might as well know the worst. I’m beginning to feel I’ve made myself rather ridiculous.”

“If you’re beginning to feel like that,” thought Anne, “Dovie would better watch out.”

Dovie herself slipped into Windy Poplars a few evenings later to consult Anne.

“What shall I do, Anne? What can I do? Jarvis wants me to elope ... practically. Father is to be in Charlottetown one night next week attending a Masonic banquet ... and it would be a good chance. Aunt Maggie would never suspect. Jarvis wants me to go to Mrs. Stevens’ and be married there.”

“And why don’t you, Dovie?”

“Oh, Anne, do you really think I ought to?” Dovie lifted a sweet, coaxing face. “Please, please make up my mind for me. I’m just distracted.” Dovie’s voice broke on a tearful note. “Oh, Anne, you don’t know Father. He just hates Jarvis ... I can’t imagine why ... can you? How can anybody

hate Jarvis? When he called on me the first time, Father forbade him the house and told him he'd set the dog on him if he ever came again ... our big bull. You know they never let go once they take hold. And he'll never forgive me if I run away with Jarvis."

"You must choose between them, Dovie."

"That's just what Jarvis said," wept Dovie. "Oh, he was so stern ... I never saw him like that before. And I can't ... I can't li . i . i . ve without him, Anne."

"Then live with him, my dear girl. And don't call it eloping. Just coming into Summerside and being married among his friends isn't eloping."

"Father will call it so," said Dovie, swallowing a sob. "But I'm going to take your advice, Anne. I'm sure you wouldn't advise me to take any step that was wrong. I'll tell Jarvis to go ahead and get the license and I'll come to his sister's the night Father is in Charlottetown."

Jarvis told Anne triumphantly that Dovie had yielded at last.

"I'm to meet her at the end of the lane next Tuesday night ... she won't have me go down to the house for fear Aunt Maggie might see me ... and we'll just step up to Julia's and be married in a brace of shakes. All my folks will be there, so it will make the poor darling quite comfortable. Franklin Westcott said I should never get his daughter. I'll show him he was mistaken."

Chapter 7

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Tuesday was a gloomy day in late November. Occasional cold, gusty showers drifted over the hills. The world seemed a dreary outlived place, seen through a gray drizzle.

“Poor Dovie hasn’t a very nice day for her wedding,” thought Anne. “Suppose ... suppose ...” she quaked and shivered ... “suppose it doesn’t turn out well, after all. It will be my fault. Dovie would never have agreed to it if I hadn’t advised her to. And suppose Franklin Westcott never forgives her. Anne Shirley, stop this! The weather is all that’s the matter with you.”

By night the rain had ceased but the air was cold and raw and the sky lowering. Anne was in her tower room, correcting school papers, with Dusty Miller coiled up under her stove. There came a thunderous knock at the front door.

Anne ran down. Rebecca Dew poked an alarmed head out of her bedroom door. Anne motioned her back.

“It’s some one at the front door!” said Rebecca hollowly.

“It’s all right, Rebecca dear. At least, I’m afraid it’s all wrong ... but, anyway, it’s only Jarvis Morrow. I saw him from the side tower window and I know he wants to see me.”

“Jarvis Morrow!” Rebecca went back and shut her door. “This is the last straw.”

“Jarvis, whatever is the matter?”

“Dovie hasn’t come,” said Jarvis wildly. “We’ve waited hours ... the minister’s there ... and my friends ... and Julia has supper ready ... and Dovie hasn’t come. I waited for her at the end of the lane till I was half crazy. I didn’t dare go down to the house because I didn’t know what had happened. That old brute of a Franklin Westcott may have come back. Aunt Maggie may have locked her up. But I’ve got to know. Anne, you must go to Elmcroft and find out why she hasn’t come.”

“Me?” said Anne incredulously and ungrammatically.

“Yes, you. There’s no one else I can trust ... no one else who knows. Oh, Anne, don’t fail me now. You’ve backed us up right along. Dovie says you

are the only real friend she has. It isn't late ... only nine. Do go."

"And be chewed up by the bulldog?" said Anne sarcastically.

"That old dog!" said Jarvis contemptuously. "He wouldn't say boo to a tramp. You don't suppose I was afraid of the dog, do you? Besides, he's always shut up at night. I simply don't want to make any trouble for Dovie at home if they've found out. Anne, please!"

"I suppose I'm in for it," said Anne with a shrug of despair.

Jarvis drove her to the long lane of Elmcroft, but she would not let him come further.

"As you say, it might complicate matters for Dovie in case her father has come home."

Anne hurried down the long, tree-bordered lane. The moon occasionally broke through the windy clouds, but for the most part it was gruesomely dark and she was not a little dubious about the dog.

There seemed to be only one light in Elmcroft ... shining from the kitchen window. Aunt Maggie herself opened the side door to Anne. Aunt Maggie was a very old sister of Franklin Westcott's, a little bent, wrinkled woman who had never been considered very bright mentally, though she was an excellent housekeeper.

"Aunt Maggie, is Dovie home?"

"Dovie's in bed," said Aunt Maggie stolidly.

"In bed? Is she sick?"

"Not as I knows on. She seemed to be in a dither all day. After supper she says she was tired and ups and goes to bed."

"I must see her for a moment, Aunt Maggie. I ... I just want a little important information."

“Better go up to her room then. It’s the one on the right side as you go up.”

Aunt Maggie gestured to the stairs and waddled out to the kitchen.

Dovie sat up as Anne walked in, rather unceremoniously, after a hurried rap. As could be seen by the light of a tiny candle, Dovie was in tears, but her tears only exasperated Anne.

“Dovie Westcott, did you forget that you promised to marry Jarvis Morrow tonight ... tonight?”

“No ... no ...” whimpered Dovie. “Oh, Anne, I’m so unhappy ... I’ve put in such a dreadful day. You can never, never know what I’ve gone through.”

“I know what poor Jarvis has gone through, waiting for two hours at that lane in the cold and drizzle,” said Anne mercilessly.

“Is he ... is he very angry, Anne?”

“Just what you could notice” ... bitingly.

“Oh, Anne, I just got frightened. I never slept one wink last night. I couldn’t go through with it ... I couldn’t. I ... there’s really something disgraceful about eloping, Anne. And I wouldn’t get any nice presents ... well, not many, anyhow. I’ve always wanted to be m ... m ... arried in church ... with lovely decorations ... and a white veil and dress ... and s ... s ... ilver slippers!”

“Dovie Westcott, get right out of that bed ... at once ... and get dressed ... and come with me.”

“Anne ... it’s too late now.”

“It isn’t too late. And it’s now or never ... you must know that, Dovie, if you’ve a grain of sense. You must know Jarvis Morrow will never speak to you again if you make a fool of him like this.”

“Oh, Anne, he’ll forgive me when he knows ...”

“He won’t. I know Jarvis Morrow. He isn’t going to let you play indefinitely with his life. Dovie, do you want me to drag you bodily out of bed?”

Dovie shuddered and sighed.

“I haven’t any suitable dress ...”

“You’ve half-a-dozen pretty dresses. Put on your rose taffeta.”

“And I haven’t any trousseau. The Morrows will always cast that up to me... .”

“You can get one afterwards. Dovie, didn’t you weigh all these things in the balance before?”

“No ... no ... that’s just the trouble. I only began to think of them last night. And Father ... you don’t know Father, Anne... .”

“Dovie. I’ll give you just ten minutes to get dressed!”

Dovie was dressed in the specified time.

“This dress is g ... g ... getting too tight for me,” she sobbed as Anne hooked her up. “If I get much fatter I don’t suppose Jarvis will l ... l ... love me. I wish I was tall and slim and pale, like you, Anne. Oh, Anne, what if Aunt Maggie hears us!”

“She won’t. She’s shut in the kitchen and you know she’s a little deaf. Here’s your hat and coat and I’ve tumbled a few things into this bag.”

“Oh, my heart is fluttering so. Do I look terrible, Anne?”

“You look lovely,” said Anne sincerely. Dovie’s satin skin was rose and cream and all her tears hadn’t spoiled her eyes. But Jarvis couldn’t see her eyes in the dark and he was just a little annoyed with his adored fair one and rather cool during the drive to town.

“For Heaven’s sake, Dovie, don’t look so scared over having to marry me,” he said impatiently as she came down the stairs of the Stevens house. “And don’t cry ... it will make your nose swell. It’s nearly ten o’clock and we’ve got to catch the eleven o’clock train.”

Dovie was quite all right as soon as she found herself irrevocably married to Jarvis. What Anne rather cattishly described in a letter to Gilbert as “the honeymoon look” was already on her face.

“Anne, darling, we owe it all to you. We’ll never forget it, will we, Jarvis? And, oh, Anne darling, will you do just one more thing for me? Please break the news to Father. He’ll be home early tomorrow evening ... and somebody has got to tell him. You can smooth him over if anybody can. Please do your best to get him to forgive me.”

Anne felt she rather needed some smoothing-over herself just then; but she also felt rather uneasily responsible for the outcome of the affair, so she gave the required promise.

“Of course he’ll be terrible ... simply terrible, Anne ... but he can’t kill you,” said Dovie comfortingly. “Oh, Anne, you don’t know ...you can’t realize ... how safe I feel with Jarvis.”

When Anne got home Rebecca Dew had reached the point where she had to satisfy her curiosity or go mad. She followed Anne to the tower room in her nightdress, with a square of flannel wrapped round her head, and heard the whole story.

“Well, I suppose this is what you might call ‘life,’” she said sarcastically. “But I’m real glad Franklin Westcott has got his comeuppance at last, and so will Mrs. Captain MacComber be. But I don’t envy you the job of breaking the news to him. He’ll rage and utter vain things. If I was in your shoes, Miss Shirley, I wouldn’t sleep one blessed wink tonight.”

“I feel that it won’t be a very pleasant experience,” agreed Anne ruefully.

Chapter 8

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Anne betook herself to Elmcroft the next evening, walking through the dreamlike landscape of a November fog with a rather sinking sensation pervading her being. It was not exactly a delightful errand. As Dovie had said, of course Franklin Westcott wouldn't kill her. Anne did not fear physical violence ... though if all the tales told of him were true, he might throw something at her. Would he gibber with rage? Anne had never seen a man gibbering with rage and she imagined it must be a rather unpleasant sight. But he would probably exercise his noted gift for unpleasant sarcasm, and sarcasm, in man or woman, was the one weapon Anne dreaded. It always hurt her ... raised blisters on her soul that smarted for months.

"Aunt Jamesina used to say, 'Never, if you can help it, be the bringer of ill news,'" reflected Anne. "She was as wise in that as in everything else. Well, here I am."

Elmcroft was an old-fashioned house with towers at every corner and a bulbous cupola on the roof. And at the top of the flight of front steps sat the dog.

"If they take hold they never let go," remembered Anne. Should she try going round to the side door? Then the thought that Franklin Westcott might be watching her from the window braced her up. Never would she give him the satisfaction of seeing that she was afraid of his dog. Resolutely, her head held high, she marched up the steps, past the dog and rang the bell. The dog had not stirred. When Anne glanced at him over her shoulder he was apparently asleep.

Franklin Westcott, it transpired, was not at home but was expected every minute, as the Charlottetown train was due. Aunt Maggie convoyed Anne into what she called the "liberry" and left her there. The dog had got up and followed them in. He came and arranged himself at Anne's feet.

Anne found herself liking the "liberry." It was a cheerful, shabby room, with a fire glowing cozily in the grate, and bearskin rugs on the worn red

carpet of the floor. Franklin Westcott evidently did himself well in regard to books and pipes.

Presently she heard him come in. He hung up his hat and coat in the hall: he stood in the library doorway with a very decided scowl on his brow. Anne recalled that her impression of him the first time she had seen him was that of a rather gentlemanly pirate, and she felt a repetition of it.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” he said rather gruffly. “Well, and what do you want?”

He had not even offered to shake hands with her. Of the two, Anne thought the dog had decidedly the better manners.

“Mr. Westcott, please hear me through patiently before ...”

“I am patient ... very patient. Proceed!”

Anne decided that there was no use beating about the bush with a man like Franklin Westcott.

“I have come to tell you,” she said steadily, “that Dovie has married Jarvis Morrow.”

Then she waited for the earthquake. None came. Not a muscle of Franklin Westcott’s lean brown face changed. He came in and sat down in the bandy-legged leather chair opposite Anne.

“When?” he said.

“Last night ... at his sister’s,” said Anne.

Franklin Westcott looked at her for a moment out of yellowish brown eyes deeply set under penthouses of grizzled eyebrow. Anne had a moment of wondering what he had looked like when he was a baby. Then he threw back his head and went into one of his spasms of soundless laughter.

“You mustn’t blame Dovie, Mr. Westcott,” said Anne earnestly, recovering her powers of speech now that the awful revelation was over. “It wasn’t her fault... .”

“I’ll bet it wasn’t,” said Franklin Westcott.

Was he trying to be sarcastic?

“No, it was all mine,” said Anne, simply and bravely. “I advised her to elope ... to be married ... I made her do it. So please forgive her, Mr. Westcott.”

Franklin Westcott coolly picked up a pipe and began to fill it.

“If you’ve managed to make Sibyl elope with Jarvis Morrow, Miss Shirley, you’ve accomplished more than I ever thought anybody could. I was beginning to be afraid she’d never have backbone enough to do it. And then I’d have had to back down ... and Lord, how we Westcotts hate backing down! You’ve saved my face, Miss Shirley, and I’m profoundly grateful to you.”

There was a very loud silence while Franklin Westcott tamped his tobacco down and looked with an amused twinkle at Anne’s face. Anne was so much at sea she didn’t know what to say.

“I suppose,” he said, “that you came here in fear and trembling to break the terrible news to me?”

“Yes,” said Anne, a trifle shortly.

Franklin Westcott chuckled soundlessly.

“You needn’t have. You couldn’t have brought me more welcome news. Why, I picked Jarvis Morrow out for Sibyl when they were kids. Soon as the other boys began taking notice of her, I shooed them off. That gave Jarvis his first notion of her. He’d show the old man! But he was so popular with the girls that I could hardly believe the incredible luck when he did really take a genuine fancy to her. Then I laid out my plan of campaign. I knew the Morrrows root and branch. You don’t. They’re a good family, but the men don’t want things they can get easily. And they’re determined to get a thing when they’re told they can’t. They always go by contraries. Jarvis’ father broke three girls’ hearts because their families threw them at his head. In Jarvis’ case I knew exactly what would happen.

Sibyl would fall head over heels in love with him ... and he'd be tired of her in no time. I knew he wouldn't keep on wanting her if she was too easy to get. So I forbade him to come near the place and forbade Sibyl to have a word to say to him and generally played the heavy parent to perfection. Talk about the charm of the uncaught! It's nothing to the charm of the uncatchable. It all worked out according to schedule, but I struck a snag in Sibyl's spinelessness. She's a nice child but she is spineless. I've been thinking she'd never have the pluck to marry him in my teeth. Now, if you've got your breath back, my dear young lady, unbosom yourself of the whole story."

Anne's sense of humor had again come to her rescue. She could never refuse an opportunity for a good laugh, even when it was on herself. And she suddenly felt very well acquainted with Franklin Westcott.

He listened to the tale, taking quiet, enjoyable whiffs of his pipe. When Anne had finished he nodded comfortably.

"I see I'm more in your debt even than I thought. She'd never have got up the courage to do it if it hadn't been for you. And Jarvis Morrow wouldn't have risked being made a fool of twice ... not if I know the breed. Gosh, but I've had a narrow escape! I'm yours to command for life. You're a real brick to come here as you did, believing all the yarns gossip told you. You've been told aplenty, haven't you now?"

Anne nodded. The bulldog had got his head on her lap and was snoring blissfully.

"Every one agreed that you were cranky, crabbed and crusty," she said candidly.

"And I suppose they told you I was a tyrant and made my poor wife's life miserable and ruled my family with a rod of iron?"

"Yes; but I really did take all that with a grain of salt, Mr. Westcott. I felt that Dovie couldn't be as fond of you as she was if you were as dreadful as gossip painted you."

“Sensible gal! My wife was a happy woman, Miss Shirley. And when Mrs. Captain MacComber tells you I bullied her to death, tick her off for me. Excuse my common way. Mollie was pretty ... prettier than Sibyl. Such a pink-and-white skin ... such golden-brown hair ... such dewy blue eyes! She was the prettiest woman in Summerside. Had to be. I couldn't have stood it if a man had walked into church with a handsomer wife than me. I ruled my household as a man should but not tyrannically. Oh, of course, I had a spell of temper now and then, but Mollie didn't mind them after she got used to them. A man has a right to have a row with his wife now and then, hasn't he? Women get tired of monotonous husbands. Besides, I always gave her a ring or a necklace or some such gaud after I calmed down. There wasn't a woman in Summerside had more nice jewelry. I must get it out and give it to Sibyl.”

Anne went wicked.

“What about Milton's poems?”

“Milton's poems? Oh, that! It wasn't Milton's poems ... it was Tennyson's. I reverence Milton but I can't abide Alfred. He's too sickly sweet. Those last two lines of Enoch Arden made me so mad one night, I did fire the book through the window. But I picked it up the next day for the sake of the Bugle Song. I'd forgive anybody anything for that. It didn't go into George Clarke's lily pond — that was old Prouty's embroidery. You're not going? Stay and have a bite of supper with a lonely old fellow robbed of his only whelp.”

“I'm really sorry I can't, Mr. Westcott, but I have to attend a meeting of the staff tonight.”

“Well, I'll be seeing you when Sibyl comes back. I'll have to fling a party for them, no doubt. Good gosh, what a relief this has been to my mind. You've no idea how I'd have hated to have to back down and say, 'Take her.' Now all I have to do is to pretend to be heartbroken and resigned and forgive her sadly for the sake of her poor mother. I'll do it beautifully ... Jarvis must never suspect. Don't you give the show away.”

“I won't,” promised Anne.

Franklin Westcott saw her courteously to the door. The bulldog sat up on his haunches and cried after her.

Franklin Westcott took his pipe out of his mouth at the door and tapped her on the shoulder with it..

“Always remember,” he said solemnly, “there’s more than one way to skin a cat. It can be done so that the animal’ll never know he’s lost his hide. Give my love to Rebecca Dew. A nice old puss, if you stroke her the right way. And thank you ... thank you.”

Anne betook herself home, through the soft, calm evening. The fog had cleared, the wind had shifted and there was a look of frost in the pale green sky.

“People told me I didn’t know Franklin Westcott,” reflected Anne. “They were right ... I didn’t. And neither did they.”

“How did he take it?” Rebecca Dew was keen to know. She had been on tenterhooks during Anne’s absence.

“Not so badly after all,” said Anne confidentially . “I think he’ll forgive Dovie in time.”

“I never did see the beat of you, Miss Shirley, for talking people round,” said Rebecca Dew admiringly. “You have certainly got a way with you.”

““Something attempted, something done has earned a night’s repose,”” quoted Anne wearily as she climbed the three steps into her bed that night. “But just wait till the next person asks my advice about eloping!”

Chapter 9

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“I am invited to have supper tomorrow night with a lady of Summerside. I know you won’t believe me, Gilbert, when I tell you her name is Tomgallon ... Miss Minerva Tomgallon. You’ll say I’ve been reading Dickens too long and too late.

“Dearest, aren’t you glad your name is Blythe? I am sure I could never marry you if it were Tomgallon. Fancy ... Anne Tomgallon! No, you can’t fancy it.

“This is the ultimate honor Summerside has to bestow ... an invitation to Tomgallon House. It has no other name. No nonsense about Elms or Chestnuts or Crofts for the Tomgallons.

“I understand they were the ‘Royal Family’ in old days. The Pringles are mushrooms compared to them. And now there is left of them all only Miss Minerva, the sole survivor of six generations of Tomgallons. She lives alone in a huge house on Queen Street ... a house with great chimneys, green shutters and the only stained-glass window in a private house in town. It is big enough for four families and is occupied only by Miss Minerva, a cook and a maid. It is very well kept up, but somehow whenever I walk past it I feel that it is a place which life has forgotten.

“Miss Minerva goes out very little, excepting to the Anglican church, and I had never met her until a few weeks ago, when she came to a meeting of staff and trustees to make a formal gift of her father’s valuable library to the school. She looks exactly as you would expect a Minerva Tomgallon to look ... tall and thin, with a long, narrow white face, a long thin nose and a long thin mouth. That doesn’t sound very attractive, yet Miss Minerva is quite handsome in a stately, aristocratic style and is always dressed with great, though somewhat old-fashioned, elegance. She was quite a beauty

when she was young, Rebecca Dew tells me, and her large black eyes are still full of fire and dark luster. She suffers from no lack of words, and I don't think I ever heard any one enjoy making a presentation speech more.

"Miss Minerva was especially nice to me, and yesterday I received a formal little note inviting me to have supper with her. When I told Rebecca Dew, she opened her eyes as widely as if I had been invited to Buckingham Palace.

"It's a great honor to be asked to Tomgallon House,' she said in a rather awed tone. I never heard of Miss Minerva asking any of the principals there before. To be sure, they were all men, so I suppose it would hardly have been proper. Well, I hope she won't talk you to death, Miss Shirley. The Tomgallons could all talk the hind leg off a cat. And they liked to be in the front of things. Some folks think the reason Miss Minerva lives so retired is because now that she's old she can't take the lead as she used to do and she won't play second fiddle to any one. What are you going to wear, Miss Shirley? I'd like to see you wear your cream silk gauze with your black velvet bows. It's so dressy.'

"I'm afraid it would be rather too "dressy" for a quiet evening out,' I said.

"Miss Minerva would like it, I think. The Tomgallons all liked their company to be nicely arrayed. They say Miss Minerva's grandfather once shut the door in the face of a woman who had been asked there to a ball, because she came in her second-best dress. He told her her best was none too good for the Tomgallons.'

"Nevertheless, I think I'll wear my green voile, and the ghosts of the Tomgallons must make the best of it.

"I'm going to confess something I did last week, Gilbert. I suppose you'll think I'm meddling again in other folks' business. But I had to do something. I'll not be in Summerside next year and I can't bear the thought of leaving little Elizabeth to the mercy of those two unloving old women who are growing bitterer and narrower every year. What kind of a girlhood will she have with them in that gloomy old place?

“‘I wonder,’ she said to me wistfully, not long ago, ‘what it would be like to have a grandmother you weren’t afraid of.’

“This is what I did: I wrote to her father. He lives in Paris and I didn’t know his address, but Rebecca Dew had heard and remembered the name of the firm whose branch he runs there, so I took a chance and addressed him in care of it. I wrote as diplomatic a letter as I could, but I told him plainly that he ought to take Elizabeth. I told him how she longs for and dreams about him and that Mrs. Campbell was really too severe and strict with her. Perhaps nothing will come of it, but if I hadn’t written I would be forever haunted by the conviction that I ought to have done it.

“What made me think of it was Elizabeth telling me very seriously one day that she had ‘written a letter to God,’ asking Him to bring her father back to her and make him love her. She said she had stopped on the way home from school, in the middle of a vacant lot, and read it, looking up at the sky. I knew she had done something odd, because Miss Prouty had seen the performance and told me about it when she came to sew for the widows next day. She thought Elizabeth was getting ‘queer’ ... ‘talking to the sky like that.’

“I asked Elizabeth about it and she told me.

“‘I thought God might pay more attention to a letter than a prayer,’ she said. ‘I’ve prayed so long. He must get so many prayers.’

“That night I wrote to her father.

“Before I close I must tell you about Dusty Miller. Some time ago Aunt Kate told me that she felt she must find another home for him because Rebecca Dew kept complaining about him so that she felt she really could not endure it any longer. One evening last week when I came home from school there was no Dusty Miller. Aunt Chatty said they had given him to Mrs. Edmonds, who lives on the other side of Summerside from Windy Poplars. I felt sorry, for Dusty Miller and I have been excellent friends. ‘But, at least,’ I thought, ‘Rebecca Dew will be a happy woman.’

“Rebecca was away for the day, having gone to the country to help a relative hook rugs. When she returned at dusk nothing was said, but at bedtime when she was calling Dusty Miller from the back porch Aunt Kate said quietly:

“‘You needn’t call Dusty Miller, Rebecca. He is not here. We have found a home for him elsewhere. You will not be bothered with him any more.’

“If Rebecca Dew could have turned pale she would have done so.

“‘Not here? Found a home for him? Good grief! Isn’t this his home?’

“‘We have given him to Mrs. Edmonds. She has been very lonely since her daughter married and thought a nice cat would be company.’

“Rebecca Dew came in and shut the door. She looked very wild.

“‘This is the last straw,’ she said. And indeed it seemed to be. I’ve never seen Rebecca Dew’s eyes emit such sparkles of rage. ‘I’ll be leaving at the end of the month, Mrs. MacComber, and sooner if you can be suited.’

“‘But, Rebecca,’ said Aunt Kate in bewilderment, ‘I don’t understand. You’ve always disliked Dusty Miller. Only last week you said ...’

“‘That’s right,’ said Rebecca bitterly. ‘Cast things up to me! Don’t have any regard for my feelings! That poor dear Cat! I’ve waited on him and pampered him and got up nights to let him in. And now he’s been spirited away behind my back without so much as a by-your-leave. And to Sarah Edmonds, who wouldn’t buy a bit of liver for the poor creature if he was dying for it! The only company I had in the kitchen!’

“‘But, Rebecca, you’ve always ...’

“‘Oh, keep on ... keep on! Don’t let me get a word in edgewise, Mrs. MacComber. I’ve raised that cat from a kitten ... I’ve looked after his health and his morals ... and what for? That Jane Edmonds should have a well-trained cat for company. Well, I hope she’ll stand out in the frost at nights, as I’ve done, calling that cat for hours rather than leave him out to

freeze, but I doubt it ... I seriously doubt it. Well, Mrs. MacComber, all I hope is that your conscience won't trouble you the next time it's ten below zero. I won't sleep a wink when it happens, but of course that doesn't matter an old shoe to any one.'

"Rebecca, if you would only ...'

"Mrs. MacComber, I am not a worm, neither am I a doormat. Well, this has been a lesson for me ... a valuable lesson! Never again will I allow my affections to twine themselves around an animal of any kind or description. And if you'd done it open and aboveboard ... but behind my back ... taking advantage of me like that! I never heard of anything so dirt mean! But who am I that I should expect my feelings to be considered!'

"Rebecca,' said Aunt Kate desperately, 'if you want Dusty Miller back we can get him back.'

"Why didn't you say so before then?' demanded Rebecca Dew. 'And I doubt it. Jane Edmonds has got her claws in him. Is it likely she'll give him up?'

"I think she will,' said Aunt Kate, who had apparently reverted to jelly. 'And if he comes back you won't leave us, will you, Rebecca?'

"I may think it over,' said Rebecca, with the air of one making a tremendous concession.

"Next day, Aunt Chatty brought Dusty Miller home in a covered basket. I caught a glance exchanged between her and Aunt Kate after Rebecca had carried Dusty Miller out to the kitchen and shut the door. I wonder! Was it all a deep-laid plot on the part of the widows, aided and abetted by Jane Edmonds?

"Rebecca has never uttered a word of complaint about Dusty Miller since and there is a veritable clang of victory in her voice when she shouts for him at bedtime. It sounds as if she wanted all Summerside to know that Dusty Miller is back where he belongs and that she has once more got the better of the widows!"

Chapter 10

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It was on a dark, windy March evening, when even the clouds scudding over the sky seemed in a hurry, that Anne skimmed up the triple flight of broad, shallow steps flanked by stone urns and stonier lions, that led to the massive front door of Tomgallon House. Usually, when she had passed it after dark it was somber and grim, with a dim twinkle of light in one or two windows. But now it blazed forth brilliantly, even the wings on either side being lighted up, as if Miss Minerva were entertaining the whole town. Such an illumination in her honor rather overcame Anne. She almost wished she had put on her cream gauze.

Nevertheless she looked very charming in her green voile and perhaps Miss Minerva, meeting her in the hall, thought so, for her face and voice were very cordial. Miss Minerva herself was regal in black velvet, a diamond comb in the heavy coils of her iron-gray hair and a massive cameo brooch surrounded by a braid of some departed Tomgallon's hair. The whole costume was a little outmoded, but Miss Minerva wore it with such a grand air that it seemed as timeless as royalty's.

"Welcome to Tomgallon House, my dear," she said, giving Anne a bony hand, likewise well sprinkled with diamonds. "I am very glad to have you here as my guest."

"I am ..."

"Tomgallon House was always the resort of beauty and youth in the old days. We used to have a great many parties and entertained all the visiting celebrities," said Miss Minerva, leading Anne to the big staircase over a carpet of faded red velvet. "But all is changed now. I entertain very little. I am the last of the Tomgallons. Perhaps it is as well. Our family, my dear, are under a curse."

Miss Minerva infused such a gruesome tinge of mystery and horror into her tones that Anne almost shivered. The Curse of the Tomgallons! What a

title for a story!

“This is the stair down which my Great-grandfather Tomgallon fell and broke his neck the night of his house-warming given to celebrate the completion of his new home. This house was consecrated by human blood. He fell there ... ” Miss Minerva pointed a long white finger so dramatically at a tiger-skin rug in the hall that Anne could almost see the departed Tomgallon dying on it. She really did not know what to say, so said inanely, “Oh!”

Miss Minerva ushered her along a hall, hung with portraits and photographs of faded loveliness, with the famous stained-glass window at its end, into a large, high-ceilinged, very stately guestroom. The high walnut bed, with its huge headboard, was covered with so gorgeous a silken quilt that Anne felt it was a desecration to lay her coat and hat on it.

“You have very beautiful hair, my dear,” said Miss Minerva admiringly. “I always liked red hair. My Aunt Lydia had it ... she was the only redhaired Tomgallon. One night when she was brushing it in the north room it caught fire from her candle and she ran shrieking down the hall wrapped in flames. All part of the Curse, my dear ... all part of the Curse.”

“Was she ...”

“No, she wasn’t burned to death, but she lost all her beauty. She was very handsome and vain. She never went out of the house from that night to the day of her death and she left directions that her coffin was to be shut so that no one might see her scarred face. Won’t you sit down to remove your rubbers, my dear? This is a very comfortable chair. My sister died in it from a stroke. She was a widow and came back home to live after her husband’s death. Her little girl was scalded in our kitchen with a pot of boiling water. Wasn’t that a tragic way for a child to die?”

“Oh, how ...”

“But at least we knew how it died. My half-aunt Eliza ... at least, she would have been my half-aunt if she had lived ... just disappeared when she was six years old. Nobody ever knew what became of her.”

“But surely ...”

“Every search was made but nothing was ever discovered. It was said that her mother ... my step-grandmother ... had been very cruel to an orphan niece of my grandfather’s who was being brought up here. She locked it up in the closet at the head of the stairs, one hot summer day, for punishment and when she went to let it out she found it ... dead. Some people thought it was a judgment on her when her own child vanished. But I think it was just Our Curse.”

“Who put ... ?”

“What a high instep you have, my dear! My instep used to be admired too. It was said a stream of water could run under it ... the test of an aristocrat.”

Miss Minerva modestly poked a slipper from under her velvet skirt and revealed what was undoubtedly a very handsome foot.

“It certainly ...”

“Would you like to see over the house, my dear, before we have supper? It used to be the Pride of Summerside. I suppose everything is very old-fashioned now, but perhaps there are a few things of interest. That sword hanging by the head of the stairs belonged to my great-great-grandfather who was an officer in the British Army and received a grant of land in Prince Edward Island for his services. He never lived in this house, but my great-great-grandmother did for a few weeks. She did not long survive her son’s tragic death.”

Miss Minerva marched Anne ruthlessly over the whole huge house, full of great square rooms ... ballroom, conservatory, billiard-room, three drawing-rooms, breakfast-room, no end of bedrooms and an enormous attic. They were all splendid and dismal.

“Those were my Uncle Ronald and my Uncle Reuben,” said Miss Minerva, indicating two worthies who seemed to be scowling at each other from the opposite sides of a fireplace. “They were twins and they hated each other

bitterly from birth. The house rang with their quarrels. It darkened their mother's whole life. And during their final quarrel in this very room, while a thunderstorm was going on, Reuben was killed by a flash of lightning. Ronald never got over it. He was a haunted man from that day. His wife," Miss Minerva added reminiscently, "swallowed her wedding-ring."

"What an ex ..."

"Ronald thought it was very careless and wouldn't have anything done. A prompt emetic might have ... but it was never heard of again. It spoiled her life. She always felt so un married without a wedding-ring."

"What a beautiful ..."

"Oh, yes, that was my Aunt Emilia ... not my aunt really, of course. Just the wife of Uncle Alexander. She was noted for her spiritual look, but she poisoned her husband with a stew of mushrooms ... toadstools really. We always pretended it was an accident, because a murder is such a messy thing to have in a family, but we all knew the truth. Of course she married him against her will. She was a gay young thing and he was far too old for her. December and May, my dear. Still, that did not really justify toadstools. She went into a decline soon afterwards. They are buried together in Charlottetown ... all the Tomgallons bury in Charlottetown. This was my Aunt Louise. She drank laudanum. The doctor pumped it out and saved her, but we all felt we could never trust her again. It was really rather a relief when she died respectably of pneumonia. Of course, some of us didn't blame her much. You see, my dear, her husband had spanked her."

"Spanked ..."

"Exactly. There are really some things no gentleman should do, my dear, and one of them is spank his wife. Knock her down ... possibly ... but spank her, never! I would like," said Miss Minerva, very majestically, "to see the man who would dare to spank me."

Anne felt she would like to see him also. She realized that there are limits to the imagination after all. By no stretch of hers could she imagine a

husband spanking Miss Minerva Tomgallon.

“This is the ballroom. Of course it is never used now. But there have been any number of balls here. The Tomgallon balls were famous. People came from all over the Island to them. That chandelier cost my father five hundred dollars. My Great-aunt Patience dropped dead while dancing here one night ... right there in that corner. She had fretted a great deal over a man who had disappointed her. I cannot imagine any girl breaking her heart over a man. Men,” said Miss Minerva, staring at a photograph of her father ... a person with bristling sidewhiskers and a hawk-like nose ... “have always seemed to me such trivial creatures.”

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The dining-room was in keeping with the rest of the house. There was another ornate chandelier, an equally ornate, gilt-framed mirror over the mantelpiece, and a table beautifully set with silver and crystal and old Crown Derby. The supper, served by a rather grim and ancient maid, was bountiful and exceedingly good, and Anne’s healthy young appetite did full justice to it. Miss Minerva kept silence for a time and Anne dared say nothing for fear of starting another avalanche of tragedies. Once a large, sleek black cat came into the room and sat down by Miss Minerva with a hoarse meow. Miss Minerva poured a saucer of cream and set it down before him. She seemed so much more human after this that Anne lost a good deal of her awe of the last of the Tomgallons.

“Do have some more of the peaches, my dear. You’ve eaten nothing ... positively nothing.”

“Oh, Miss Tomgallon, I’ve enjoyed ...”

“The Tomgallons always set a good table,” said Miss Minerva complacently. “My Aunt Sophia made the best sponge-cake I ever tasted. I think the only person my father ever really hated to see come to our house was his sister Mary, because she had such a poor appetite. She just minced

and tasted. He took it as a personal insult. Father was a very unrelenting man. He never forgave my brother Richard for marrying against his will. He ordered him out of the house and he was never allowed to enter it again. Father always repeated the Lord's Prayer at family worship every morning, but after Richard flouted him he always left out the sentence, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' I can see him," said Miss Minerva dreamily, "kneeling there leaving it out."

After supper they went to the smallest of the three drawing-rooms ... which was still rather big and grim ... and spent the evening before the huge fire ... a pleasant, friendly enough fire. Anne crocheted at a set of intricate doilies and Miss Minerva knitted away at an afghan and kept up what was practically a monologue composed in great part of colorful and gruesome Tomgallon history.

"This is a house of tragical memories, my dear."

"Miss Tomgallon, didn't any pleasant thing ever happen in this house?" asked Anne, achieving a complete sentence by a mere fluke. Miss Minerva had had to stop talking long enough to blow her nose.

"Oh, I suppose so," said Miss Minerva, as if she hated to admit it. "Yes, of course, we used to have gay times here when I was a girl. They tell me you're writing a book about every one in Summerside, my dear."

"I'm not ... there isn't a word of truth ..."

"Oh!" Miss Minerva was plainly a little disappointed. "Well, if ever you do you are at liberty to use any of our stories you like, perhaps with the names disguised. And now what do you say to a game of parchesi?"

"I'm afraid it is time I was going... ."

"Oh, my dear, you can't go home tonight. It's pouring cats and dogs ... and listen to the wind. I don't keep a carriage now ... I have so little use for one ... and you can't walk half a mile in that deluge. You must be my guest for the night."

Anne was not sure she wanted to spend a night in Tomgallon House. But neither did she want to walk to Windy Poplars in a March tempest. So they had their game of parchesi ... in which Miss Minerva was so interested that she forgot to talk about horrors ... and then a “bedtime snack.” They ate cinnamon toast and drank cocoa out of old Tomgallon cups of marvelous thinness and beauty.

Finally Miss Minerva took her up to a guestroom which Anne at first was glad to see was not the one where Miss Minerva’s sister had died of a stroke.

“This is Aunt Annabella’s room,” said Miss Minerva, lighting the candles in the silver candlesticks on a rather pretty green dressing-table and turning out the gas. Matthew Tomgallon had blown out the gas one night ... whereupon exit Matthew Tomgallon. “She was the handsomest of all the Tomgallons. That’s her picture above the mirror. Do you notice what a proud mouth she had? She made that crazy quilt on the bed. I hope you’ll be comfortable, my dear. Mary has aired the bed and put two hot bricks in it. And she has aired this nightdress for you ...” pointing to an ample flannel garment hanging over a chair and smelling strongly of moth balls. “I hope it will fit you. It hasn’t been worn since poor Mother died in it. Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you ...” Miss Minerva turned back at the door ... “this is the room Oscar Tomgallon came back to life in — after being thought dead for two days. They didn’t want him to, you know — that was the tragedy. I hope you’ll sleep well, my dear.”

Anne did not know if she could sleep at all or not. Suddenly there seemed something strange and alien in the room ... something a little hostile. But is there not something strange about any room that has been occupied through generations? Death has lurked in it ... love has been rosy red in it ... births have been here ... all the passions ... all the hopes. It is full of wraths.

But this was really rather a terrible old house, full of the ghosts of dead hatreds and heartbreaks, crowded with dark deeds that had never been dragged into light and were still festering in its corners and hidy-holes. Too many women must have wept here. The wind wailed very eerily in the

spruces by the window. For a moment Anne felt like running out, storm or no storm.

Then she took herself resolutely in hand and commanded common sense. If tragic and dreadful things had happened here, many shadowy years ago, amusing and lovely things must have happened, too. Gay and pretty girls had danced here and talked over their charming secrets; dimpled babies had been born here; there had been weddings and balls and music and laughter. The sponge-cake lady must have been a comfortable creature and the unforgiven Richard a gallant lover.

“I’ll think on these things and go to bed. What a quilt to sleep under! I wonder if I’ll be as crazy as it by morning. And this is a spare room! I’ve never forgotten what a thrill it used to give me to sleep in any one’s spare room.”

Anne uncoiled and brushed her hair under the very nose of Annabella Tomgallon, who stared down at her with a face in which there were pride and vanity, and something of the insolence of great beauty. Anne felt a little creepy as she looked in the mirror. Who knew what faces might look out of it at her? All the tragic and haunted ladies who had ever looked into it, perhaps. She bravely opened the closet door, half expecting any number of skeletons to tumble out, and hung up her dress. She sat down calmly on a rigid chair, which looked as if it would be insulted if anybody sat on it, and took off her shoes. Then she put on the flannel nightgown, blew out the candles and got into the bed, pleasantly warm from Mary’s bricks. For a little while the rain streaming on the panes and the shriek of the wind around the old eaves prevented her from sleeping. Then she forgot all the Tomgallon tragedies in dreamless slumber until she found herself looking at dark fir boughs against a red sunrise.

“I’ve enjoyed having you so much, my dear,” said Miss Minerva when Anne left after breakfast. “We’ve had a real cheerful visit, haven’t we? Though I’ve lived so long alone I’ve almost forgotten how to talk. And I need not say what a delight it is to meet a really charming and unspoiled young girl in this frivolous age. I didn’t tell you yesterday but it was my birthday, and it was very pleasant to have a bit of youth in the house. There

is nobody to remember my birthday now ...” Miss Minerva gave a faint sigh ... “and once there were so many.”

“Well, I suppose you heard a pretty grim chronicle,” said Aunt Chatty that night.

“Did all those things Miss Minerva told me really happen, Aunt Chatty?”

“Well, the queer thing is, they did,” said Aunt Chatty. “It’s a curious thing, Miss Shirley, but a lot of awful things did happen to the Tomgallons.”

“I don’t know that there were many more than happen in any large family in the course of six generations,” said Aunt Kate.

“Oh, I think there were. They really did seem under a curse. So many of them died sudden or violent deaths. Of course there is a streak of insanity in them ... every one knows that. That was curse enough ... but I’ve heard an old story ... I can’t recall the details ... of the carpenter who built the house cursing it. Something about the contract ... old Paul Tomgallon held him to it and it ruined him, it cost so much more than he had figured.”

“Miss Minerva seems rather proud of the curse,” said Anne.

“Poor old thing, it’s all she has,” said Rebecca Dew.

Anne smiled to think of the stately Miss Minerva being referred to as a poor old thing. But she went to the tower room and wrote to Gilbert:

“I thought Tomgallon House was a sleepy old place where nothing ever happened. Well, perhaps things don’t happen now but evidently they did. Little Elizabeth is always talking of Tomorrow. But the old Tomgallon house is Yesterday. I’m glad I don’t live in Yesterday ... that Tomorrow is still a friend.

“Of course I think Miss Minerva has all the Tomgallon liking for the spotlight and gets no end of satisfaction out of her tragedies. They are to her what husband and children are to other women. But, oh, Gilbert, no matter how old we get in years to come, don’t let’s ever see life as all

tragedy and revel in it. I think I'd hate a house one hundred and twenty years old. I hope when we get our house of dreams it will either be new, ghostless and traditionless, or, if that can't be, at least have been occupied by reasonably happy people. I shall never forget my night at Tomgallon House. And for once in my life I've met a person who could talk me down."

Chapter 1 2

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Little Elizabeth Grayson had been born expecting things to happen. That they seldom happened under the watchful eyes of Grandmother and the Woman never brightened her expectations in the least. Things were just bound to happen some time ... if not today, then tomorrow.

When Miss Shirley came to live at Windy Poplars Elizabeth felt that Tomorrow must be very close at hand and her visit to Green Gables was like a foretaste of it. But now in the June of Miss Shirley's third and last year in Summerside High, little Elizabeth's heart had descended into the nice buttoned boots Grandmother always got for her to wear. Many children at the school where she went envied little Elizabeth those beautiful buttoned kid boots. But little Elizabeth cared nothing about buttoned boots when she could not tread the way to freedom in them. And now her adored Miss Shirley was going away from her forever. At the end of June she would be leaving Summerside and going back to that beautiful Green Gables. Little Elizabeth simply could not bear the thought of it. It was of no use for Miss Shirley to promise that she would have her down to Green Gables in the summer before she was married. Little Elizabeth knew somehow that Grandmother would not let her go again. Little Elizabeth knew Grandmother had never really approved of her intimacy with Miss Shirley.

"It will be the end of everything, Miss Shirley," she sobbed.

"Let's hope, darling, that it is only a new beginning," said Anne cheerfully. But she felt downcast herself. No word had ever come from little Elizabeth's father. Either her letter had never reached him or he did not care. And, if he did not care, what was to become of Elizabeth? It was bad enough now in her childhood, but what would it be later on?

"Those two old dames will boss her to death," Rebecca Dew had said. Anne felt that there was more truth than elegance in her remark.

Elizabeth knew that she was “bossed.” And she especially resented being bossed by the Woman. She did not like it in Grandmother, of course, but one conceded reluctantly that perhaps a grandmother had a certain right to boss you. But what right had the Woman? Elizabeth always wanted to ask her that right out. She would do it some time ... when Tomorrow came. And oh, how she would enjoy the look on the Woman’s face!

Grandmother would never let little Elizabeth go out walking by herself ... for fear, she said, that she might be kidnaped by gypsies. A child had been once, forty years before. It was very seldom gypsies came to the Island now, and little Elizabeth felt that it was only an excuse. But why should Grandmother care whether she were kidnaped or not? Elizabeth knew that Grandmother and the Woman didn’t love her at all. Why, they never even spoke of her by her name if they could help it. It was always “the child.” How Elizabeth hated to be called “the child” just as they might have spoken of “the dog” or “the cat” if there had been one. But when Elizabeth had ventured a protest, Grandmother’s face had grown dark and angry and little Elizabeth had been punished for impertinence, while the Woman looked on, well content. Little Elizabeth often wondered just why the Woman hated her. Why should any one hate you when you were so small? Could you be worth hating? Little Elizabeth did not know that the mother whose life she had cost had been that bitter old woman’s darling and, if she had known, could not have understood what perverted shapes thwarted love can take.

Little Elizabeth hated the gloomy, splendid Evergreens, where everything seemed unacquainted with her although she had lived in it all her life. But after Miss Shirley had come to Windy Poplars everything had changed magically. Little Elizabeth lived in a world of romance after Miss Shirley’s coming. There was beauty wherever you looked. Fortunately Grandmother and the Woman couldn’t prevent you from looking, though Elizabeth had no doubt they would if they could. The short walks along the red magic of the harbor road, which she was all too rarely permitted to share with Miss Shirley, were the high lights in her shadowy life. She loved everything she saw ... the faraway lighthouse painted in odd red and white rings ... the far, dim blue shores ... the little silvery blue waves ... the range lights that gleamed through the violet dusks ... all gave her so

much delight that it hurt. And the harbor with its smoky islands and glowing sunsets! Elizabeth always went up to a window in the mansard roof to watch them through the treetops ... and the ships that sailed at the rising of the moon. Ships that came back ... ships that never came back. Elizabeth longed to go in one of them ... on a voyage to the Island of Happiness. The ships that never came back stayed there, where it was always Tomorrow.

That mysterious red road ran on and on and her feet itched to follow it. Where did it lead to? Sometimes Elizabeth thought she would burst if she didn't find out. When Tomorrow really came she would fare forth on it and perhaps find an island all her own where she and Miss Shirley could live alone and Grandmother and the Woman could never come. They both hated water and would not put foot in a boat for anything. Little Elizabeth liked to picture herself standing on her island and mocking them, as they stood vainly glowering on the mainland shore.

"This is Tomorrow," she would taunt them. "You can't catch me any more. You're only in Today."

What fun it would be! How she would enjoy the look on the Woman's face!

Then one evening in late June an amazing thing happened. Miss Shirley had told Mrs. Campbell that she had an errand next day at Flying Cloud, to see a certain Mrs. Thompson, who was convener of the refreshment committee of the Ladies' Aid, and might she take Elizabeth with her. Grandmother had agreed with her usual dourness ... Elizabeth could never understand why she agreed at all, being completely ignorant of the Pringle horror of a certain bit of information Miss Shirley possessed ... but she had agreed.

"We'll go right down to the harbor mouth," whispered Anne, "after I've done my errand at Flying Cloud."

Little Elizabeth went to bed in such excitement that she didn't expect to sleep a wink. At last she was going to answer the lure of the road that had called so long. In spite of her excitement, she conscientiously went

through her little ritual of retiring. She folded her clothes and cleaned her teeth and brushed her golden hair. She thought she had rather pretty hair, though of course it wasn't like Miss Shirley's lovely redgold with the ripples in it and the little lovelocks that curled around her ears. Little Elizabeth would have given anything to have had hair like Miss Shirley's.

Before she got into bed little Elizabeth opened one of the drawers in the high, black, polished old bureau and took a carefully hidden picture from under a pile of hankies ... a picture of Miss Shirley which she had cut out of a special edition of the Weekly Courier that had reproduced a photograph of the High School staff.

"Good night, dearest Miss Shirley." She kissed the picture and returned it to its hiding-place. Then she climbed into bed and cuddled down under the blankets ... for the June night was cool and the breeze of the harbor searching. Indeed, it was more than a breeze tonight. It whistled and banged and shook and thumped, and Elizabeth knew the harbor would be a tossing expanse of waves under the moonlight. What fun it would be to steal down close to it under the moon! But it was only in Tomorrow one could do that.

Where was Flying Cloud? What a name! Out of Tomorrow again. It was maddening to be so near Tomorrow and not be able to get into it. But suppose the wind blew up rain for tomorrow! Elizabeth knew she would never be allowed to go anywhere in rain.

She sat up in bed and clasped her hands.

"Dear God," she said, "I don't like to meddle, but could You see that it is fine tomorrow? Please, dear God."

The next afternoon was glorious. Little Elizabeth felt as if she had slipped from some invisible shackles when she and Miss Shirley walked away from that house of gloom. She took a huge gulp of freedom, even if the Woman was scowling after them through the red glass of the big front door. How heavenly to be walking through the lovely world with Miss Shirley! It was always so wonderful to be alone with Miss Shirley. What would she do when Miss Shirley had gone? But little Elizabeth put the

thought firmly away. She wouldn't spoil the day by thinking it. Perhaps ... a great perhaps ... she and Miss Shirley would get into Tomorrow this afternoon and then they would never be separated. Little Elizabeth just wanted to walk quietly on towards that blueness at the end of the world, drinking in the beauty around her. Every turn and kink of the road revealed new lovelinesses ... and it turned and kinked interminably, following the windings of a tiny river that seemed to have appeared from nowhere.

On every side were fields of buttercups and clover where bees buzzed. Now and then they walked through a milky way of daisies. Far out the strait laughed at them in silver-tipped waves. The harbor was like watered silk. Little Elizabeth liked it better that way than when it was like pale blue satin. They drank the wind in. It was a very gentle wind. It purred about them and seemed to coax them on.

"Isn't it nice, walking with the wind like this?" said little Elizabeth.

"A nice, friendly, perfumed wind," said Anne, more to herself than Elizabeth. "Such a wind as I used to think a mistral was. Mistral sounds like that. What a disappointment when I found out it was a rough, disagreeable wind!"

Elizabeth didn't quite understand ... she had never heard of the mistral ... but the music of her beloved's voice was enough for her. The very sky was glad. A sailor with gold rings in his ears ... the very kind of person one would meet in Tomorrow ... smiled as he passed them. Elizabeth thought of a verse she had learned in Sunday-school ... "The little hills rejoice on every side." Had the man who wrote that ever seen hills like those blue ones over the harbor?

"I think this road leads right to God," she said dreamily.

"Perhaps," said Anne. "Perhaps all roads do, little Elizabeth. We turn off here just now. We must go over to that island ... that's Flying Cloud."

Flying Cloud was a long, slender islet, lying about a quarter of a mile from the shore. There were trees on it and a house. Little Elizabeth had always

wished she might have an island of her own, with a little bay of silver sand in it.

“How do we get to it?”

“We’ll row out in this flat,” said Miss Shirley, picking up the oars in a small boat tied to a leaning tree.

Miss Shirley could row. Was there anything Miss Shirley couldn’t do? When they reached the island, it proved to be a fascinating place where anything might happen. Of course it was in Tomorrow. Islands like this didn’t happen except in Tomorrow. They had no part or lot in humdrum Today.

A little maid who met them at the door of the house told Anne she would find Mrs. Thompson on the far end of the island, picking wild strawberries. Fancy an island where wild strawberries grew!

Anne went to hunt Mrs. Thompson up, but first she asked if little Elizabeth might wait in the livingroom. Anne was thinking that little Elizabeth looked rather tired after her unaccustomedly long walk and needed a rest. Little Elizabeth didn’t think she did, but Miss Shirley’s lightest wish was law.

It was a beautiful room, with flowers everywhere and wild sea-breezes blowing in. Elizabeth liked the mirror over the mantel which reflected the room so beautifully and, through the open window, a glimpse of harbor and hill and strait.

All at once a man came through the door. Elizabeth felt a moment of dismay and terror. Was he a gypsy? He didn’t look like her idea of a gypsy but of course she had never seen one. He might be one ... and then in a swift flash of intuition Elizabeth decided she didn’t care if he did kidnap her. She liked his crinkly hazel eyes and his crinkly brown hair and his square chin and his smile. For he was smiling.

“Now, who are you?” he asked.

“I’m ... I’m me,” faltered Elizabeth, still a little flustered.

“Oh, to be sure ... you. Popped out of the sea, I suppose ... come up from the dunes ... no name known among mortals.”

Elizabeth felt that she was being made fun of a little. But she didn’t mind. In fact she rather liked it. But she answered a bit primly.

“My name is Elizabeth Grayson.”

There was a silence ... a very queer silence. The man looked at her for a moment without saying anything. Then he politely asked her to sit down.

“I’m waiting for Miss Shirley,” she explained. “She’s gone to see Mrs. Thompson about the Ladies’ Aid Supper. When she comes back we are going down to the end of the world.”

Now, if you have any notion of kidnaping me, Mr. Man!

“Of course. But meanwhile you might as well be comfortable. And I must do the honors. What would you like in the way of light refreshment? Mrs. Thompson’s cat has probably brought something in.”

Elizabeth sat down. She felt oddly happy and at home.

“Can I have just what I like?”

“Certainly.”

“Then,” said Elizabeth triumphantly, “I’d like some ice-cream with strawberry jam on it.”

The man rang a bell and gave an order. Yes, this must be Tomorrow ... no doubt about it. Ice-cream and strawberry jam didn’t appear in this magical manner in Today, cats or no cats.

“We’ll set a share aside for your Miss Shirley,” said the man.

They were good friends right away. The man didn't talk a great deal, but he looked at Elizabeth very often. There was a tenderness in his face ... a tenderness she had never seen before in anybody's face, not even Miss Shirley's. She felt that he liked her. And she knew that she liked him.

Finally he glanced out of the window and stood up.

"I think I must go now," he said. "I see your Miss Shirley coming up the walk, so you'll not be alone."

"Won't you wait and see Miss Shirley?" asked Elizabeth, licking her spoon to get the last vestige of the jam. Grandmother and the Woman would have died of horror had they seen her.

"Not this time," said the man.

Elizabeth knew he hadn't the slightest notion of kidnaping her, and she felt the strangest, most unaccountable sensation of disappointment.

"Good-by and thank you," she said politely. "It is very nice here in Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?"

"This is Tomorrow," explained Elizabeth. "I've always wanted to get into Tomorrow and now I have."

"Oh, I see. Well, I'm sorry to say I don't care much about Tomorrow. I would like to get back into Yesterday."

Little Elizabeth was sorry for him. But how could he be unhappy? How could any one living in Tomorrow be unhappy?

Elizabeth looked longingly back to Flying Cloud as they rowed away. Just as they pushed through the scrub spruces that fringed the shore to the road, she turned for another farewell look at it. A flying team of horses attached to a truck wagon whirled around the bend, evidently quite beyond their driver's control.

Elizabeth heard Miss Shirley shriek... .

Chapter 13

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The room went around oddly. The furniture nodded and jiggled. The bed ... how came she to be in bed? Somebody with a white cap on was just going out of the door. What door? How funny one's head felt! There were voices somewhere ... low voices. She could not see who was talking, but somehow she knew it was Miss Shirley and the man.

What were they saying? Elizabeth heard sentences here and there, bobbing out of a confusion of murmuring.

“Are you really ... ?” Miss Shirley's voice sounded so excited..

“Yes ... your letter ... see for myself ... before approaching Mrs. Campbell ... Flying Cloud is the summer home of our General Manager...
.”

If that room would only stay put! Really, things behaved rather queerly in Tomorrow. If she could only turn her head and see the talkers ... Elizabeth gave a long sigh.

Then they came over to her bed ... Miss Shirley and the man. Miss Shirley all tall and white, like a lily, looking as if she had been through some terrible experience but with some inner radiance shining behind it all ... a radiance that seemed part of the golden sunset light which suddenly flooded the room. The man was smiling down at her. Elizabeth felt that he loved her very much and that there was some secret, tender and dear, between them which she would learn as soon as she had learned the language spoken in Tomorrow.

“Are you feeling better, darling?” said Miss Shirley.

“Have I been sick?”

“You were knocked down by a team of runaway horses on the mainland road,” said Miss Shirley. “I ... I wasn’t quick enough. I thought you were killed. I brought you right back here in the flat and your ... this gentleman telephoned for a doctor and nurse.”

“Will I die?” said little Elizabeth.

“No, indeed, darling. You were only stunned and you will be all right soon. And, Elizabeth darling, this is your father.”

“Father is in France. Am I in France, too?” Elizabeth would not have been surprised at it. Wasn’t this Tomorrow? Besides, things were still a bit wobbly.

“Father is very much here, my sweet.” He had such a delightful voice ... you loved him for his voice. He bent and kissed her. “I’ve come for you. We’ll never be separated anymore.”

The woman in the white cap was coming in again. Somehow, Elizabeth knew whatever she had to say must be said before she got quite in.

“Will we live together?”

“Always,” said Father.

“And will Grandmother and the Woman live with us?”

“They will not,” said Father.

The sunset gold was fading and the nurse was looking her disapproval. But Elizabeth didn’t care.

“I’ve found Tomorrow,” she said, as the nurse looked Father and Miss Shirley out.

“I’ve found a treasure I didn’t know I possessed,” said Father, as the nurse shut the door on him. “And I can never thank you enough for that letter, Miss Shirley.”

“And so,” wrote Anne to Gilbert that night, “little Elizabeth’s road of mystery has led on to happiness and the end of her old world.”

Chapter 14

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“(For the last time),
“June 27th.

“DEAREST:

“I’ve come to another bend in the road. I’ve written you a good many letters in this old tower room these past three years. I suppose this is the last one I will write you for a long, long time. Because after this there won’t be any need of letters. In just a few weeks now we’ll belong to each other forever ... we’ll be together. Just think of it ... being together ... talking, walking, eating, dreaming, planning together ... sharing each other’s wonderful moments ... making a home out of our house of dreams. Our house! Doesn’t that sound ‘mystic and wonderful,’ Gilbert? I’ve been building dream houses all my life and now one of them is going to come true. As to whom I really want to share my house of dreams with ... well, I’ll tell you that at four o’clock next year.

“Three years sounded endless at the beginning, Gilbert. And now they are gone like a watch in the night. They have been very happy years ... except for those first few months with the Pringles. After that, life has seemed to flow by like a pleasant golden river. And my old feud with the Pringles seems like a dream. They like me now for myself ... they have forgotten they ever hated me. Cora Pringle, one of the Widow Pringle’s brood, brought me a bouquet of roses yesterday and twisted round the stems was a bit of paper bearing the legend, ‘To the sweetest teacher in the whole world.’ Fancy that for a Pringle!

“Jen is brokenhearted because I am leaving. I shall watch Jen’s career with interest. She is brilliant and rather unpredictable. One thing is certain ... she will have no commonplace existence. She can’t look so much like Becky Sharp for nothing.

“Lewis Allen is going to McGill. Sophy Sinclair is going to Queen’s. Then she means to teach until she has saved up enough money to go to the School of Dramatic Expression in Kingsport. Myra Pringle is going to ‘enter society’ in the fall. She is so pretty that it won’t matter a bit that she wouldn’t know a past perfect participle if she met it on the street.

“And there is no longer a small neighbor on the other side of the vine-hung gate. Little Elizabeth has gone forever from that sunshineless house ... gone into her Tomorrow. If I were staying on in Summerside I should break my heart, missing her. But as it is, I’m glad. Pierce Grayson took her away with him. He is not going back to Paris but will be living in Boston. Elizabeth cried bitterly at our parting but she is so happy with her father that I feel sure her tears will soon be dried. Mrs. Campbell and the Woman were very dour over the whole affair and put all the blame on me ... which I accept cheerfully and unrepentantly.

“‘She has had a good home here,’ said Mrs. Campbell majestically.

“‘Where she never heard a single word of affection,’ I thought but did not say.

“‘I think I’ll be Betty all the time now, darling Miss Shirley,’ were Elizabeth’s last words. ‘Except,’ she called back, ‘when I’m lonesome for you, and then I’ll be Lizzie.’

“‘Don’t you ever dare to be Lizzie, no matter what happens,’ I said.

“We threw kisses to each other as long as we could see, and I came up to my tower room with tears in my eyes. She’s been so sweet, the dear little golden thing. She always seemed to me like a little aeolian harp, so responsive to the tiniest breath of affection that blew her way. It’s been an adventure to be her friend. I hope Pierce Grayson realizes what a daughter he has ... and I think he does. He sounded very grateful and repentant.

“‘I didn’t realize she was no longer a baby,’ he said, ‘nor how unsympathetic her environment was. Thank you a thousand times for all you have done for her.’

“I had our map of fairyland framed and gave it to little Elizabeth for a farewell keepsake.

“I’m sorry to leave Windy Poplars. Of course, I’m really a bit tired of living in a trunk, but I’ve loved it here ... loved my cool morning hours at my window ... loved my bed into which I have veritably climbed every night ... loved my blue doughnut cushion ... loved all the winds that blew. I’m afraid I’ll never be quite so chummy with the winds again as I’ve been here. And shall I ever have a room again from which I can see both the rising and the setting sun?

“I’ve finished with Windy Poplars and the years that have been linked with it. And I’ve kept the faith. I’ve never betrayed Aunt Chatty’s hidy-hole to Aunt Kate or the buttermilk secret of each to either of the others.

“I think they are all sorry to see me go ... and I’m glad of it. It would be terrible to think they were glad I am going ... or that they would not miss me a little when I’m gone. Rebecca Dew has been making all my favorite dishes for a week now ... she even devoted ten eggs to angel-cake twice ... and using the ‘company’ china. And Aunt Chatty’s soft brown eyes brim over whenever I mention my departure. Even Dusty Miller seems to gaze at me reproachfully as he sits about on his little haunches.

“I had a long letter from Katherine last week. She has a gift for writing letters. She has got a position as private secretary to a globetrotting M. P. What a fascinating phrase ‘globetrotting’ is! A person who would say, ‘Let’s go to Egypt,’ as one might say, ‘Let’s go to Charlottetown’ ... and go! That life will just suit Katherine.

“She persists in ascribing all her changed outlook and prospects to me. ‘I wish I could tell you what you’ve brought into my life,’ she wrote. I suppose I did help. And it wasn’t easy at first. She seldom said anything without a sting in it, and listened to any suggestion I made in regard to the

school work with an air of disdainfully humoring a lunatic. But somehow, I've forgotten it all. It was just born of her secret bitterness against life.

"Everybody has been inviting me to supper ... even Pauline Gibson. Old Mrs. Gibson died a few months ago, so Pauline dared do it. And I've been to Tomgallon House for another supper with Miss Minerva of that ilk and another onesided conversation. But I had a very good time, eating the delicious meal Miss Minerva provided, and she had a good time airing a few more tragedies. She couldn't quite hide the fact that she was sorry for any one who was not a Tomgallon, but she paid me several nice compliments and gave me a lovely ring set with an aquamarine ... a moonlight blend of blue and green ... that her father had given her on her eighteenth birthday ... 'when I was young and handsome, dear ... quite handsome. I may say that now, I suppose.' I was glad it belonged to Miss Minerva and not to the wife of Uncle Alexander. I'm sure I could never have worn it if it had. It is very beautiful. There is a mysterious charm about the jewels of the sea.

"Tomgallon House is certainly very splendid, especially now when its grounds are all a-leaf and a-flower. But I wouldn't give my as yet unfounded house of dreams for Tomgallon House and grounds with the ghosts thrown in.

"Not but what a ghost might be a nice, aristocratic sort of thing to have around. My only quarrel with Spook's Lane is that there are no spooks.

"I went to my old graveyard yesterday evening for a last prowling ... walked all round it and wondered if Herbert Pringle occasionally chuckled to himself in his grave. And I'm saying good-by tonight to the old Storm King, with the sunset on its brow, and my little winding valley full of dusk.

"I'm a wee bit tired after a month of exams and farewells and 'last things.' For a week after I get back to Green Gables I'm going to be lazy ... do absolutely nothing but run free in a green world of summer loveliness. I'll dream by the Dryad's Bubble in the twilight. I'll drift on the Lake of Shining Waters in a shallop shaped from a moonbeam ... or in Mr. Barry's flat, if moonbeam shallops are not in season. I'll gather starflowers and June bells in the Haunted Wood. I'll find plots of wild strawberries in Mr.

Harrison's hill pasture. I'll join the dance of fireflies in Lover's Lane and visit Hester Gray's old, forgotten garden ... and sit out on the back doorstep under the stars and listen to the sea calling in its sleep.

"And when the week is ended you will be home ... and I won't want anything else."

When the time came the next day for Anne to say good-bye to the folks at Windy Poplars, Rebecca Dew was not on hand. Instead, Aunt Kate gravely handed Anne a letter.

"Dear Miss Shirley," wrote Rebecca Dew, "I am writing this to bid my farewell because I cannot trust myself to say it. For three years you have sojourned under our roof. The fortunate possessor of a cheerful spirit and a natural taste for the gaieties of youth, you have never surrendered yourself to the vain pleasures of the giddy and fickle crowd. You have conducted yourself on all occasions and to every one, especially the one who pens these lines, with the most refined delicacy. You have always been most considerate of my feelings and I find a heavy gloom on my spirits at the thought of your departure. But we must not repine at what Providence has ordained. (First Samuel, 29th and 18th.)

"You will be lamented by all in Summerside who had the privilege of knowing you, and the homage of one faithful though humble heart will ever be yours, and my prayer will ever be for your happiness and welfare in this world and your eternal felicity in that which is to come.

"Something whispers to me that you will not be long 'Miss Shirley' but that you will ere long be linked together in a union of souls with the choice of your heart, who, I understand from what I have heard, is a very exceptional young man. The writer, possessed of but few personal charms and beginning to feel her age (not but what I'm good for a good few years yet), has never permitted herself to cherish any matrimonial aspirations. But she does not deny herself the pleasure of an interest in the nuptials of her friends and may I express a fervent wish that your married life will be one of continued and uninterrupted Bliss? (Only do not expect too much of a man.)

“My esteem and, may I say, my affection for you will never lessen, and once in a while when you have nothing better to do will you kindly remember that there is such a person as

“Your obedient servant,

“REBECCA DEW.

“P.S. God bless you.”

Anne’s eyes were misty as she folded the letter up. Though she strongly suspected Rebecca Dew had got most of her phrases out of her favorite “Book of Deportment and Etiquette,” that did not make them any the less sincere, and the P. S. certainly came straight from Rebecca Dew’s affectionate heart.

“Tell dear Rebecca Dew I’ll never forget her and that I’m coming back to see you all every summer.”

“We have memories of you that nothing can take away,” sobbed Aunt Chatty.

“Nothing,” said Aunt Kate, emphatically.

But as Anne drove away from Windy Poplars the last message from it was a large white bath-towel fluttering frantically from the tower window. Rebecca Dew was waving it.

THE END

ANNE'S HOUSE OF DREAMS (1917)

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CHAPTER 1

IN THE GARRET OF GREEN GABLES

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“Thanks be, I’m done with geometry, learning or teaching it,” said Anne Shirley, a trifle vindictively, as she thumped a somewhat battered volume of Euclid into a big chest of books, banged the lid in triumph, and sat down upon it, looking at Diana Wright across the Green Gables garret, with gray eyes that were like a morning sky.

The garret was a shadowy, suggestive, delightful place, as all garrets should be. Through the open window, by which Anne sat, blew the sweet, scented, sunwarm air of the August afternoon; outside, poplar boughs rustled and tossed in the wind; beyond them were the woods, where Lover’s Lane wound its enchanted path, and the old apple orchard which still bore its rosy harvests munificently. And, over all, was a great mountain range of snowy clouds in the blue southern sky. Through the other window was glimpsed a distant, white-capped, blue sea — the beautiful St. Lawrence Gulf, on which floats, like a jewel, Abegweit, whose softer, sweeter Indian name has long been forsaken for the more prosaic one of Prince Edward Island.

Diana Wright, three years older than when we last saw her, had grown somewhat matronly in the intervening time. But her eyes were as black and brilliant, her cheeks as rosy, and her dimples as enchanting, as in the long-ago days when she and Anne Shirley had vowed eternal friendship in the garden at Orchard Slope. In her arms she held a small, sleeping, black-curved creature, who for two happy years had been known to the world of Avonlea as “Small Anne Cordelia.” Avonlea folks knew why Diana had called her Anne, of course, but Avonlea folks were puzzled by the Cordelia. There had never been a Cordelia in the Wright or Barry

connections. Mrs. Harmon Andrews said she supposed Diana had found the name in some trashy novel, and wondered that Fred hadn't more sense than to allow it. But Diana and Anne smiled at each other. They knew how Small Anne Cordelia had come by her name.

"You always hated geometry," said Diana with a retrospective smile. "I should think you'd be real glad to be through with teaching, anyhow."

"Oh, I've always liked teaching, apart from geometry. These past three years in Summerside have been very pleasant ones. Mrs. Harmon Andrews told me when I came home that I wouldn't likely find married life as much better than teaching as I expected. Evidently Mrs. Harmon is of Hamlet's opinion that it may be better to bear the ills that we have than fly to others that we know not of."

Anne's laugh, as blithe and irresistible as of yore, with an added note of sweetness and maturity, rang through the garret. Marilla in the kitchen below, compounding blue plum preserve, heard it and smiled; then sighed to think how seldom that dear laugh would echo through Green Gables in the years to come. Nothing in her life had ever given Marilla so much happiness as the knowledge that Anne was going to marry Gilbert Blythe; but every joy must bring with it its little shadow of sorrow. During the three Summerside years Anne had been home often for vacations and weekends; but, after this, a bi-annual visit would be as much as could be hoped for.

"You needn't let what Mrs. Harmon says worry you," said Diana, with the calm assurance of the four-years matron. "Married life has its ups and downs, of course. You mustn't expect that everything will always go smoothly. But I can assure you, Anne, that it's a happy life, when you're married to the right man."

Anne smothered a smile. Diana's airs of vast experience always amused her a little.

"I daresay I'll be putting them on too, when I've been married four years," she thought. "Surely my sense of humor will preserve me from it, though."

“Is it settled yet where you are going to live?” asked Diana, cuddling Small Anne Cordelia with the inimitable gesture of motherhood which always sent through Anne’s heart, filled with sweet, unuttered dreams and hopes, a thrill that was half pure pleasure and half a strange, ethereal pain.

“Yes. That was what I wanted to tell you when I ‘phoned to you to come down today. By the way, I can’t realize that we really have telephones in Avonlea now. It sounds so preposterously up-to-date and modernish for this darling, leisurely old place.”

“We can thank the A. V. I. S. for them,” said Diana. “We should never have got the line if they hadn’t taken the matter up and carried it through. There was enough cold water thrown to discourage any society. But they stuck to it, nevertheless. You did a splendid thing for Avonlea when you founded that society, Anne. What fun we did have at our meetings! Will you ever forget the blue hall and Judson Parker’s scheme for painting medicine advertisements on his fence?”

“I don’t know that I’m wholly grateful to the A. V. I. S. in the matter of the telephone,” said Anne. “Oh, I know it’s most convenient — even more so than our old device of signalling to each other by flashes of candlelight! And, as Mrs. Rachel says, ‘Avonlea must keep up with the procession, that’s what.’ But somehow I feel as if I didn’t want Avonlea spoiled by what Mr. Harrison, when he wants to be witty, calls ‘modern inconveniences.’ I should like to have it kept always just as it was in the dear old years. That’s foolish — and sentimental — and impossible. So I shall immediately become wise and practical and possible. The telephone, as Mr. Harrison concedes, is ‘a buster of a good thing’ — even if you do know that probably half a dozen interested people are listening along the line.”

“That’s the worst of it,” sighed Diana. “It’s so annoying to hear the receivers going down whenever you ring anyone up. They say Mrs. Harmon Andrews insisted that their ‘phone should be put in their kitchen just so that she could listen whenever it rang and keep an eye on the dinner at the same time. Today, when you called me, I distinctly heard that queer clock of the Pyes’ striking. So no doubt Josie or Gertie was listening.”

“Oh, so that is why you said, ‘You’ve got a new clock at Green Gables, haven’t you?’ I couldn’t imagine what you meant. I heard a vicious click as soon as you had spoken. I suppose it was the Pye receiver being hung up with profane energy. Well, never mind the Pyes. As Mrs. Rachel says, ‘Pyes they always were and Pyes they always will be, world without end, amen.’ I want to talk of pleasanter things. It’s all settled as to where my new home shall be.”

“Oh, Anne, where? I do hope it’s near here.”

“No-o-o, that’s the drawback. Gilbert is going to settle at Four Winds Harbor — sixty miles from here.”

“Sixty! It might as well be six hundred,” sighed Diana. “I never can get further from home now than Charlottetown.”

“You’ll have to come to Four Winds. It’s the most beautiful harbor on the Island. There’s a little village called Glen St. Mary at its head, and Dr. David Blythe has been practicing there for fifty years. He is Gilbert’s great-uncle, you know. He is going to retire, and Gilbert is to take over his practice. Dr. Blythe is going to keep his house, though, so we shall have to find a habitation for ourselves. I don’t know yet what it is, or where it will be in reality, but I have a little house o’dreams all furnished in my imagination — a tiny, delightful castle in Spain.”

“Where are you going for your wedding tour?” asked Diana.

“Nowhere. Don’t look horrified, Diana dearest. You suggest Mrs. Harmon Andrews. She, no doubt, will remark condescendingly that people who can’t afford wedding ‘towers’ are real sensible not to take them; and then she’ll remind me that Jane went to Europe for hers. I want to spend MY honeymoon at Four Winds in my own dear house of dreams.”

“And you’ve decided not to have any bridesmaid?”

“There isn’t any one to have. You and Phil and Priscilla and Jane all stole a march on me in the matter of marriage; and Stella is teaching in

Vancouver. I have no other ‘kindred soul’ and I won’t have a bridesmaid who isn’t.”

“But you are going to wear a veil, aren’t you?” asked Diana, anxiously.

“Yes, indeedy. I shouldn’t feel like a bride without one. I remember telling Matthew, that evening when he brought me to Green Gables, that I never expected to be a bride because I was so homely no one would ever want to marry me — unless some foreign missionary did. I had an idea then that foreign missionaries couldn’t afford to be finicky in the matter of looks if they wanted a girl to risk her life among cannibals. You should have seen the foreign missionary Priscilla married. He was as handsome and inscrutable as those daydreams we once planned to marry ourselves, Diana; he was the best dressed man I ever met, and he raved over Priscilla’s ‘ethereal, golden beauty.’ But of course there are no cannibals in Japan.”

“Your wedding dress is a dream, anyhow,” sighed Diana rapturously.

“You’ll look like a perfect queen in it — you’re so tall and slender. How DO you keep so slim, Anne? I’m fatter than ever — I’ll soon have no waist at all.”

“Stoutness and slimness seem to be matters of predestination,” said Anne. “At all events, Mrs. Harmon Andrews can’t say to you what she said to me when I came home from Summerside, ‘Well, Anne, you’re just about as skinny as ever.’ It sounds quite romantic to be ‘slender,’ but ‘skinny’ has a very different tang.”

“Mrs. Harmon has been talking about your trousseau. She admits it’s as nice as Jane’s, although she says Jane married a millionaire and you are only marrying a ‘poor young doctor without a cent to his name.’”

Anne laughed.

“My dresses ARE nice. I love pretty things. I remember the first pretty dress I ever had — the brown gloria Matthew gave me for our school concert. Before that everything I had was so ugly. It seemed to me that I stepped into a new world that night.”

“That was the night Gilbert recited ‘Bingen on the Rhine,’ and looked at you when he said, ‘There’s another, NOT a sister.’ And you were so furious because he put your pink tissue rose in his breast pocket! You didn’t much imagine then that you would ever marry him.”

“Oh, well, that’s another instance of predestination,” laughed Anne, as they went down the garret stairs.

CHAPTER 2

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

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There was more excitement in the air of Green Gables than there had ever been before in all its history. Even Marilla was so excited that she couldn't help showing it — which was little short of being phenomenal.

“There's never been a wedding in this house,” she said, half apologetically, to Mrs. Rachel Lynde. “When I was a child I heard an old minister say that a house was not a real home until it had been consecrated by a birth, a wedding and a death. We've had deaths here — my father and mother died here as well as Matthew; and we've even had a birth here. Long ago, just after we moved into this house, we had a married hired man for a little while, and his wife had a baby here. But there's never been a wedding before. It does seem so strange to think of Anne being married. In a way she just seems to me the little girl Matthew brought home here fourteen years ago. I can't realize that she's grown up. I shall never forget what I felt when I saw Matthew bringing in a GIRL. I wonder what became of the boy we would have got if there hadn't been a mistake. I wonder what HIS fate was.”

“Well, it was a fortunate mistake,” said Mrs. Rachel Lynde, “though, mind you, there was a time I didn't think so — that evening I came up to see Anne and she treated us to such a scene. Many things have changed since then, that's what.”

Mrs. Rachel sighed, and then brisked up again. When weddings were in order Mrs. Rachel was ready to let the dead past bury its dead.

“I'm going to give Anne two of my cotton warp spreads,” she resumed. “A tobacco-stripe one and an apple-leaf one. She tells me they're getting to be real fashionable again. Well, fashion or no fashion, I don't believe there's

anything prettier for a spare-room bed than a nice apple-leaf spread, that's what. I must see about getting them bleached. I've had them sewed up in cotton bags ever since Thomas died, and no doubt they're an awful color. But there's a month yet, and dew-bleaching will work wonders."

Only a month! Marilla sighed and then said proudly:

"I'm giving Anne that half dozen braided rugs I have in the garret. I never supposed she'd want them — they're so old-fashioned, and nobody seems to want anything but hooked mats now. But she asked me for them — said she'd rather have them than anything else for her floors. They ARE pretty. I made them of the nicest rags, and braided them in stripes. It was such company these last few winters. And I'll make her enough blue plum preserve to stock her jam closet for a year. It seems real strange. Those blue plum trees hadn't even a blossom for three years, and I thought they might as well be cut down. And this last spring they were white, and such a crop of plums I never remember at Green Gables."

"Well, thank goodness that Anne and Gilbert really are going to be married after all. It's what I've always prayed for," said Mrs. Rachel, in the tone of one who is comfortably sure that her prayers have availed much. "It was a great relief to find out that she really didn't mean to take the Kingsport man. He was rich, to be sure, and Gilbert is poor — at least, to begin with; but then he's an Island boy."

"He's Gilbert Blythe," said Marilla contentedly. Marilla would have died the death before she would have put into words the thought that was always in the background of her mind whenever she had looked at Gilbert from his childhood up — the thought that, had it not been for her own wilful pride long, long ago, he might have been HER son. Marilla felt that, in some strange way, his marriage with Anne would put right that old mistake. Good had come out of the evil of the ancient bitterness.

As for Anne herself, she was so happy that she almost felt frightened. The gods, so says the old superstition, do not like to behold too happy mortals. It is certain, at least, that some human beings do not. Two of that ilk descended upon Anne one violet dusk and proceeded to do what in them lay to prick the rainbow bubble of her satisfaction. If she thought she was

getting any particular prize in young Dr. Blythe, or if she imagined that he was still as infatuated with her as he might have been in his salad days, it was surely their duty to put the matter before her in another light. Yet these two worthy ladies were not enemies of Anne; on the contrary, they were really quite fond of her, and would have defended her as their own young had anyone else attacked her. Human nature is not obliged to be consistent.

Mrs. Inglis — nee Jane Andrews, to quote from the Daily Enterprise — came with her mother and Mrs. Jasper Bell. But in Jane the milk of human kindness had not been curdled by years of matrimonial bickerings. Her lines had fallen in pleasant places. In spite of the fact — as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would say — that she had married a millionaire, her marriage had been happy. Wealth had not spoiled her. She was still the placid, amiable, pink-cheeked Jane of the old quartette, sympathising with her old chum's happiness and as keenly interested in all the dainty details of Anne's trousseau as if it could rival her own silken and bejewelled splendors. Jane was not brilliant, and had probably never made a remark worth listening to in her life; but she never said anything that would hurt anyone's feelings — which may be a negative talent but is likewise a rare and enviable one.

"So Gilbert didn't go back on you after all," said Mrs. Harmon Andrews, contriving to convey an expression of surprise in her tone. "Well, the Blythes generally keep their word when they've once passed it, no matter what happens. Let me see — you're twenty-five, aren't you, Anne? When I was a girl twenty-five was the first corner. But you look quite young. Redheaded people always do."

"Red hair is very fashionable now," said Anne, trying to smile, but speaking rather coldly. Life had developed in her a sense of humor which helped her over many difficulties; but as yet nothing had availed to steel her against a reference to her hair.

"So it is — so it is," conceded Mrs. Harmon. "There's no telling what queer freaks fashion will take. Well, Anne, your things are very pretty, and very suitable to your position in life, aren't they, Jane? I hope you'll be very happy. You have my best wishes, I'm sure. A long engagement

doesn't often turn out well. But, of course, in your case it couldn't be helped."

"Gilbert looks very young for a doctor. I'm afraid people won't have much confidence in him," said Mrs. Jasper Bell gloomily. Then she shut her mouth tightly, as if she had said what she considered it her duty to say and held her conscience clear. She belonged to the type which always has a stringy black feather in its hat and straggling locks of hair on its neck.

Anne's surface pleasure in her pretty bridal things was temporarily shadowed; but the deeps of happiness below could not thus be disturbed; and the little stings of Mesdames Bell and Andrews were forgotten when Gilbert came later, and they wandered down to the birches of the brook, which had been saplings when Anne had come to Green Gables, but were now tall, ivory columns in a fairy palace of twilight and stars. In their shadows Anne and Gilbert talked in lover-fashion of their new home and their new life together.

"I've found a nest for us, Anne."

"Oh, where? Not right in the village, I hope. I wouldn't like that altogether."

"No. There was no house to be had in the village. This is a little white house on the harbor shore, half way between Glen St. Mary and Four Winds Point. It's a little out of the way, but when we get a 'phone in that won't matter so much. The situation is beautiful. It looks to the sunset and has the great blue harbor before it. The sand-dunes aren't very far away — the sea winds blow over them and the sea spray drenches them."

"But the house itself, Gilbert, — OUR first home? What is it like?"

"Not very large, but large enough for us. There's a splendid living room with a fireplace in it downstairs, and a dining room that looks out on the harbor, and a little room that will do for my office. It is about sixty years old — the oldest house in Four Winds. But it has been kept in pretty good repair, and was all done over about fifteen years ago — shingled, plastered and re-floored. It was well built to begin with. I understand that there was

some romantic story connected with its building, but the man I rented it from didn't know it."

"He said Captain Jim was the only one who could spin that old yarn now."

"Who is Captain Jim?"

"The keeper of the lighthouse on Four Winds Point. You'll love that Four Winds light, Anne. It's a revolving one, and it flashes like a magnificent star through the twilights. We can see it from our living room windows and our front door."

"Who owns the house?"

"Well, it's the property of the Glen St. Mary Presbyterian Church now, and I rented it from the trustees. But it belonged until lately to a very old lady, Miss Elizabeth Russell. She died last spring, and as she had no near relatives she left her property to the Glen St. Mary Church. Her furniture is still in the house, and I bought most of it — for a mere song you might say, because it was all so old-fashioned that the trustees despaired of selling it. Glen St. Mary folks prefer plush brocade and sideboards with mirrors and ornamentations, I fancy. But Miss Russell's furniture is very good and I feel sure you'll like it, Anne."

"So far, good," said Anne, nodding cautious approval. "But, Gilbert, people cannot live by furniture alone. You haven't yet mentioned one very important thing. Are there TREES about this house?"

"Heaps of them, oh, dryad! There is a big grove of fir trees behind it, two rows of Lombardy poplars down the lane, and a ring of white birches around a very delightful garden. Our front door opens right into the garden, but there is another entrance — a little gate hung between two firs. The hinges are on one trunk and the catch on the other. Their boughs form an arch overhead."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I couldn't live where there were no trees — something vital in me would starve. Well, after that, there's no use asking you if there's a brook anywhere near. THAT would be expecting too much."

“But there IS a brook — and it actually cuts across one corner of the garden.”

“Then,” said Anne, with a long sigh of supreme satisfaction, “this house you have found IS my house of dreams and none other.”

CHAPTER 3

THE LAND OF DREAMS AMONG

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“Have you made up your mind who you’re going to have to the wedding, Anne?” asked Mrs. Rachel Lynde, as she hemstitched table napkins industriously. “It’s time your invitations were sent, even if they are to be only informal ones.”

“I don’t mean to have very many,” said Anne. “We just want those we love best to see us married. Gilbert’s people, and Mr. and Mrs. Allan, and Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.”

“There was a time when you’d hardly have numbered Mr. Harrison among your dearest friends,” said Marilla drily.

“Well, I wasn’t VERY strongly attracted to him at our first meeting,” acknowledged Anne, with a laugh over the recollection. “But Mr. Harrison has improved on acquaintance, and Mrs. Harrison is really a dear. Then, of course, there are Miss Lavendar and Paul.”

“Have they decided to come to the Island this summer? I thought they were going to Europe.”

“They changed their minds when I wrote them I was going to be married. I had a letter from Paul today. He says he MUST come to my wedding, no matter what happens to Europe.”

“That child always idolised you,” remarked Mrs. Rachel.

“That ‘child’ is a young man of nineteen now, Mrs. Lynde.”

“How time does fly!” was Mrs. Lynde’s brilliant and original response.

“Charlotta the Fourth may come with them. She sent word by Paul that she would come if her husband would let her. I wonder if she still wears those enormous blue bows, and whether her husband calls her Charlotta or Leonora. I should love to have Charlotta at my wedding. Charlotta and I were at a wedding long syne. They expect to be at Echo Lodge next week. Then there are Phil and the Reverend Jo — —”

“It sounds awful to hear you speaking of a minister like that, Anne,” said Mrs. Rachel severely.

“His wife calls him that.”

“She should have more respect for his holy office, then,” retorted Mrs. Rachel.

“I’ve heard you criticise ministers pretty sharply yourself,” teased Anne.

“Yes, but I do it reverently,” protested Mrs. Lynde. “You never heard me NICKNAME a minister.”

Anne smothered a smile.

“Well, there are Diana and Fred and little Fred and Small Anne Cordelia — and Jane Andrews. I wish I could have Miss Stacey and Aunt Jamesina and Priscilla and Stella. But Stella is in Vancouver, and Pris is in Japan, and Miss Stacey is married in California, and Aunt Jamesina has gone to India to explore her daughter’s mission field, in spite of her horror of snakes. It’s really dreadful — the way people get scattered over the globe.”

“The Lord never intended it, that’s what,” said Mrs. Rachel authoritatively. “In my young days people grew up and married and settled down where they were born, or pretty near it. Thank goodness you’ve stuck to the Island, Anne. I was afraid Gilbert would insist on rushing off to the ends of the earth when he got through college, and dragging you with him.”

“If everybody stayed where he was born places would soon be filled up, Mrs. Lynde.”

“Oh, I’m not going to argue with you, Anne. I am not a B.A. What time of the day is the ceremony to be?”

“We have decided on noon — high noon, as the society reporters say. That will give us time to catch the evening train to Glen St. Mary.”

“And you’ll be married in the parlor?”

“No — not unless it rains. We mean to be married in the orchard — with the blue sky over us and the sunshine around us. Do you know when and where I’d like to be married, if I could? It would be at dawn — a June dawn, with a glorious sunrise, and roses blooming in the gardens; and I would slip down and meet Gilbert and we would go together to the heart of the beech woods, — and there, under the green arches that would be like a splendid cathedral, we would be married.”

Marilla sniffed scornfully and Mrs. Lynde looked shocked.

“But that would be terrible queer, Anne. Why, it wouldn’t really seem legal. And what would Mrs. Harmon Andrews say?”

“Ah, there’s the rub,” sighed Anne. “There are so many things in life we cannot do because of the fear of what Mrs. Harmon Andrews would say. ‘Tis true, ‘tis pity, and pity ‘tis, ‘tis true.’ What delightful things we might do were it not for Mrs. Harmon Andrews!”

“By times, Anne, I don’t feel quite sure that I understand you altogether,” complained Mrs. Lynde.

“Anne was always romantic, you know,” said Marilla apologetically.

“Well, married life will most likely cure her of that,” Mrs. Rachel responded comfortingly.

Anne laughed and slipped away to Lover’s Lane, where Gilbert found her; and neither of them seemed to entertain much fear, or hope, that their married life would cure them of romance.

The Echo Lodge people came over the next week, and Green Gables buzzed with the delight of them. Miss Lavendar had changed so little that the three years since her last Island visit might have been a watch in the night; but Anne gasped with amazement over Paul. Could this splendid six feet of manhood be the little Paul of Avonlea schooldays?

“You really make me feel old, Paul,” said Anne. “Why, I have to look up to you!”

“You’ll never grow old, Teacher,” said Paul. “You are one of the fortunate mortals who have found and drunk from the Fountain of Youth, — you and Mother Lavendar. See here! When you’re married I WON’T call you Mrs. Blythe. To me you’ll always be ‘Teacher’ — the teacher of the best lessons I ever learned. I want to show you something.”

The “something” was a pocketbook full of poems. Paul had put some of his beautiful fancies into verse, and magazine editors had not been as unappreciative as they are sometimes supposed to be. Anne read Paul’s poems with real delight. They were full of charm and promise.

“You’ll be famous yet, Paul. I always dreamed of having one famous pupil. He was to be a college president — but a great poet would be even better. Some day I’ll be able to boast that I whipped the distinguished Paul Irving. But then I never did whip you, did I, Paul? What an opportunity lost! I think I kept you in at recess, however.”

“You may be famous yourself, Teacher. I’ve seen a good deal of your work these last three years.”

“No. I know what I can do. I can write pretty, fanciful little sketches that children love and editors send welcome cheques for. But I can do nothing big. My only chance for earthly immortality is a corner in your Memoirs.”

Charlotta the Fourth had discarded the blue bows but her freckles were not noticeably less.

“I never did think I’d come down to marrying a Yankee, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” she said. “But you never know what’s before you, and it isn’t his

fault. He was born that way.”

“You’re a Yankee yourself, Charlotta, since you’ve married one.”

“Miss Shirley, ma’am, I’m NOT! And I wouldn’t be if I was to marry a dozen Yankees! Tom’s kind of nice. And besides, I thought I’d better not be too hard to please, for I mightn’t get another chance. Tom don’t drink and he don’t growl because he has to work between meals, and when all’s said and done I’m satisfied, Miss Shirley, ma’am.”

“Does he call you Leonora?” asked Anne.

“Goodness, no, Miss Shirley, ma’am. I wouldn’t know who he meant if he did. Of course, when we got married he had to say, ‘I take thee, Leonora,’ and I declare to you, Miss Shirley, ma’am, I’ve had the most dreadful feeling ever since that it wasn’t me he was talking to and I haven’t been rightly married at all. And so you’re going to be married yourself, Miss Shirley, ma’am? I always thought I’d like to marry a doctor. It would be so handy when the children had measles and croup. Tom is only a bricklayer, but he’s real good-tempered. When I said to him, says I, ‘Tom, can I go to Miss Shirley’s wedding? I mean to go anyhow, but I’d like to have your consent,’ he just says, ‘Suit yourself, Charlotta, and you’ll suit me.’ That’s a real pleasant kind of husband to have, Miss Shirley, ma’am.”

Philippa and her Reverend Jo arrived at Green Gables the day before the wedding. Anne and Phil had a rapturous meeting which presently simmered down to a cosy, confidential chat over all that had been and was about to be.

“Queen Anne, you’re as queenly as ever. I’ve got fearfully thin since the babies came. I’m not half so goodlooking; but I think Jo likes it. There’s not such a contrast between us, you see. And oh, it’s perfectly magnificent that you’re going to marry Gilbert. Roy Gardner wouldn’t have done at all, at all. I can see that now, though I was horribly disappointed at the time. You know, Anne, you did treat Roy very badly.”

“He has recovered, I understand,” smiled Anne.

“Oh, yes. He is married and his wife is a sweet little thing and they’re perfectly happy. Everything works together for good. Jo and the Bible say that, and they are pretty good authorities.”

“Are Alec and Alonzo married yet?”

“Alec is, but Alonzo isn’t. How those dear old days at Patty’s Place come back when I’m talking to you, Anne! What fun we had!”

“Have you been to Patty’s Place lately?”

“Oh, yes, I go often. Miss Patty and Miss Maria still sit by the fireplace and knit. And that reminds me — we’ve brought you a wedding gift from them, Anne. Guess what it is.”

“I never could. How did they know I was going to be married?”

“Oh, I told them. I was there last week. And they were so interested. Two days ago Miss Patty wrote me a note asking me to call; and then she asked if I would take her gift to you. What would you wish most from Patty’s Place, Anne?”

“You can’t mean that Miss Patty has sent me her china dogs?”

“Go up head. They’re in my trunk this very moment. And I’ve a letter for you. Wait a moment and I’ll get it.”

“Dear Miss Shirley,” Miss Patty had written, “Maria and I were very much interested in hearing of your approaching nuptials. We send you our best wishes. Maria and I have never married, but we have no objection to other people doing so. We are sending you the china dogs. I intended to leave them to you in my will, because you seemed to have sincere affection for them. But Maria and I expect to live a good while yet (D.V.), so I have decided to give you the dogs while you are young. You will not have forgotten that Gog looks to the right and Magog to the left.”

“Just fancy those lovely old dogs sitting by the fireplace in my house of dreams,” said Anne rapturously. “I never expected anything so delightful.”

That evening Green Gables hummed with preparations for the following day; but in the twilight Anne slipped away. She had a little pilgrimage to make on this last day of her girlhood and she must make it alone. She went to Matthew's grave, in the little poplar-shaded Avonlea graveyard, and there kept a silent tryst with old memories and immortal loves.

"How glad Matthew would be tomorrow if he were here," she whispered. "But I believe he does know and is glad of it — somewhere else. I've read somewhere that 'our dead are never dead until we have forgotten them.' Matthew will never be dead to me, for I can never forget him."

She left on his grave the flowers she had brought and walked slowly down the long hill. It was a gracious evening, full of delectable lights and shadows. In the west was a sky of mackerel clouds — crimson and amber-tinted, with long strips of apple-green sky between. Beyond was the glimmering radiance of a sunset sea, and the ceaseless voice of many waters came up from the tawny shore. All around her, lying in the fine, beautiful country silence, were the hills and fields and woods she had known and loved so long.

"History repeats itself," said Gilbert, joining her as she passed the Blythe gate. "Do you remember our first walk down this hill, Anne — our first walk together anywhere, for that matter?"

"I was coming home in the twilight from Matthew's grave — and you came out of the gate; and I swallowed the pride of years and spoke to you."

"And all heaven opened before me," supplemented Gilbert. "From that moment I looked forward to tomorrow. When I left you at your gate that night and walked home I was the happiest boy in the world. Anne had forgiven me."

"I think you had the most to forgive. I was an ungrateful little wretch — and after you had really saved my life that day on the pond, too. How I loathed that load of obligation at first! I don't deserve the happiness that has come to me."

Gilbert laughed and clasped tighter the girlish hand that wore his ring. Anne's engagement ring was a circlet of pearls. She had refused to wear a diamond.

"I've never really liked diamonds since I found out they weren't the lovely purple I had dreamed. They will always suggest my old disappointment."

"But pearls are for tears, the old legend says," Gilbert had objected.

"I'm not afraid of that. And tears can be happy as well as sad. My very happiest moments have been when I had tears in my eyes — when Marilla told me I might stay at Green Gables — when Matthew gave me the first pretty dress I ever had — when I heard that you were going to recover from the fever. So give me pearls for our troth ring, Gilbert, and I'll willingly accept the sorrow of life with its joy."

But tonight our lovers thought only of joy and never of sorrow. For the morrow was their wedding day, and their house of dreams awaited them on the misty, purple shore of Four Winds Harbor.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST BRIDE OF GREEN GABLES

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Anne wakened on the morning of her wedding day to find the sunshine winking in at the window of the little porch gable and a September breeze frolicking with her curtains.

“I’m so glad the sun will shine on me,” she thought happily.

She recalled the first morning she had wakened in that little porch room, when the sunshine had crept in on her through the blossom-drift of the old Snow Queen. That had not been a happy wakening, for it brought with it the bitter disappointment of the preceding night. But since then the little room had been endeared and consecrated by years of happy childhood dreams and maiden visions. To it she had come back joyfully after all her absences; at its window she had knelt through that night of bitter agony when she believed Gilbert dying, and by it she had sat in speechless happiness the night of her betrothal. Many vigils of joy and some of sorrow had been kept there; and today she must leave it forever. Henceforth it would be hers no more; fifteen-year-old Dora was to inherit it when she had gone. Nor did Anne wish it otherwise; the little room was sacred to youth and girlhood — to the past that was to close today before the chapter of wifehood opened.

Green Gables was a busy and joyous house that forenoon. Diana arrived early, with little Fred and Small Anne Cordelia, to lend a hand. Davy and Dora, the Green Gables twins, whisked the babies off to the garden.

“Don’t let Small Anne Cordelia spoil her clothes,” warned Diana anxiously.

“You needn’t be afraid to trust her with Dora,” said Marilla. “That child is more sensible and careful than most of the mothers I’ve known. She’s really a wonder in some ways. Not much like that other harum-scarum I brought up.”

Marilla smiled across her chicken salad at Anne. It might even be suspected that she liked the harum-scarum best after all.

“Those twins are real nice children,” said Mrs. Rachel, when she was sure they were out of earshot. “Dora is so womanly and helpful, and Davy is developing into a very smart boy. He isn’t the holy terror for mischief he used to be.”

“I never was so distracted in my life as I was the first six months he was here,” acknowledged Marilla. “After that I suppose I got used to him. He’s taken a great notion to farming lately, and wants me to let him try running the farm next year. I may, for Mr. Barry doesn’t think he’ll want to rent it much longer, and some new arrangement will have to be made.”

“Well, you certainly have a lovely day for your wedding, Anne,” said Diana, as she slipped a voluminous apron over her silken array. “You couldn’t have had a finer one if you’d ordered it from Eaton’s.”

“Indeed, there’s too much money going out of this Island to that same Eaton’s,” said Mrs. Lynde indignantly. She had strong views on the subject of octopus-like department stores, and never lost an opportunity of airing them. “And as for those catalogues of theirs, they’re the Avonlea girls’ Bible now, that’s what. They pore over them on Sundays instead of studying the Holy Scriptures.”

“Well, they’re splendid to amuse children with,” said Diana. “Fred and Small Anne look at the pictures by the hour.”

“I amused ten children without the aid of Eaton’s catalogue,” said Mrs. Rachel severely.

“Come, you two, don’t quarrel over Eaton’s catalogue,” said Anne gaily. “This is my day of days, you know. I’m so happy I want every one else to

be happy, too.”

“I’m sure I hope your happiness will last, child,” sighed Mrs. Rachel. She did hope it truly, and believed it, but she was afraid it was in the nature of a challenge to Providence to flaunt your happiness too openly. Anne, for her own good, must be toned down a trifle.

But it was a happy and beautiful bride who came down the old, homespun-carpeted stairs that September noon — the first bride of Green Gables, slender and shining-eyed, in the mist of her maiden veil, with her arms full of roses. Gilbert, waiting for her in the hall below, looked up at her with adoring eyes. She was his at last, this evasive, long-sought Anne, won after years of patient waiting. It was to him she was coming in the sweet surrender of the bride. Was he worthy of her? Could he make her as happy as he hoped? If he failed her — if he could not measure up to her standard of manhood — then, as she held out her hand, their eyes met and all doubt was swept away in a glad certainty. They belonged to each other; and, no matter what life might hold for them, it could never alter that. Their happiness was in each other’s keeping and both were unafraid.

They were married in the sunshine of the old orchard, circled by the loving and kindly faces of long-familiar friends. Mr. Allan married them, and the Reverend Jo made what Mrs. Rachel Lynde afterwards pronounced to be the “most beautiful wedding prayer” she had ever heard. Birds do not often sing in September, but one sang sweetly from some hidden bough while Gilbert and Anne repeated their deathless vows. Anne heard it and thrilled to it; Gilbert heard it, and wondered only that all the birds in the world had not burst into jubilant song; Paul heard it and later wrote a lyric about it which was one of the most admired in his first volume of verse; Charlotta the Fourth heard it and was blissfully sure it meant good luck for her adored Miss Shirley. The bird sang until the ceremony was ended and then it wound up with one mad little, glad little trill. Never had the old gray-green house among its enfolding orchards known a blither, merrier afternoon. All the old jests and quips that must have done duty at weddings since Eden were served up, and seemed as new and brilliant and mirth-provoking as if they had never been uttered before. Laughter and joy had their way; and when Anne and Gilbert left to catch the Carmody train,

with Paul as driver, the twins were ready with rice and old shoes, in the throwing of which Charlotta the Fourth and Mr. Harrison bore a valiant part. Marilla stood at the gate and watched the carriage out of sight down the long lane with its banks of goldenrod. Anne turned at its end to wave her last goodbye. She was gone — Green Gables was her home no more; Marilla's face looked very gray and old as she turned to the house which Anne had filled for fourteen years, and even in her absence, with light and life.

But Diana and her small fry, the Echo Lodge people and the Allans, had stayed to help the two old ladies over the loneliness of the first evening; and they contrived to have a quietly pleasant little supper time, sitting long around the table and chatting over all the details of the day. While they were sitting there Anne and Gilbert were alighting from the train at Glen St. Mary.

CHAPTER 5

THE HOME COMING

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Dr. David Blythe had sent his horse and buggy to meet them, and the urchin who had brought it slipped away with a sympathetic grin, leaving them to the delight of driving alone to their new home through the radiant evening.

Anne never forgot the loveliness of the view that broke upon them when they had driven over the hill behind the village. Her new home could not yet be seen; but before her lay Four Winds Harbor like a great, shining mirror of rose and silver. Far down, she saw its entrance between the bar of sand dunes on one side and a steep, high, grim, red sandstone cliff on the other. Beyond the bar the sea, calm and austere, dreamed in the afterlight. The little fishing village, nestled in the cove where the sand-dunes met the harbor shore, looked like a great opal in the haze. The sky over them was like a jewelled cup from which the dusk was pouring; the air was crisp with the compelling tang of the sea, and the whole landscape was infused with the subtleties of a sea evening. A few dim sails drifted along the darkening, fir-clad harbor shores. A bell was ringing from the tower of a little white church on the far side; mellowly and dreamily sweet, the chime floated across the water blent with the moan of the sea. The great revolving light on the cliff at the channel flashed warm and golden against the clear northern sky, a trembling, quivering star of good hope. Far out along the horizon was the crinkled gray ribbon of a passing steamer's smoke.

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful," murmured Anne. "I shall love Four Winds, Gilbert. Where is our house?"

"We can't see it yet — the belt of birch running up from that little cove hides it. It's about two miles from Glen St. Mary, and there's another mile

between it and the lighthouse. We won't have many neighbors, Anne. There's only one house near us and I don't know who lives in it. Shall you be lonely when I'm away?"

"Not with that light and that loveliness for company. Who lives in that house, Gilbert?"

"I don't know. It doesn't look — exactly — as if the occupants would be kindred spirits, Anne, does it?"

The house was a large, substantial affair, painted such a vivid green that the landscape seemed quite faded by contrast. There was an orchard behind it, and a nicely kept lawn before it, but, somehow, there was a certain bareness about it. Perhaps its neatness was responsible for this; the whole establishment, house, barns, orchard, garden, lawn and lane, was so starkly neat.

"It doesn't seem probable that anyone with that taste in paint could be VERY kindred," acknowledged Anne, "unless it were an accident — like our blue hall. I feel certain there are no children there, at least. It's even neater than the old Copp place on the Tory road, and I never expected to see anything neater than that."

They had not met anybody on the moist, red road that wound along the harbor shore. But just before they came to the belt of birch which hid their home, Anne saw a girl who was driving a flock of snow-white geese along the crest of a velvety green hill on the right. Great, scattered firs grew along it. Between their trunks one saw glimpses of yellow harvest fields, gleams of golden sandhills, and bits of blue sea. The girl was tall and wore a dress of pale blue print. She walked with a certain springiness of step and erectness of bearing. She and her geese came out of the gate at the foot of the hill as Anne and Gilbert passed. She stood with her hand on the fastening of the gate, and looked steadily at them, with an expression that hardly attained to interest, but did not descend to curiosity. It seemed to Anne, for a fleeting moment, that there was even a veiled hint of hostility in it. But it was the girl's beauty which made Anne give a little gasp — a beauty so marked that it must have attracted attention anywhere. She was hatless, but heavy braids of burnished hair, the hue of ripe wheat, were

twisted about her head like a coronet; her eyes were blue and starlike; her figure, in its plain print gown, was magnificent; and her lips were as crimson as the bunch of blood-red poppies she wore at her belt.

“Gilbert, who is the girl we have just passed?” asked Anne, in a low voice.

“I didn’t notice any girl,” said Gilbert, who had eyes only for his bride.

“She was standing by that gate — no, don’t look back. She is still watching us. I never saw such a beautiful face.”

“I don’t remember seeing any very handsome girls while I was here. There are some pretty girls up at the Glen, but I hardly think they could be called beautiful.”

“This girl is. You can’t have seen her, or you would remember her. Nobody could forget her. I never saw such a face except in pictures. And her hair! It made me think of Browning’s ‘cord of gold’ and ‘gorgeous snake’!”

“Probably she’s some visitor in Four Winds — likely some one from that big summer hotel over the harbor.”

“She wore a white apron and she was driving geese.”

“She might do that for amusement. Look, Anne — there’s our house.”

Anne looked and forgot for a time the girl with the splendid, resentful eyes. The first glimpse of her new home was a delight to eye and spirit — it looked so like a big, creamy seashell stranded on the harbor shore. The rows of tall Lombardy poplars down its lane stood out in stately, purple silhouette against the sky. Behind it, sheltering its garden from the too keen breath of sea winds, was a cloudy fir wood, in which the winds might make all kinds of weird and haunting music. Like all woods, it seemed to be holding and enfolding secrets in its recesses, — secrets whose charm is only to be won by entering in and patiently seeking. Outwardly, dark green arms keep them inviolate from curious or indifferent eyes.

The night winds were beginning their wild dances beyond the bar and the fishing hamlet across the harbor was gemmed with lights as Anne and Gilbert drove up the poplar lane. The door of the little house opened, and a warm glow of firelight flickered out into the dusk. Gilbert lifted Anne from the buggy and led her into the garden, through the little gate between the ruddy-tipped firs, up the trim, red path to the sandstone step.

“Welcome home,” he whispered, and hand in hand they stepped over the threshold of their house of dreams.

CHAPTER 6

CAPTAIN JIM

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“Old Doctor Dave” and “Mrs. Doctor Dave” had come down to the little house to greet the bride and groom. Doctor Dave was a big, jolly, white-whiskered old fellow, and Mrs. Doctor was a trim rosy-cheeked, silver-haired little lady who took Anne at once to her heart, literally and figuratively.

“I’m so glad to see you, dear. You must be real tired. We’ve got a bite of supper ready, and Captain Jim brought up some trout for you. Captain Jim — where are you? Oh, he’s slipped out to see to the horse, I suppose. Come upstairs and take your things off.”

Anne looked about her with bright, appreciative eyes as she followed Mrs. Doctor Dave upstairs. She liked the appearance of her new home very much. It seemed to have the atmosphere of Green Gables and the flavor of her old traditions.

“I think I would have found Miss Elizabeth Russell a ‘kindred spirit,’” she murmured when she was alone in her room. There were two windows in it; the dormer one looked out on the lower harbor and the sandbar and the Four Winds light.

“A magic casement opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,”

quoted Anne softly. The gable window gave a view of a little harvest-hued valley through which a brook ran. Half a mile up the brook was the only house in sight — an old, rambling, gray one surrounded by huge willows through which its windows peered, like shy, seeking eyes, into the dusk. Anne wondered who lived there; they would be her nearest neighbors and

she hoped they would be nice. She suddenly found herself thinking of the beautiful girl with the white geese.

“Gilbert thought she didn’t belong here,” mused Anne, “but I feel sure she does. There was something about her that made her part of the sea and the sky and the harbor. Four Winds is in her blood.”

When Anne went downstairs Gilbert was standing before the fireplace talking to a stranger. Both turned as Anne entered.

“Anne, this is Captain Boyd. Captain Boyd, my wife.”

It was the first time Gilbert had said “my wife” to anybody but Anne, and he narrowly escaped bursting with the pride of it. The old captain held out a sinewy hand to Anne; they smiled at each other and were friends from that moment. Kindred spirit flashed recognition to kindred spirit.

“I’m right down pleased to meet you, Mistress Blythe; and I hope you’ll be as happy as the first bride was who came here. I can’t wish you no better than THAT. But your husband doesn’t introduce me jest exactly right. ‘Captain Jim’ is my week-a-day name and you might as well begin as you’re sartain to end up — calling me that. You sartainly are a nice little bride, Mistress Blythe. Looking at you sorter makes me feel that I’ve jest been married myself.”

Amid the laughter that followed Mrs. Doctor Dave urged Captain Jim to stay and have supper with them.

“Thank you kindly. ‘Twill be a real treat, Mistress Doctor. I mostly has to eat my meals alone, with the reflection of my ugly old phiz in a looking-glass opposite for company. ‘Tisn’t often I have a chance to sit down with two such sweet, purty ladies.”

Captain Jim’s compliments may look very bald on paper, but he paid them with such a gracious, gentle deference of tone and look that the woman upon whom they were bestowed felt that she was being offered a queen’s tribute in a kingly fashion.

Captain Jim was a high-souled, simple-minded old man, with eternal youth in his eyes and heart. He had a tall, rather ungainly figure, somewhat stooped, yet suggestive of great strength and endurance; a clean-shaven face deeply lined and bronzed; a thick mane of iron-gray hair falling quite to his shoulders, and a pair of remarkably blue, deep-set eyes, which sometimes twinkled and sometimes dreamed, and sometimes looked out seaward with a wistful quest in them, as of one seeking something precious and lost. Anne was to learn one day what it was for which Captain Jim looked.

It could not be denied that Captain Jim was a homely man. His spare jaws, rugged mouth, and square brow were not fashioned on the lines of beauty; and he had passed through many hardships and sorrows which had marked his body as well as his soul; but though at first sight Anne thought him plain she never thought anything more about it — the spirit shining through that rugged tenement beautified it so wholly.

They gathered gaily around the supper table. The hearth fire banished the chill of the September evening, but the window of the dining room was open and sea breezes entered at their own sweet will. The view was magnificent, taking in the harbor and the sweep of low, purple hills beyond. The table was heaped with Mrs. Doctor's delicacies but the piece de resistance was undoubtedly the big platter of sea trout.

"Thought they'd be sorter tasty after travelling," said Captain Jim.
"They're fresh as trout can be, Mistress Blythe. Two hours ago they were swimming in the Glen Pond."

"Who is attending to the light tonight, Captain Jim?" asked Doctor Dave.

"Nephew Alec. He understands it as well as I do. Well, now, I'm real glad you asked me to stay to supper. I'm proper hungry — didn't have much of a dinner today."

"I believe you half starve yourself most of the time down at that light," said Mrs. Doctor Dave severely. "You won't take the trouble to get up a decent meal."

“Oh, I do, Mistress Doctor, I do,” protested Captain Jim. “Why, I live like a king gen’rally. Last night I was up to the Glen and took home two pounds of steak. I meant to have a spanking good dinner today.”

“And what happened to the steak?” asked Mrs. Doctor Dave. “Did you lose it on the way home?”

“No.” Captain Jim looked sheepish. “Just at bedtime a poor, ornery sort of dog came along and asked for a night’s lodging. Guess he belonged to some of the fishermen ‘long shore. I couldn’t turn the poor cur out — he had a sore foot. So I shut him in the porch, with an old bag to lie on, and went to bed. But somehow I couldn’t sleep. Come to think it over, I sorter remembered that the dog looked hungry.”

“And you got up and gave him that steak — ALL that steak,” said Mrs. Doctor Dave, with a kind of triumphant reproof.

“Well, there wasn’t anything else TO give him,” said Captain Jim deprecatingly. “Nothing a dog’d care for, that is. I reckon he WAS hungry, for he made about two bites of it. I had a fine sleep the rest of the night but my dinner had to be sorter scanty — potatoes and point, as you might say. The dog, he lit out for home this morning. I reckon HE weren’t a vegetarian.”

“The idea of starving yourself for a worthless dog!” sniffed Mrs. Doctor.

“You don’t know but he may be worth a lot to somebody,” protested Captain Jim. “He didn’t LOOK of much account, but you can’t go by looks in jedging a dog. Like meself, he might be a real beauty inside. The First Mate didn’t approve of him, I’ll allow. His language was right down forcible. But the First Mate is prejudiced. No use in taking a cat’s opinion of a dog. ‘Tennyrate, I lost my dinner, so this nice spread in this delightful company is real pleasant. It’s a great thing to have good neighbors.”

“Who lives in the house among the willows up the brook?” asked Anne.

“Mrs. Dick Moore,” said Captain Jim—”and her husband,” he added, as if by way of an afterthought.

Anne smiled, and deduced a mental picture of Mrs. Dick Moore from Captain Jim’s way of putting it; evidently a second Mrs. Rachel Lynde.

“You haven’t many neighbors, Mistress Blythe,” Captain Jim went on. “This side of the harbor is mighty thinly settled. Most of the land belongs to Mr. Howard up yander past the Glen, and he rents it out for pasture. The other side of the harbor, now, is thick with folks—’specially MacAllisters. There’s a whole colony of MacAllisters you can’t throw a stone but you hit one. I was talking to old Leon Blacquiere the other day. He’s been working on the harbor all summer. ‘Dey’re nearly all MacAllisters over thar,’ he told me. ‘Dare’s Neil MacAllister and Sandy MacAllister and William MacAllister and Alec MacAllister and Angus MacAllister — and I believe dare’s de Devil MacAllister.’”

“There are nearly as many Elliotts and Crawfords,” said Doctor Dave, after the laughter had subsided. “You know, Gilbert, we folk on this side of Four Winds have an old saying—’From the conceit of the Elliotts, the pride of the MacAllisters, and the vainglory of the Crawfords, good Lord deliver us.’”

“There’s a plenty of fine people among them, though,” said Captain Jim. “I sailed with William Crawford for many a year, and for courage and endurance and truth that man hadn’t an equal. They’ve got brains over on that side of Four Winds. Mebbe that’s why this side is sorter inclined to pick on ‘em. Strange, ain’t it, how folks seem to resent anyone being born a mite cleverer than they be.”

Doctor Dave, who had a forty years’ feud with the over-harbor people, laughed and subsided.

“Who lives in that brilliant emerald house about half a mile up the road?” asked Gilbert.

Captain Jim smiled delightedly.

“Miss Cornelia Bryant. She’ll likely be over to see you soon, seeing you’re Presbyterians. If you were Methodists she wouldn’t come at all. Cornelia has a holy horror of Methodists.”

“She’s quite a character,” chuckled Doctor Dave. “A most inveterate man-hater!”

“Sour grapes?” queried Gilbert, laughing.

“No, ‘tisn’t sour grapes,” answered Captain Jim seriously. “Cornelia could have had her pick when she was young. Even yet she’s only to say the word to see the old widowers jump. She jest seems to have been born with a sort of chronic spite agin men and Methodists. She’s got the bitterest tongue and the kindest heart in Four Winds. Wherever there’s any trouble, that woman is there, doing everything to help in the tenderest way. She never says a harsh word about another woman, and if she likes to card us poor scalawags of men down I reckon our tough old hides can stand it.”

“She always speaks well of you, Captain Jim,” said Mrs. Doctor.

“Yes, I’m afraid so. I don’t half like it. It makes me feel as if there must be something sorter unnateral about me.”

CHAPTER 7

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S BRIDE

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“Who was the first bride who came to this house, Captain Jim?” Anne asked, as they sat around the fireplace after supper.

“Was she a part of the story I’ve heard was connected with this house?” asked Gilbert. “Somebody told me you could tell it, Captain Jim.”

“Well, yes, I know it. I reckon I’m the only person living in Four Winds now that can remember the schoolmaster’s bride as she was when she come to the Island. She’s been dead this thirty year, but she was one of them women you never forget.”

“Tell us the story,” pleaded Anne. “I want to find out all about the women who have lived in this house before me.”

“Well, there’s jest been three — Elizabeth Russell, and Mrs. Ned Russell, and the schoolmaster’s bride. Elizabeth Russell was a nice, clever little critter, and Mrs. Ned was a nice woman, too. But they weren’t ever like the schoolmaster’s bride.

“The schoolmaster’s name was John Selwyn. He came out from the Old Country to teach school at the Glen when I was a boy of sixteen. He wasn’t much like the usual run of derelicts who used to come out to P.E.I. to teach school in them days. Most of them were clever, drunken critters who taught the children the three R’s when they were sober, and lambasted them when they wasn’t. But John Selwyn was a fine, handsome young fellow. He boarded at my father’s, and he and me were cronies, though he was ten years older’n me. We read and walked and talked a heap together. He knew about all the poetry that was ever written, I reckon, and he used to quote it to me along shore in the evenings. Dad thought it an awful

waste of time, but he sorter endured it, hoping it'd put me off the notion of going to sea. Well, nothing could do THAT — mother come of a race of sea-going folk and it was born in me. But I loved to hear John read and recite. It's almost sixty years ago, but I could repeat yards of poetry I learned from him. Nearly sixty years!"

Captain Jim was silent for a space, gazing into the glowing fire in a quest of the bygones. Then, with a sigh, he resumed his story.

"I remember one spring evening I met him on the sandhills. He looked sorter uplifted — jest like you did, Dr. Blythe, when you brought Mistress Blythe in tonight. I thought of him the minute I seen you. And he told me that he had a sweetheart back home and that she was coming out to him. I wasn't more'n half pleased, ornery young lump of selfishness that I was; I thought he wouldn't be as much my friend after she came. But I'd enough decency not to let him see it. He told me all about her. Her name was Persis Leigh, and she would have come out with him if it hadn't been for her old uncle. He was sick, and he'd looked after her when her parents died and she wouldn't leave him. And now he was dead and she was coming out to marry John Selwyn. 'Twasn't no easy journey for a woman in them days. There weren't no steamers, you must ricollect.

"'When do you expect her?' says I.

"'She sails on the Royal William, the 20th of June,' says he, 'and so she should be here by mid-July. I must set Carpenter Johnson to building me a home for her. Her letter come today. I know before I opened it that it had good news for me. I saw her a few nights ago.'

"I didn't understand him, and then he explained — though I didn't understand THAT much better. He said he had a gift — or a curse. Them was his words, Mistress Blythe — a gift or a curse. He didn't know which it was. He said a great-great-grandmother of his had had it, and they burned her for a witch on account of it. He said queer spells — trances, I think was the name he give 'em — come over him now and again. Are there such things, Doctor?"

“There are people who are certainly subject to trances,” answered Gilbert. “The matter is more in the line of psychological research than medical. What were the trances of this John Selwyn like?”

“Like dreams,” said the old Doctor skeptically.

“He said he could see things in them,” said Captain Jim slowly.

“Mind you, I’m telling you jest what HE said — things that were happening — things that were GOING to happen. He said they were sometimes a comfort to him and sometimes a horror. Four nights before this he’d been in one — went into it while he was sitting looking at the fire. And he saw an old room he knew well in England, and Persis Leigh in it, holding out her hands to him and looking glad and happy. So he knew he was going to hear good news of her.”

“A dream — a dream,” scoffed the old Doctor.

“Likely — likely,” conceded Captain Jim. “That’s what I said to him at the time. It was a vast more comfortable to think so. I didn’t like the idea of him seeing things like that — it was real uncanny.

“‘No,’ says he, ‘I didn’t dream it. But we won’t talk of this again. You won’t be so much my friend if you think much about it.’

“I told him nothing could make me any less his friend. But he jest shook his head and says, says he:

“‘Lad, I know. I’ve lost friends before because of this. I don’t blame them. There are times when I feel hardly friendly to myself because of it. Such a power has a bit of divinity in it — whether of a good or an evil divinity who shall say? And we mortals all shrink from too close contact with God or devil.’

“Them was his words. I remember them as if ‘twas yesterday, though I didn’t know jest what he meant. What do you s’pose he DID mean, doctor?”

“I doubt if he knew what he meant himself,” said Doctor Dave testily.

“I think I understand,” whispered Anne. She was listening in her old attitude of clasped lips and shining eyes. Captain Jim treated himself to an admiring smile before he went on with his story.

“Well, purty soon all the Glen and Four Winds people knew the schoolmaster’s bride was coming, and they were all glad because they thought so much of him. And everybody took an interest in his new house — THIS house. He picked this site for it, because you could see the harbor and hear the sea from it. He made the garden out there for his bride, but he didn’t plant the Lombardies. Mrs. Ned Russell planted THEM. But there’s a double row of rosebushes in the garden that the little girls who went to the Glen school set out there for the schoolmaster’s bride. He said they were pink for her cheeks and white for her brow and red for her lips. He’d quoted poetry so much that he sorter got into the habit of talking it, too, I reckon.

“Almost everybody sent him some little present to help out the furnishing of the house. When the Russells came into it they were well-to-do and furnished it real handsome, as you can see; but the first furniture that went into it was plain enough. This little house was rich in love, though. The women sent in quilts and tablecloths and towels, and one man made a chest for her, and another a table and so on. Even blind old Aunt Margaret Boyd wove a little basket for her out of the sweet-scented sandhill grass. The schoolmaster’s wife used it for years to keep her handkerchiefs in.

“Well, at last everything was ready — even to the logs in the big fireplace ready for lighting. ‘Twasn’t exactly THIS fireplace, though ‘twas in the same place. Miss Elizabeth had this put in when she made the house over fifteen years ago. It was a big, old-fashioned fireplace where you could have roasted an ox. Many’s the time I’ve sat here and spun yarns, same’s I’m doing tonight.”

Again there was a silence, while Captain Jim kept a passing tryst with visitants Anne and Gilbert could not see — the folks who had sat with him around that fireplace in the vanished years, with mirth and bridal joy shining in eyes long since closed forever under churchyard sod or heaving

leagues of sea. Here on olden nights children had tossed laughter lightly to and fro. Here on winter evenings friends had gathered. Dance and music and jest had been here. Here youths and maidens had dreamed. For Captain Jim the little house was tenanted with shapes entreating remembrance.

“It was the first of July when the house was finished. The schoolmaster began to count the days then. We used to see him walking along the shore, and we’d say to each other, ‘She’ll soon be with him now.’

“She was expected the middle of July, but she didn’t come then. Nobody felt anxious. Vessels were often delayed for days and mebbe weeks. The Royal William was a week overdue — and then two — and then three. And at last we began to be frightened, and it got worse and worse. Fin’lly I couldn’t bear to look into John Selwyn’s eyes. D’ye know, Mistress Blythe” — Captain Jim lowered his voice—”I used to think that they looked just like what his old great-great-grandmother’s must have been when they were burning her to death. He never said much but he taught school like a man in a dream and then hurried to the shore. Many a night he walked there from dark to dawn. People said he was losing his mind. Everybody had given up hope — the Royal William was eight weeks overdue. It was the middle of September and the schoolmaster’s bride hadn’t come — never would come, we thought.

“There was a big storm then that lasted three days, and on the evening after it died away I went to the shore. I found the schoolmaster there, leaning with his arms folded against a big rock, gazing out to sea.

“I spoke to him but he didn’t answer. His eyes seemed to be looking at something I couldn’t see. His face was set, like a dead man’s.

“‘John — John,’ I called out — jest like that — jest like a frightened child, ‘wake up — wake up.’

“That strange, awful look seemed to sorter fade out of his eyes.

“He turned his head and looked at me. I’ve never forgot his face — never will forget it till I ships for my last voyage.

“‘All is well, lad,’ he says. ‘I’ve seen the Royal William coming around East Point. She will be here by dawn. Tomorrow night I shall sit with my bride by my own hearth-fire.’

“Do you think he did see it?” demanded Captain Jim abruptly.

“God knows,” said Gilbert softly. “Great love and great pain might compass we know not what marvels.”

“I am sure he did see it,” said Anne earnestly.

“Fol-de-rol,” said Doctor Dave, but he spoke with less conviction than usual.

“Because, you know,” said Captain Jim solemnly, “the Royal William came into Four Winds Harbor at daylight the next morning.

“Every soul in the Glen and along the shore was at the old wharf to meet her. The schoolmaster had been watching there all night. How we cheered as she sailed up the channel.”

Captain Jim’s eyes were shining. They were looking at the Four Winds Harbor of sixty years ago, with a battered old ship sailing through the sunrise splendor.

“And Persis Leigh was on board?” asked Anne.

“Yes — her and the captain’s wife. They’d had an awful passage — storm after storm — and their provisions give out, too. But there they were at last. When Persis Leigh stepped onto the old wharf John Selwyn took her in his arms — and folks stopped cheering and begun to cry. I cried myself, though ‘twas years, mind you, afore I’d admit it. Ain’t it funny how ashamed boys are of tears?”

“Was Persis Leigh beautiful?” asked Anne.

“Well, I don’t know that you’d call her beautiful exactly — I — don’t — know,” said Captain Jim slowly. “Somehow, you never got so far along as to wonder if she was handsome or not. It jest didn’t matter. There was

something so sweet and winsome about her that you had to love her, that was all. But she was pleasant to look at — big, clear, hazel eyes and heaps of glossy brown hair, and an English skin. John and her were married at our house that night at early candlelighting; everybody from far and near was there to see it and we all brought them down here afterwards. Mistress Selwyn lighted the fire, and we went away and left them sitting here, jest as John had seen in that vision of his. A strange thing — a strange thing! But I've seen a turrible lot of strange things in my time."

Captain Jim shook his head sagely.

"It's a dear story," said Anne, feeling that for once she had got enough romance to satisfy her. "How long did they live here?"

"Fifteen years. I ran off to sea soon after they were married, like the young scalawag I was. But every time I come back from a voyage I'd head for here, even before I went home, and tell Mistress Selwyn all about it. Fifteen happy years! They had a sort of talent for happiness, them two. Some folks are like that, if you've noticed. They COULDN'T be unhappy for long, no matter what happened. They quarrelled once or twice, for they was both high-sperrited. But Mistress Selwyn says to me once, says she, laughing in that pretty way of hers, 'I felt dreadful when John and I quarrelled, but underneath it all I was very happy because I had such a nice husband to quarrel with and make it up with.' Then they moved to Charlottetown, and Ned Russell bought this house and brought his bride here. They were a gay young pair, as I remember them. Miss Elizabeth Russell was Alec's sister. She came to live with them a year or so later, and she was a creature of mirth, too. The walls of this house must be sorter SOAKED with laughing and good times. You're the third bride I've seen come here, Mistress Blythe — and the handsomest."

Captain Jim contrived to give his sunflower compliment the delicacy of a violet, and Anne wore it proudly. She was looking her best that night, with the bridal rose on her cheeks and the love-light in her eyes; even gruff old Doctor Dave gave her an approving glance, and told his wife, as they drove home together, that that redheaded wife of the boy's was something of a beauty.

“I must be getting back to the light,” announced Captain Jim. “I’ve enj’yed this evening something tremenjus.”

“You must come often to see us,” said Anne.

“I wonder if you’d give that invitation if you knew how likely I’ll be to accept it,” Captain Jim remarked whimsically.

“Which is another way of saying you wonder if I mean it,” smiled Anne. “I do, ‘cross my heart,’ as we used to say at school.”

“Then I’ll come. You’re likely to be pestered with me at any hour. And I’ll be proud to have you drop down and visit me now and then, too. Gin’rally I haven’t anyone to talk to but the First Mate, bless his sociable heart. He’s a mighty good listener, and has forgot more’n any MacAllister of them all ever knew, but he isn’t much of a conversationalist. You’re young and I’m old, but our souls are about the same age, I reckon. We both belong to the race that knows Joseph, as Cornelia Bryant would say.”

“The race that knows Joseph?” puzzled Anne.

“Yes. Cornelia divides all the folks in the world into two kinds — the race that knows Joseph and the race that don’t. If a person sorter sees eye to eye with you, and has pretty much the same ideas about things, and the same taste in jokes — why, then he belongs to the race that knows Joseph.”

“Oh, I understand,” exclaimed Anne, light breaking in upon her.

“It’s what I used to call — and still call in quotation marks ‘kindred spirits.’”

“Jest so — jest so,” agreed Captain Jim. “We’re it, whatever IT is. When you come in tonight, Mistress Blythe, I says to myself, says I, ‘Yes, she’s of the race that knows Joseph.’ And mighty glad I was, for if it wasn’t so we couldn’t have had any real satisfaction in each other’s company. The race that knows Joseph is the salt of the airth, I reckon.”

The moon had just risen when Anne and Gilbert went to the door with their guests. Four Winds Harbor was beginning to be a thing of dream and glamour and enchantment — a spellbound haven where no tempest might ever ravin. The Lombardies down the lane, tall and sombre as the priestly forms of some mystic band, were tipped with silver.

“Always liked Lombardies,” said Captain Jim, waving a long arm at them. “They’re the trees of princesses. They’re out of fashion now. Folks complain that they die at the top and get ragged-looking. So they do — so they do, if you don’t risk your neck every spring climbing up a light ladder to trim them out. I always did it for Miss Elizabeth, so her Lombardies never got out-at-elbows. She was especially fond of them. She liked their dignity and stand-offishness. THEY don’t hobnob with every Tom, Dick and Harry. If it’s maples for company, Mistress Blythe, it’s Lombardies for society.”

“What a beautiful night,” said Mrs. Doctor Dave, as she climbed into the Doctor’s buggy.

“Most nights are beautiful,” said Captain Jim. “But I ‘low that moonlight over Four Winds makes me sorter wonder what’s left for heaven. The moon’s a great friend of mine, Mistress Blythe. I’ve loved her ever since I can remember. When I was a little chap of eight I fell asleep in the garden one evening and wasn’t missed. I woke up along in the night and I was most scared to death. What shadows and queer noises there was! I dursn’t move. Jest crouched there quaking, poor small mite. Seemed ‘s if there weren’t anyone in the world but meself and it was mighty big. Then all at once I saw the moon looking down at me through the apple boughs, jest like an old friend. I was comforted right off. Got up and walked to the house as brave as a lion, looking at her. Many’s the night I’ve watched her from the deck of my vessel, on seas far away from here. Why don’t you folks tell me to take in the slack of my jaw and go home?”

The laughter of the goodnights died away. Anne and Gilbert walked hand in hand around their garden. The brook that ran across the corner dimpled pellucidly in the shadows of the birches. The poppies along its banks were like shallow cups of moonlight. Flowers that had been planted by the hands of the schoolmaster’s bride flung their sweetness on the shadowy

air, like the beauty and blessing of sacred yesterdays. Anne paused in the gloom to gather a spray.

“I love to smell flowers in the dark,” she said. “You get hold of their soul then. Oh, Gilbert, this little house is all I’ve dreamed it. And I’m so glad that we are not the first who have kept bridal tryst here!”

CHAPTER 8

MISS CORNELIA BRYANT COMES TO CALL

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That September was a month of golden mists and purple hazes at Four Winds Harbor — a month of sun-steeped days and of nights that were swimming in moonlight, or pulsating with stars. No storm marred it, no rough wind blew. Anne and Gilbert put their nest in order, rambled on the shores, sailed on the harbor, drove about Four Winds and the Glen, or through the ferny, sequestered roads of the woods around the harbor head; in short, had such a honeymoon as any lovers in the world might have envied them.

“If life were to stop short just now it would still have been richly worth while, just for the sake of these past four weeks, wouldn’t it?” said Anne. “I don’t suppose we will ever have four such perfect weeks again — but we’ve HAD them. Everything — wind, weather, folks, house of dreams — has conspired to make our honeymoon delightful. There hasn’t even been a rainy day since we came here.”

“And we haven’t quarrelled once,” teased Gilbert.

“Well, ‘that’s a pleasure all the greater for being deferred,’” quoted Anne. “I’m so glad we decided to spend our honeymoon here. Our memories of it will always belong here, in our house of dreams, instead of being scattered about in strange places.”

There was a certain tang of romance and adventure in the atmosphere of their new home which Anne had never found in Avonlea. There, although she had lived in sight of the sea, it had not entered intimately into her life. In Four Winds it surrounded her and called to her constantly. From every window of her new home she saw some varying aspect of it. Its haunting murmur was ever in her ears. Vessels sailed up the harbor every day to the

wharf at the Glen, or sailed out again through the sunset, bound for ports that might be half way round the globe. Fishing boats went white-winged down the channel in the mornings, and returned laden in the evenings. Sailors and fisher-folk travelled the red, winding harbor roads, lighthearted and content. There was always a certain sense of things going to happen — of adventures and farings-forth. The ways of Four Winds were less staid and settled and grooved than those of Avonlea; winds of change blew over them; the sea called ever to the dwellers on shore, and even those who might not answer its call felt the thrill and unrest and mystery and possibilities of it.

“I understand now why some men must go to sea,” said Anne. “That desire which comes to us all at times—’to sail beyond the bourne of sunset’ — must be very imperious when it is born in you. I don’t wonder Captain Jim ran away because of it. I never see a ship sailing out of the channel, or a gull soaring over the sandbar, without wishing I were on board the ship or had wings, not like a dove ‘to fly away and be at rest,’ but like a gull, to sweep out into the very heart of a storm.”

“You’ll stay right here with me, Anne-girl,” said Gilbert lazily. “I won’t have you flying away from me into the hearts of storms.”

They were sitting on their red sandstone doorstep in the late afternoon. Great tranquillities were all about them in land and sea and sky. Silvery gulls were soaring over them. The horizons were laced with long trails of frail, pinkish clouds. The hushed air was threaded with a murmurous refrain of minstrel winds and waves. Pale asters were blowing in the sere and misty meadows between them and the harbor.

“Doctors who have to be up all night waiting on sick folk don’t feel very adventurous, I suppose,” Anne said indulgently. “If you had had a good sleep last night, Gilbert, you’d be as ready as I am for a flight of imagination.”

“I did good work last night, Anne,” said Gilbert quietly. “Under God, I saved a life. This is the first time I could ever really claim that. In other cases I may have helped; but, Anne, if I had not stayed at Allonby’s last night and fought death hand to hand, that woman would have died before

morning. I tried an experiment that was certainly never tried in Four Winds before. I doubt if it was ever tried anywhere before outside of a hospital. It was a new thing in Kingsport hospital last winter. I could never have dared try it here if I had not been absolutely certain that there was no other chance. I risked it — and it succeeded. As a result, a good wife and mother is saved for long years of happiness and usefulness. As I drove home this morning, while the sun was rising over the harbor, I thanked God that I had chosen the profession I did. I had fought a good fight and won — think of it, Anne, WON, against the Great Destroyer. It's what I dreamed of doing long ago when we talked together of what we wanted to do in life. That dream of mine came true this morning."

"Was that the only one of your dreams that has come true?" asked Anne, who knew perfectly well what the substance of his answer would be, but wanted to hear it again.

"YOU know, Anne-girl," said Gilbert, smiling into her eyes. At that moment there were certainly two perfectly happy people sitting on the doorstep of a little white house on the Four Winds Harbor shore.

Presently Gilbert said, with a change of tone, "Do I or do I not see a full-rigged ship sailing up our lane?"

Anne looked and sprang up.

"That must be either Miss Cornelia Bryant or Mrs. Moore coming to call," she said.

"I'm going into the office, and if it is Miss Cornelia I warn you that I'll eavesdrop," said Gilbert. "From all I've heard regarding Miss Cornelia I conclude that her conversation will not be dull, to say the least."

"It may be Mrs. Moore."

"I don't think Mrs. Moore is built on those lines. I saw her working in her garden the other day, and, though I was too far away to see clearly, I thought she was rather slender. She doesn't seem very socially inclined

when she has never called on you yet, although she's your nearest neighbor."

"She can't be like Mrs. Lynde, after all, or curiosity would have brought her," said Anne. "This caller is, I think, Miss Cornelia."

Miss Cornelia it was; moreover, Miss Cornelia had not come to make any brief and fashionable wedding call. She had her work under her arm in a substantial parcel, and when Anne asked her to stay she promptly took off her capacious sun-hat, which had been held on her head, despite irreverent September breezes, by a tight elastic band under her hard little knob of fair hair. No hat pins for Miss Cornelia, an it please ye! Elastic bands had been good enough for her mother and they were good enough for HER. She had a fresh, round, pink-and-white face, and jolly brown eyes. She did not look in the least like the traditional old maid, and there was something in her expression which won Anne instantly. With her old instinctive quickness to discern kindred spirits she knew she was going to like Miss Cornelia, in spite of uncertain oddities of opinion, and certain oddities of attire.

Nobody but Miss Cornelia would have come to make a call arrayed in a striped blue-and-white apron and a wrapper of chocolate print, with a design of huge, pink roses scattered over it. And nobody but Miss Cornelia could have looked dignified and suitably garbed in it. Had Miss Cornelia been entering a palace to call on a prince's bride, she would have been just as dignified and just as wholly mistress of the situation. She would have trailed her rose-spattered flounce over the marble floors just as unconcernedly, and she would have proceeded just as calmly to disabuse the mind of the princess of any idea that the possession of a mere man, be he prince or peasant, was anything to brag of.

"I've brought my work, Mrs. Blythe, dearie," she remarked, unrolling some dainty material. "I'm in a hurry to get this done, and there isn't any time to lose."

Anne looked in some surprise at the white garment spread over Miss Cornelia's ample lap. It was certainly a baby's dress, and it was most beautifully made, with tiny frills and tucks. Miss Cornelia adjusted her glasses and fell to embroidering with exquisite stitches.

“This is for Mrs. Fred Proctor up at the Glen,” she announced. “She’s expecting her eighth baby any day now, and not a stitch has she ready for it. The other seven have wore out all she made for the first, and she’s never had time or strength or spirit to make any more. That woman is a martyr, Mrs. Blythe, believe ME. When she married Fred Proctor I knew how it would turn out. He was one of your wicked, fascinating men. After he got married he left off being fascinating and just kept on being wicked. He drinks and he neglects his family. Isn’t that like a man? I don’t know how Mrs. Proctor would ever keep her children decently clothed if her neighbors didn’t help her out.”

As Anne was afterwards to learn, Miss Cornelia was the only neighbor who troubled herself much about the decency of the young Proctors.

“When I heard this eighth baby was coming I decided to make some things for it,” Miss Cornelia went on. “This is the last and I want to finish it today.”

“It’s certainly very pretty,” said Anne. “I’ll get my sewing and we’ll have a little thimble party of two. You are a beautiful sewer, Miss Bryant.”

“Yes, I’m the best sewer in these parts,” said Miss Cornelia in a matter-of-fact tone. “I ought to be! Lord, I’ve done more of it than if I’d had a hundred children of my own, believe ME! I s’pose I’m a fool, to be putting hand embroidery on this dress for an eighth baby. But, Lord, Mrs. Blythe, dearie, it isn’t to blame for being the eighth, and I kind of wished it to have one real pretty dress, just as if it WAS wanted. Nobody’s wanting the poor mite — so I put some extra fuss on its little things just on that account.”

“Any baby might be proud of that dress,” said Anne, feeling still more strongly that she was going to like Miss Cornelia.

“I s’pose you’ve been thinking I was never coming to call on you,” resumed Miss Cornelia. “But this is harvest month, you know, and I’ve been busy — and a lot of extra hands hanging round, eating more’n they work, just like the men. I’d have come yesterday, but I went to Mrs. Roderick MacAllister’s funeral. At first I thought my head was aching so

badly I couldn't enjoy myself if I did go. But she was a hundred years old, and I'd always promised myself that I'd go to her funeral."

"Was it a successful function?" asked Anne, noticing that the office door was ajar.

"What's that? Oh, yes, it was a tremendous funeral. She had a very large connection. There was over one hundred and twenty carriages in the procession. There was one or two funny things happened. I thought that die I would to see old Joe Bradshaw, who is an infidel and never darkens the door of a church, singing 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' with great gusto and fervor. He glories in singing — that's why he never misses a funeral. Poor Mrs. Bradshaw didn't look much like singing — all wore out slaving. Old Joe starts out once in a while to buy her a present and brings home some new kind of farm machinery. Isn't that like a man? But what else would you expect of a man who never goes to church, even a Methodist one? I was real thankful to see you and the young Doctor in the Presbyterian church your first Sunday. No doctor for me who isn't a Presbyterian."

"We were in the Methodist church last Sunday evening," said Anne wickedly.

"Oh, I s'pose Dr. Blythe has to go to the Methodist church once in a while or he wouldn't get the Methodist practice."

"We liked the sermon very much," declared Anne boldly. "And I thought the Methodist minster's prayer was one of the most beautiful I ever heard."

"Oh, I've no doubt he can pray. I never heard anyone make more beautiful prayers than old Simon Bentley, who was always drunk, or hoping to be, and the drunker he was the better he prayed."

"The Methodist minister is very fine looking," said Anne, for the benefit of the office door.

"Yes, he's quite ornamental," agreed Miss Cornelia. "Oh, and VERY ladylike. And he thinks that every girl who looks at him falls in love with

him — as if a Methodist minister, wandering about like any Jew, was such a prize! If you and the young doctor take MY advice, you won't have much to do with the Methodists. My motto is — if you ARE a Presbyterian, BE a Presbyterian.”

“Don't you think that Methodists go to heaven as well as Presbyterians?” asked Anne smilelessly.

“That isn't for US to decide. It's in higher hands than ours,” said Miss Cornelia solemnly. “But I ain't going to associate with them on earth whatever I may have to do in heaven. THIS Methodist minister isn't married. The last one they had was, and his wife was the silliest, flightiest little thing I ever saw. I told her husband once that he should have waited till she was grown up before he married her. He said he wanted to have the training of her. Wasn't that like a man?”

“It's rather hard to decide just when people ARE grown up,” laughed Anne.

“That's a true word, dearie. Some are grown up when they're born, and others ain't grown up when they're eighty, believe ME. That same Mrs. Roderick I was speaking of never grew up. She was as foolish when she was a hundred as when she was ten.”

“Perhaps that was why she lived so long,” suggested Anne.

“Maybe 'twas. I'd rather live fifty sensible years than a hundred foolish ones.”

“But just think what a dull world it would be if everyone was sensible,” pleaded Anne.

Miss Cornelia disdained any skirmish of flippant epigram.

“Mrs. Roderick was a Milgrave, and the Milgraves never had much sense. Her nephew, Ebenezer Milgrave, used to be insane for years. He believed he was dead and used to rage at his wife because she wouldn't bury him. I'd a-done it.”

Miss Cornelia looked so grimly determined that Anne could almost see her with a spade in her hand.

“Don’t you know ANY good husbands, Miss Bryant?”

“Oh, yes, lots of them — over yonder,” said Miss Cornelia, waving her hand through the open window towards the little graveyard of the church across the harbor.

“But living — going about in the flesh?” persisted Anne.

“Oh, there’s a few, just to show that with God all things are possible,” acknowledged Miss Cornelia reluctantly. “I don’t deny that an odd man here and there, if he’s caught young and trained up proper, and if his mother has spanked him well beforehand, may turn out a decent being. YOUR husband, now, isn’t so bad, as men go, from all I hear. I s’pose” — Miss Cornelia looked sharply at Anne over her glasses—“you think there’s nobody like him in the world.”

“There isn’t,” said Anne promptly.

“Ah, well, I heard another bride say that once,” sighed Miss Cornelia. “Jennie Dean thought when she married that there wasn’t anybody like HER husband in the world. And she was right — there wasn’t! And a good thing, too, believe ME! He led her an awful life — and he was courting his second wife while Jennie was dying.

“Wasn’t that like a man? However, I hope YOUR confidence will be better justified, dearie. The young doctor is taking real well. I was afraid at first he mightn’t, for folks hereabouts have always thought old Doctor Dave the only doctor in the world. Doctor Dave hadn’t much tact, to be sure — he was always talking of ropes in houses where someone had hanged himself. But folks forgot their hurt feelings when they had a pain in their stomachs. If he’d been a minister instead of a doctor they’d never have forgiven him. Soul-ache doesn’t worry folks near as much as stomachache. Seeing as we’re both Presbyterians and no Methodists around, will you tell me your candid opinion of OUR minister?”

“Why — really — I — well,” hesitated Anne.

Miss Cornelia nodded.

“Exactly. I agree with you, dearie. We made a mistake when we called HIM. His face just looks like one of those long, narrow stones in the graveyard, doesn’t it? ‘Sacred to the memory’ ought to be written on his forehead. I shall never forget the first sermon he preached after he came. It was on the subject of everyone doing what they were best fitted for — a very good subject, of course; but such illustrations as he used! He said, ‘If you had a cow and an apple tree, and if you tied the apple tree in your stable and planted the cow in your orchard, with her legs up, how much milk would you get from the apple tree, or how many apples from the cow?’ Did you ever hear the like in your born days, dearie? I was so thankful there were no Methodists there that day — they’d never have been done hooting over it. But what I dislike most in him is his habit of agreeing with everybody, no matter what is said. If you said to him, ‘You’re a scoundrel,’ he’d say, with that smooth smile of his, ‘Yes, that’s so.’ A minister should have more backbone. The long and the short of it is, I consider him a reverend jackass. But, of course, this is just between you and me. When there are Methodists in hearing I praise him to the skies. Some folks think his wife dresses too gay, but I say when she has to live with a face like that she needs something to cheer her up. You’ll never hear ME condemning a woman for her dress. I’m only too thankful when her husband isn’t too mean and miserly to allow it. Not that I bother much with dress myself. Women just dress to please the men, and I’d never stoop to THAT. I have had a real placid, comfortable life, dearie, and it’s just because I never cared a cent what the men thought.”

“Why do you hate the men so, Miss Bryant?”

“Lord, dearie, I don’t hate them. They aren’t worth it. I just sort of despise them. I think I’ll like YOUR husband if he keeps on as he has begun. But apart from him about the only men in the world I’ve much use for are the old doctor and Captain Jim.”

“Captain Jim is certainly splendid,” agreed Anne cordially.

“Captain Jim is a good man, but he’s kind of vexing in one way. You CAN’T make him mad. I’ve tried for twenty years and he just keeps on being placid. It does sort of rile me. And I s’pose the woman he should have married got a man who went into tantrums twice a day.”

“Who was she?”

“Oh, I don’t know, dearie. I never remember of Captain Jim making up to anybody. He was edging on old as far as my memory goes. He’s seventy-six, you know. I never heard any reason for his staying a bachelor, but there must be one, believe ME. He sailed all his life till five years ago, and there’s no corner of the earth he hasn’t poked his nose into. He and Elizabeth Russell were great cronies, all their lives, but they never had any notion of sweethearting. Elizabeth never married, though she had plenty of chances. She was a great beauty when she was young. The year the Prince of Wales came to the Island she was visiting her uncle in Charlottetown and he was a Government official, and so she got invited to the great ball. She was the prettiest girl there, and the Prince danced with her, and all the other women he didn’t dance with were furious about it, because their social standing was higher than hers and they said he shouldn’t have passed them over. Elizabeth was always very proud of that dance. Mean folks said that was why she never married — she couldn’t put up with an ordinary man after dancing with a prince. But that wasn’t so. She told me the reason once — it was because she had such a temper that she was afraid she couldn’t live peaceably with any man. She HAD an awful temper — she used to have to go upstairs and bite pieces out of her bureau to keep it down by times. But I told her that wasn’t any reason for not marrying if she wanted to. There’s no reason why we should let the men have a monopoly of temper, is there, Mrs. Blythe, dearie?”

“I’ve a bit of temper myself,” sighed Anne.

“It’s well you have, dearie. You won’t be half so likely to be trodden on, believe ME! My, how that golden glow of yours is blooming! Your garden looks fine. Poor Elizabeth always took such care of it.”

“I love it,” said Anne. “I’m glad it’s so full of old-fashioned flowers. Speaking of gardening, we want to get a man to dig up that little lot

beyond the fir grove and set it out with strawberry plants for us. Gilbert is so busy he will never get time for it this fall. Do you know anyone we can get?"

"Well, Henry Hammond up at the Glen goes out doing jobs like that. He'll do, maybe. He's always a heap more interested in his wages than in his work, just like a man, and he's so slow in the uptake that he stands still for five minutes before it dawns on him that he's stopped. His father threw a stump at him when he was small.

"Nice gentle missile, wasn't it? So like a man! Course, the boy never got over it. But he's the only one I can recommend at all. He painted my house for me last spring. It looks real nice now, don't you think?"

Anne was saved by the clock striking five.

"Lord, is it that late?" exclaimed Miss Cornelia. "How time does slip by when you're enjoying yourself! Well, I must betake myself home."

"No, indeed! You are going to stay and have tea with us," said Anne eagerly.

"Are you asking me because you think you ought to, or because you really want to?" demanded Miss Cornelia.

"Because I really want to."

"Then I'll stay. YOU belong to the race that knows Joseph."

"I know we are going to be friends," said Anne, with the smile that only they of the household of faith ever saw.

"Yes, we are, dearie. Thank goodness, we can choose our friends. We have to take our relatives as they are, and be thankful if there are no penitentiary birds among them. Not that I've many — none nearer than second cousins. I'm a kind of lonely soul, Mrs. Blythe."

There was a wistful note in Miss Cornelia's voice.

“I wish you would call me Anne,” exclaimed Anne impulsively. “It would seem more HOMEY. Everyone in Four Winds, except my husband, calls me Mrs. Blythe, and it makes me feel like a stranger. Do you know that your name is very near being the one I yearned after when I was a child. I hated ‘Anne’ and I called myself ‘Cordelia’ in imagination.”

“I like Anne. It was my mother’s name. Old-fashioned names are the best and sweetest in my opinion. If you’re going to get tea you might send the young doctor to talk to me. He’s been lying on the sofa in that office ever since I came, laughing fit to kill over what I’ve been saying.”

“How did you know?” cried Anne, too aghast at this instance of Miss Cornelia’s uncanny prescience to make a polite denial.

“I saw him sitting beside you when I came up the lane, and I know men’s tricks,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “There, I’ve finished my little dress, dearie, and the eighth baby can come as soon as it pleases.”

CHAPTER 9

AN EVENING AT FOUR WINDS POINT

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It was late September when Anne and Gilbert were able to pay Four Winds light their promised visit. They had often planned to go, but something always occurred to prevent them. Captain Jim had “dropped in” several times at the little house.

“I don’t stand on ceremony, Mistress Blythe,” he told Anne. “It’s a real pleasure to me to come here, and I’m not going to deny myself jest because you haven’t got down to see me. There oughtn’t to be no bargaining like that among the race that knows Joseph. I’ll come when I can, and you come when you can, and so long’s we have our pleasant little chat it don’t matter a mite what roof’s over us.”

Captain Jim took a great fancy to Gog and Magog, who were presiding over the destinies of the hearth in the little house with as much dignity and aplomb as they had done at Patty’s Place.

“Aren’t they the cutest little cusses?” he would say delightedly; and he bade them greeting and farewell as gravely and invariably as he did his host and hostess. Captain Jim was not going to offend household deities by any lack of reverence and ceremony.

“You’ve made this little house just about perfect,” he told Anne. “It never was so nice before. Mistress Selwyn had your taste and she did wonders; but folks in those days didn’t have the pretty little curtains and pictures and nicknacks you have. As for Elizabeth, she lived in the past. You’ve kinder brought the future into it, so to speak. I’d be real happy even if we couldn’t talk at all, when I come here — jest to sit and look at you and your pictures and your flowers would be enough of a treat. It’s beautiful — beautiful.”

Captain Jim was a passionate worshipper of beauty. Every lovely thing heard or seen gave him a deep, subtle, inner joy that irradiated his life. He was quite keenly aware of his own lack of outward comeliness and lamented it.

“Folks say I’m good,” he remarked whimsically upon one occasion, “but I sometimes wish the Lord had made me only half as good and put the rest of it into looks. But there, I reckon He knew what He was about, as a good Captain should. Some of us have to be homely, or the purty ones — like Mistress Blythe here — wouldn’t show up so well.”

One evening Anne and Gilbert finally walked down to the Four Winds light. The day had begun sombrely in gray cloud and mist, but it had ended in a pomp of scarlet and gold. Over the western hills beyond the harbor were amber deeps and crystalline shallows, with the fire of sunset below. The north was a mackerel sky of little, fiery golden clouds. The red light flamed on the white sails of a vessel gliding down the channel, bound to a southern port in a land of palms. Beyond her, it smote upon and incarnadined the shining, white, grassless faces of the sand dunes. To the right, it fell on the old house among the willows up the brook, and gave it for a fleeting space casements more splendid than those of an old cathedral. They glowed out of its quiet and grayness like the throbbing,

blood-red thoughts of a vivid soul imprisoned in a dull husk of environment.

“That old house up the brook always seems so lonely,” said Anne. “I never see visitors there. Of course, its lane opens on the upper road — but I don’t think there’s much coming and going. It seems odd we’ve never met the Moores yet, when they live within fifteen minutes’ walk of us. I may have seen them in church, of course, but if so I didn’t know them. I’m sorry they are so unsociable, when they are our only near neighbors.”

“Evidently they don’t belong to the race that knows Joseph,” laughed Gilbert. “Have you ever found out who that girl was whom you thought so beautiful?”

“No. Somehow I have never remembered to ask about her. But I’ve never seen her anywhere, so I suppose she must have been a stranger. Oh, the sun has just vanished — and there’s the light.”

As the dusk deepened, the great beacon cut swathes of light through it, sweeping in a circle over the fields and the harbor, the sandbar and the gulf.

“I feel as if it might catch me and whisk me leagues out to sea,” said Anne, as one drenched them with radiance; and she felt rather relieved when they got so near the Point that they were inside the range of those dazzling, recurrent flashes.

As they turned into the little lane that led across the fields to the Point they met a man coming out of it — a man of such extraordinary appearance that for a moment they both frankly stared. He was a decidedly fine-looking person-tall, broad-shouldered, well-featured, with a Roman nose and frank gray eyes; he was dressed in a prosperous farmer’s Sunday best; in so far he might have been any inhabitant of Four Winds or the Glen. But, flowing over his breast nearly to his knees, was a river of crinkly brown beard; and adown his back, beneath his commonplace felt hat, was a corresponding cascade of thick, wavy, brown hair.

“Anne,” murmured Gilbert, when they were out of earshot, “you didn’t put what Uncle Dave calls ‘a little of the Scott Act’ in that lemonade you gave me just before we left home, did you?”

“No, I didn’t,” said Anne, stifling her laughter, lest the retreating enigma should hear here. “Who in the world can he be?”

“I don’t know; but if Captain Jim keeps apparitions like that down at this Point I’m going to carry cold iron in my pocket when I come here. He wasn’t a sailor, or one might pardon his eccentricity of appearance; he must belong to the over-harbor clans. Uncle Dave says they have several freaks over there.”

“Uncle Dave is a little prejudiced, I think. You know all the over-harbor people who come to the Glen Church seem very nice. Oh, Gilbert, isn’t this beautiful?”

The Four Winds light was built on a spur of red sandstone cliff jutting out into the gulf. On one side, across the channel, stretched the silvery sand shore of the bar; on the other, extended a long, curving beach of red cliffs, rising steeply from the pebbled coves. It was a shore that knew the magic and mystery of storm and star. There is a great solitude about such a shore. The woods are never solitary — they are full of whispering, beckoning, friendly life. But the sea is a mighty soul, forever moaning of some great, unshareable sorrow, which shuts it up into itself for all eternity. We can never pierce its infinite mystery — we may only wander, awed and spellbound, on the outer fringe of it. The woods call to us with a hundred voices, but the sea has one only — a mighty voice that drowns our souls in its majestic music. The woods are human, but the sea is of the company of the archangels.

Anne and Gilbert found Uncle Jim sitting on a bench outside the lighthouse, putting the finishing touches to a wonderful, full-rigged, toy schooner. He rose and welcomed them to his abode with the gentle, unconscious courtesy that became him so well.

“This has been a purty nice day all through, Mistress Blythe, and now, right at the last, it’s brought its best. Would you like to sit down here

outside a bit, while the light lasts? I've just finished this bit of a plaything for my little grand nephew, Joe, up at the Glen. After I promised to make it for him I was kinder sorry, for his mother was vexed. She's afraid he'll be wanting to go to sea later on and she doesn't want the notion encouraged in him. But what could I do, Mistress Blythe? I'd PROMISED him, and I think it's sorter real dastardly to break a promise you make to a child. Come, sit down. It won't take long to stay an hour."

The wind was off shore, and only broke the sea's surface into long, silvery ripples, and sent sheeny shadows flying out across it, from every point and headland, like transparent wings. The dusk was hanging a curtain of violet gloom over the sand dunes and the headlands where gulls were huddling. The sky was faintly filmed over with scarfs of silken vapor. Cloud fleets rode at anchor along the horizons. An evening star was watching over the bar.

"Isn't that a view worth looking at?" said Captain Jim, with a loving, proprietary pride. "Nice and far from the marketplace, ain't it? No buying and selling and getting gain. You don't have to pay anything — all that sea and sky free—'without money and without price.' There's going to be a moonrise purty soon, too — I'm never tired of finding out what a moonrise can be over them rocks and sea and harbor. There's a surprise in it every time."

They had their moonrise, and watched its marvel and magic in a silence that asked nothing of the world or each other. Then they went up into the tower, and Captain Jim showed and explained the mechanism of the great light. Finally they found themselves in the dining room, where a fire of driftwood was weaving flames of wavering, elusive, sea-born hues in the open fireplace.

"I put this fireplace in myself," remarked Captain Jim. "The Government don't give lighthouse keepers such luxuries. Look at the colors that wood makes. If you'd like some driftwood for your fire, Mistress Blythe, I'll bring you up a load some day. Sit down. I'm going to make you a cup of tea."

Captain Jim placed a chair for Anne, having first removed therefrom a huge, orange-colored cat and a newspaper.

“Get down, Matey. The sofa is your place. I must put this paper away safe till I can find time to finish the story in it. It’s called A Mad Love. ‘Tisn’t my favorite brand of fiction, but I’m reading it jest to see how long she can spin it out. It’s at the sixty-second chapter now, and the wedding ain’t any nearer than when it begun, far’s I can see. When little Joe comes I have to read him pirate yarns. Ain’t it strange how innocent little creatures like children like the blood-thirstiest stories?”

“Like my lad Davy at home,” said Anne. “He wants tales that reek with gore.”

Captain Jim’s tea proved to be nectar. He was pleased as a child with Anne’s compliments, but he affected a fine indifference.

“The secret is I don’t skimp the cream,” he remarked airily. Captain Jim had never heard of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but he evidently agreed with that writer’s dictum that “big heart never liked little cream pot.”

“We met an odd-looking personage coming out of your lane,” said Gilbert as they sipped. “Who was he?”

Captain Jim grinned.

“That’s Marshall Elliott — a mighty fine man with jest one streak of foolishness in him. I s’pose you wondered what his object was in turning himself into a sort of dime museum freak.”

“Is he a modern Nazarite or a Hebrew prophet left over from olden times?” asked Anne.

“Neither of them. It’s politics that’s at the bottom of his freak. All those Elliotts and Crawfords and MacAllisters are dyed-in-the-wool politicians. They’re born Grit or Tory, as the case may be, and they live Grit or Tory, and they die Grit or Tory; and what they’re going to do in heaven, where there’s probably no politics, is more than I can fathom. This Marshall

Elliott was born a Grit. I'm a Grit myself in moderation, but there's no moderation about Marshall. Fifteen years ago there was a specially bitter general election. Marshall fought for his party tooth and nail. He was dead sure the Liberals would win — so sure that he got up at a public meeting and vowed that he wouldn't shave his face or cut his hair until the Grits were in power. Well, they didn't go in — and they've never got in yet — and you saw the result today for yourselves. Marshall stuck to his word."

"What does his wife think of it?" asked Anne.

"He's a bachelor. But if he had a wife I reckon she couldn't make him break that vow. That family of Elliotts has always been more stubborn than natteral. Marshall's brother Alexander had a dog he set great store by, and when it died the man actilly wanted to have it buried in the graveyard, 'along with the other Christians,' he said. Course, he wasn't allowed to; so he buried it just outside the graveyard fence, and never darkened the church door again. But Sundays he'd drive his family to church and sit by that dog's grave and read his Bible all the time service was going on. They say when he was dying he asked his wife to bury him beside the dog; she was a meek little soul but she fired up at THAT. She said SHE wasn't going to be buried beside no dog, and if he'd rather have his last resting place beside the dog than beside her, jest to say so. Alexander Elliott was a stubborn mule, but he was fond of his wife, so he give in and said, 'Well, durn it, bury me where you please. But when Gabriel's trump blows I expect my dog to rise with the rest of us, for he had as much soul as any durned Elliott or Crawford or MacAllister that ever strutted.' Them was HIS parting words. As for Marshall, we're all used to him, but he must strike strangers as right down peculiar-looking. I've known him ever since he was ten — he's about fifty now — and I like him. Him and me was out codfishing today. That's about all I'm good for now — catching trout and cod occasional. But 'tweren't always so — not by no manner of means. I used to do other things, as you'd admit if you saw my life-book."

Anne was just going to ask what his life-book was when the First Mate created a diversion by springing upon Captain Jim's knee. He was a gorgeous beastie, with a face as round as a full moon, vivid green eyes,

and immense, white, double paws. Captain Jim stroked his velvet back gently.

“I never fancied cats much till I found the First Mate,” he remarked, to the accompaniment of the Mate’s tremendous purrs. “I saved his life, and when you’ve saved a creature’s life you’re bound to love it. It’s next thing to giving life. There’s some turrible thoughtless people in the world, Mistress Blythe. Some of them city folks who have summer homes over the harbor are so thoughtless that they’re cruel. It’s the worst kind of cruelty — the thoughtless kind. You can’t cope with it. They keep cats there in the summer, and feed and pet ‘em, and doll ‘em up with ribbons and collars. And then in the fall they go off and leave ‘em to starve or freeze. It makes my blood boil, Mistress Blythe. One day last winter I found a poor old mother cat dead on the shore, lying against the skin-and-bone bodies of her three little kittens. She’d died trying to shelter ‘em. She had her poor stiff paws around ‘em. Master, I cried. Then I swore. Then I carried them poor little kittens home and fed ‘em up and found good homes for ‘em. I knew the woman who left the cat and when she come back this summer I jest went over the harbor and told her my opinion of her. It was rank meddling, but I do love meddling in a good cause.”

“How did she take it?” asked Gilbert.

“Cried and said she ‘didn’t think.’ I says to her, says I, ‘Do you s’pose that’ll be held for a good excuse in the day of Jedgment, when you’ll have to account for that poor old mother’s life? The Lord’ll ask you what He give you your brains for if it wasn’t to think, I reckon.’ I don’t fancy she’ll leave cats to starve another time.”

“Was the First Mate one of the forsaken?” asked Anne, making advances to him which were responded to graciously, if condescendingly.

“Yes. I found HIM one bitter cold day in winter, caught in the branches of a tree by his durn-fool ribbon collar. He was almost starving. If you could have seen his eyes, Mistress Blythe! He was nothing but a kitten, and he’d got his living somehow since he’d been left until he got hung up. When I loosed him he gave my hand a pitiful swipe with his little red tongue. He wasn’t the able seaman you see now. He was meek as Moses. That was

nine years ago. His life has been long in the land for a cat. He's a good old pal, the First Mate is."

"I should have expected you to have a dog," said Gilbert.

Captain Jim shook his head.

"I had a dog once. I thought so much of him that when he died I couldn't bear the thought of getting another in his place. He was a FRIEND — you understand, Mistress Blythe? Matey's only a pal. I'm fond of Matey — all the fonder on account of the spice of devilment that's in him — like there is in all cats. But I LOVED my dog. I always had a sneaking sympathy for Alexander Elliott about HIS dog. There isn't any devil in a good dog. That's why they're more lovable than cats, I reckon. But I'm darned if they're as interesting. Here I am, talking too much. Why don't you check me? When I do get a chance to talk to anyone I run on turrible. If you've done your tea I've a few little things you might like to look at — picked 'em up in the queer corners I used to be poking my nose into."

Captain Jim's "few little things" turned out to be a most interesting collection of curios, hideous, quaint and beautiful. And almost every one had some striking story attached to it.

Anne never forgot the delight with which she listened to those old tales that moonlit evening by that enchanted driftwood fire, while the silver sea called to them through the open window and sobbed against the rocks below them.

Captain Jim never said a boastful word, but it was impossible to help seeing what a hero the man had been — brave, true, resourceful, unselfish. He sat there in his little room and made those things live again for his hearers. By a lift of the eyebrow, a twist of the lip, a gesture, a word, he painted a whole scene or character so that they saw it as it was.

Some of Captain Jim's adventures had such a marvellous edge that Anne and Gilbert secretly wondered if he were not drawing a rather long bow at their credulous expense. But in this, as they found later, they did him injustice. His tales were all literally true. Captain Jim had the gift of the

born storyteller, whereby “unhappy, far-off things” can be brought vividly before the hearer in all their pristine poignancy.

Anne and Gilbert laughed and shivered over his tales, and once Anne found herself crying. Captain Jim surveyed her tears with pleasure shining from his face.

“I like to see folks cry that way,” he remarked. “It’s a compliment. But I can’t do justice to the things I’ve seen or helped to do. I’ve ‘em all jotted down in my life-book, but I haven’t got the knack of writing them out properly. If I could hit on jest the right words and string ‘em together proper on paper I could make a great book. It would beat A Mad Love holler, and I believe Joe’d like it as well as the pirate yarns. Yes, I’ve had some adventures in my time; and, do you know, Mistress Blythe, I still lust after ‘em. Yes, old and useless as I be, there’s an awful longing sweeps over me at times to sail out — out — out there — forever and ever.”

“Like Ulysses, you would

‘Sail beyond the sunset and the baths
Of all the western stars until you die,’”

said Anne dreamily.

“Ulysses? I’ve read of him. Yes, that’s just how I feel — jest how all us old sailors feel, I reckon. I’ll die on land after all, I s’pose. Well, what is to be will be. There was old William Ford at the Glen who never went on the water in his life, ‘cause he was afraid of being drowned. A fortune-teller had predicted he would be. And one day he fainted and fell with his face in the barn trough and was drowned. Must you go? Well, come soon and come often. The doctor is to do the talking next time. He knows a heap of things I want to find out. I’m sorter lonesome here by times. It’s been worse since Elizabeth Russell died. Her and me was such cronies.”

Captain Jim spoke with the pathos of the aged, who see their old friends slipping from them one by one — friends whose place can never be quite filled by those of a younger generation, even of the race that knows Joseph. Anne and Gilbert promised to come soon and often.

“He’s a rare old fellow, isn’t he?” said Gilbert, as they walked home.

“Somehow, I can’t reconcile his simple, kindly personality with the wild, adventurous life he has lived,” mused Anne.

“You wouldn’t find it so hard if you had seen him the other day down at the fishing village. One of the men of Peter Gautier’s boat made a nasty remark about some girl along the shore. Captain Jim fairly scorched the wretched fellow with the lightning of his eyes. He seemed a man transformed. He didn’t say much — but the way he said it! You’d have thought it would strip the flesh from the fellow’s bones. I understand that Captain Jim will never allow a word against any woman to be said in his presence.”

“I wonder why he never married,” said Anne. “He should have sons with their ships at sea now, and grandchildren climbing over him to hear his stories — he’s that kind of a man. Instead, he has nothing but a magnificent cat.”

But Anne was mistaken. Captain Jim had more than that. He had a memory.

CHAPTER 10

LESLIE MOORE

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“I’m going for a walk to the outside shore tonight,” Anne told Gog and Magog one October evening. There was no one else to tell, for Gilbert had gone over the harbor. Anne had her little domain in the speckless order one would expect of anyone brought up by Marilla Cuthbert, and felt that she could gad shoreward with a clear conscience. Many and delightful had been her shore rambles, sometimes with Gilbert, sometimes with Captain Jim, sometimes alone with her own thoughts and new, poignantly-sweet dreams that were beginning to span life with their rainbows. She loved the gentle, misty harbor shore and the silvery, wind-haunted sand shore, but best of all she loved the rock shore, with its cliffs and caves and piles of surf-worn boulders, and its coves where the pebbles glittered under the pools; and it was to this shore she hied herself tonight.

There had been an autumn storm of wind and rain, lasting for three days. Thunderous had been the crash of billows on the rocks, wild the white spray and spume that blew over the bar, troubled and misty and tempest-torn the erstwhile blue peace of Four Winds Harbor. Now it was over, and the shore lay clean-washed after the storm; not a wind stirred, but there was still a fine surf on, dashing on sand and rock in a splendid white turmoil — the only restless thing in the great, pervading stillness and peace.

“Oh, this is a moment worth living through weeks of storm and stress for,” Anne exclaimed, delightedly sending her far gaze across the tossing waters from the top of the cliff where she stood. Presently she scrambled down the steep path to the little cove below, where she seemed shut in with rocks and sea and sky.

“I’m going to dance and sing,” she said. “There’s no one here to see me — the seagulls won’t carry tales of the matter. I may be as crazy as I like.”

She caught up her skirt and pirouetted along the hard strip of sand just out of reach of the waves that almost lapped her feet with their spent foam. Whirling round and round, laughing like a child, she reached the little headland that ran out to the east of the cove; then she stopped suddenly, blushing crimson; she was not alone; there had been a witness to her dance and laughter.

The girl of the golden hair and sea-blue eyes was sitting on a boulder of the headland, half-hidden by a jutting rock. She was looking straight at Anne with a strange expression — part wonder, part sympathy, part — could it be? — envy. She was bareheaded, and her splendid hair, more than ever like Browning’s “gorgeous snake,” was bound about her head with a crimson ribbon. She wore a dress of some dark material, very plainly made; but swathed about her waist, outlining its fine curves, was a vivid girdle of red silk. Her hands, clasped over her knee, were brown and somewhat work-hardened; but the skin of her throat and cheeks was as white as cream. A flying gleam of sunset broke through a lowlying western cloud and fell across her hair. For a moment she seemed the spirit of the sea personified — all its mystery, all its passion, all its elusive charm.

“You — you must think me crazy,” stammered Anne, trying to recover her selfpossession. To be seen by this stately girl in such an abandon of childishness — she, Mrs. Dr. Blythe, with all the dignity of the matron to keep up — it was too bad!

“No,” said the girl, “I don’t.”

She said nothing more; her voice was expressionless; her manner slightly repellent; but there was something in her eyes — eager yet shy, defiant yet pleading — which turned Anne from her purpose of walking away. Instead, she sat down on the boulder beside the girl.

“Let’s introduce ourselves,” she said, with the smile that had never yet failed to win confidence and friendliness. “I am Mrs. Blythe — and I live

in that little white house up the harbor shore.”

“Yes, I know,” said the girl. “I am Leslie Moore — Mrs. Dick Moore,” she added stiffly.

Anne was silent for a moment from sheer amazement. It had not occurred to her that this girl was married — there seemed nothing of the wife about her. And that she should be the neighbor whom Anne had pictured as a commonplace Four Winds housewife! Anne could not quickly adjust her mental focus to this astonishing change.

“Then — then you live in that gray house up the brook,” she stammered.

“Yes. I should have gone over to call on you long ago,” said the other. She did not offer any explanation or excuse for not having gone.

“I wish you WOULD come,” said Anne, recovering herself somewhat. “We’re such near neighbors we ought to be friends. That is the sole fault of Four Winds — there aren’t quite enough neighbors. Otherwise it is perfection.”

“You like it?”

“LIKE it! I love it. It is the most beautiful place I ever saw.”

“I’ve never seen many places,” said Leslie Moore, slowly, “but I’ve always thought it was very lovely here. I — I love it, too.”

She spoke, as she looked, shyly, yet eagerly. Anne had an odd impression that this strange girl — the word “girl” would persist — could say a good deal if she chose.

“I often come to the shore,” she added.

“So do I,” said Anne. “It’s a wonder we haven’t met here before.”

“Probably you come earlier in the evening than I do. It is generally late — almost dark — when I come. And I love to come just after a storm — like

this. I don't like the sea so well when it's calm and quiet. I like the struggle — and the crash — and the noise."

"I love it in all its moods," declared Anne. "The sea at Four Winds is to me what Lover's Lane was at home. Tonight it seemed so free — so untamed — something broke loose in me, too, out of sympathy. That was why I danced along the shore in that wild way. I didn't suppose anybody was looking, of course. If Miss Cornelia Bryant had seen me she would have forboded a gloomy prospect for poor young Dr. Blythe."

"You know Miss Cornelia?" said Leslie, laughing. She had an exquisite laugh; it bubbled up suddenly and unexpectedly with something of the delicious quality of a baby's. Anne laughed, too.

"Oh, yes. She has been down to my house of dreams several times."

"Your house of dreams?"

"Oh, that's a dear, foolish little name Gilbert and I have for our home. We just call it that between ourselves. It slipped out before I thought."

"So Miss Russell's little white house is YOUR house of dreams," said Leslie wonderingly. "I had a house of dreams once — but it was a palace," she added, with a laugh, the sweetness of which was marred by a little note of derision.

"Oh, I once dreamed of a palace, too," said Anne. "I suppose all girls do. And then we settle down contentedly in eight-room houses that seem to fulfill all the desires of our hearts — because our prince is there. YOU should have had your palace really, though — you are so beautiful. You MUST let me say it — it has to be said — I'm nearly bursting with admiration. You are the loveliest thing I ever saw, Mrs. Moore."

"If we are to be friends you must call me Leslie," said the other with an odd passion.

"Of course I will. And MY friends call me Anne."

“I suppose I am beautiful,” Leslie went on, looking stormily out to sea. “I hate my beauty. I wish I had always been as brown and plain as the brownest and plainest girl at the fishing village over there. Well, what do you think of Miss Cornelia?”

The abrupt change of subject shut the door on any further confidences.

“Miss Cornelia is a darling, isn’t she?” said Anne. “Gilbert and I were invited to her house to a state tea last week. You’ve heard of groaning tables.”

“I seem to recall seeing the expression in the newspaper reports of weddings,” said Leslie, smiling.

“Well, Miss Cornelia’s groaned — at least, it creaked — positively. You couldn’t have believed she would have cooked so much for two ordinary people. She had every kind of pie you could name, I think — except lemon pie. She said she had taken the prize for lemon pies at the Charlottetown Exhibition ten years ago and had never made any since for fear of losing her reputation for them.”

“Were you able to eat enough pie to please her?”

“I wasn’t. Gilbert won her heart by eating — I won’t tell you how much. She said she never knew a man who didn’t like pie better than his Bible. Do you know, I love Miss Cornelia.”

“So do I,” said Leslie. “She is the best friend I have in the world.”

Anne wondered secretly why, if this were so, Miss Cornelia had never mentioned Mrs. Dick Moore to her. Miss Cornelia had certainly talked freely about every other individual in or near Four Winds.

“Isn’t that beautiful?” said Leslie, after a brief silence, pointing to the exquisite effect of a shaft of light falling through a cleft in the rock behind them, across a dark green pool at its base. “If I had come here — and seen nothing but just that — I would go home satisfied.”

“The effects of light and shadow all along these shores are wonderful,” agreed Anne. “My little sewing room looks out on the harbor, and I sit at its window and feast my eyes. The colors and shadows are never the same two minutes together.”

“And you are never lonely?” asked Leslie abruptly. “Never — when you are alone?”

“No. I don’t think I’ve ever been really lonely in my life,” answered Anne. “Even when I’m alone I have real good company — dreams and imaginations and pretendings. I LIKE to be alone now and then, just to think over things and TASTE them. But I love friendship — and nice, jolly little times with people. Oh, WON’T you come to see me — often? Please do. I believe,” Anne added, laughing, “that you’d like me if you knew me.”

“I wonder if YOU would like ME,” said Leslie seriously. She was not fishing for a compliment. She looked out across the waves that were beginning to be garlanded with blossoms of moonlit foam, and her eyes filled with shadows.

“I’m sure I would,” said Anne. “And please don’t think I’m utterly irresponsible because you saw me dancing on the shore at sunset. No doubt I shall be dignified after a time. You see, I haven’t been married very long. I feel like a girl, and sometimes like a child, yet.”

“I have been married twelve years,” said Leslie.

Here was another unbelievable thing.

“Why, you can’t be as old as I am!” exclaimed Anne. “You must have been a child when you were married.”

“I was sixteen,” said Leslie, rising, and picking up the cap and jacket lying beside her. “I am twenty-eight now. Well, I must go back.”

“So must I. Gilbert will probably be home. But I’m so glad we both came to the shore tonight and met each other.”

Leslie said nothing, and Anne was a little chilled. She had offered friendship frankly but it had not been accepted very graciously, if it had not been absolutely repelled. In silence they climbed the cliffs and walked across a pasture-field of which the feathery, bleached, wild grasses were like a carpet of creamy velvet in the moonlight. When they reached the shore lane Leslie turned.

“I go this way, Mrs. Blythe. You will come over and see me some time, won’t you?”

Anne felt as if the invitation had been thrown at her. She got the impression that Leslie Moore gave it reluctantly.

“I will come if you really want me to,” she said a little coldly.

“Oh, I do — I do,” exclaimed Leslie, with an eagerness which seemed to burst forth and beat down some restraint that had been imposed on it.

“Then I’ll come. Goodnight — Leslie.”

“Goodnight, Mrs. Blythe.”

Anne walked home in a brown study and poured out her tale to Gilbert.

“So Mrs. Dick Moore isn’t one of the race that knows Joseph?” said Gilbert teasingly.

“No — o — o, not exactly. And yet — I think she WAS one of them once, but has gone or got into exile,” said Anne musingly. “She is certainly very different from the other women about here. You can’t talk about eggs and butter to HER. To think I’ve been imagining her a second Mrs. Rachel Lynde! Have you ever seen Dick Moore, Gilbert?”

“No. I’ve seen several men working about the fields of the farm, but I don’t know which was Moore.”

“She never mentioned him. I KNOW she isn’t happy.”

“From what you tell me I suppose she was married before she was old enough to know her own mind or heart, and found out too late that she had made a mistake. It’s a common tragedy enough, Anne.

“A fine woman would have made the best of it. Mrs. Moore has evidently let it make her bitter and resentful.”

“Don’t let us judge her till we know,” pleaded Anne. “I don’t believe her case is so ordinary. You will understand her fascination when you meet her, Gilbert. It is a thing quite apart from her beauty. I feel that she possesses a rich nature, into which a friend might enter as into a kingdom; but for some reason she bars every one out and shuts all her possibilities up in herself, so that they cannot develop and blossom. There, I’ve been struggling to define her to myself ever since I left her, and that is the nearest I can get to it. I’m going to ask Miss Cornelia about her.”

CHAPTER 1 1

THE STORY OF LESLIE MOORE

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“Yes, the eighth baby arrived a fortnight ago,” said Miss Cornelia, from a rocker before the fire of the little house one chilly October afternoon. “It’s a girl. Fred was ranting mad — said he wanted a boy — when the truth is he didn’t want it at all. If it had been a boy he’d have ranted because it wasn’t a girl. They had four girls and three boys before, so I can’t see that it made much difference what this one was, but of course he’d have to be cantankerous, just like a man. The baby is real pretty, dressed up in its nice little clothes. It has black eyes and the dearest, tiny hands.”

“I must go and see it. I just love babies,” said Anne, smiling to herself over a thought too dear and sacred to be put into words.

“I don’t say but what they’re nice,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “But some folks seem to have more than they really need, believe ME. My poor cousin Flora up at the Glen had eleven, and such a slave as she is! Her husband suicided three years ago. Just like a man!”

“What made him do that?” asked Anne, rather shocked.

“Couldn’t get his way over something, so he jumped into the well. A good riddance! He was a born tyrant. But of course it spoiled the well. Flora could never abide the thought of using it again, poor thing! So she had another dug and a frightful expense it was, and the water as hard as nails. If he HAD to drown himself there was plenty of water in the harbor, wasn’t there? I’ve no patience with a man like that. We’ve only had two suicides in Four Winds in my recollection. The other was Frank West — Leslie Moore’s father. By the way, has Leslie ever been over to call on you yet?”

“No, but I met her on the shore a few nights ago and we scraped an acquaintance,” said Anne, pricking up her ears.

Miss Cornelia nodded.

“I’m glad, dearie. I was hoping you’d foregather with her. What do you think of her?”

“I thought her very beautiful.”

“Oh, of course. There was never anybody about Four Winds could touch her for looks. Did you ever see her hair? It reaches to her feet when she lets it down. But I meant how did you like her?”

“I think I could like her very much if she’d let me,” said Anne slowly.

“But she wouldn’t let you — she pushed you off and kept you at arm’s length. Poor Leslie! You wouldn’t be much surprised if you knew what her life has been. It’s been a tragedy — a tragedy!” repeated Miss Cornelia emphatically.

“I wish you would tell me all about her — that is, if you can do so without betraying any confidence.”

“Lord, dearie, everybody in Four Winds knows poor Leslie’s story. It’s no secret — the OUTSIDE, that is. Nobody knows the INSIDE but Leslie herself, and she doesn’t take folks into her confidence. I’m about the best friend she has on earth, I reckon, and she’s never uttered a word of complaint to me. Have you ever seen Dick Moore?”

“No.”

“Well, I may as well begin at the beginning and tell you everything straight through, so you’ll understand it. As I said, Leslie’s father was Frank West. He was clever and shiftless — just like a man. Oh, he had heaps of brains — and much good they did him! He started to go to college, and he went for two years, and then his health broke down. The Wests were all inclined to be consumptive. So Frank came home and

started farming. He married Rose Elliott from over harbor. Rose was reckoned the beauty of Four Winds — Leslie takes her looks from her mother, but she has ten times the spirit and go that Rose had, and a far better figure. Now you know, Anne, I always take the ground that us women ought to stand by each other. We've got enough to endure at the hands of the men, the Lord knows, so I hold we hadn't ought to clapper-claw one another, and it isn't often you'll find me running down another woman. But I never had much use for Rose Elliott. She was spoiled to begin with, believe ME, and she was nothing but a lazy, selfish, whining creature. Frank was no hand to work, so they were poor as Job's turkey. Poor! They lived on potatoes and point, believe ME. They had two children — Leslie and Kenneth. Leslie had her mother's looks and her father's brains, and something she didn't get from either of them. She took after her Grandmother West — a splendid old lady. She was the brightest, friendliest, merriest thing when she was a child, Anne. Everybody liked her. She was her father's favorite and she was awful fond of him. They were 'chums,' as she used to say. She couldn't see any of his faults — and he WAS a taking sort of man in some ways.

“Well, when Leslie was twelve years old, the first dreadful thing happened. She worshipped little Kenneth — he was four years younger than her, and he WAS a dear little chap. And he was killed one day — fell off a big load of hay just as it was going into the barn, and the wheel went right over his little body and crushed the life out of it. And mind you, Anne, Leslie saw it. She was looking down from the loft. She gave one screech — the hired man said he never heard such a sound in all his life — he said it would ring in his ears till Gabriel's trump drove it out. But she never screeched or cried again about it. She jumped from the loft onto the load and from the load to the floor, and caught up the little bleeding, warm, dead body, Anne — they had to tear it from her before she would let it go. They sent for me — I can't talk of it.”

Miss Cornelia wiped the tears from her kindly brown eyes and sewed in bitter silence for a few minutes.

“Well,” she resumed, “it was all over — they buried little Kenneth in that graveyard over the harbor, and after a while Leslie went back to her school

and her studies. She never mentioned Kenneth's name — I've never heard it cross her lips from that day to this. I reckon that old hurt still aches and burns at times; but she was only a child and time is real kind to children, Anne, dearie. After a while she began to laugh again — she had the prettiest laugh. You don't often hear it now."

"I heard it once the other night," said Anne. "It IS a beautiful laugh."

"Frank West began to go down after Kenneth's death. He wasn't strong and it was a shock to him, because he was real fond of the child, though, as I've said, Leslie was his favorite. He got mopy and melancholy, and couldn't or wouldn't work. And one day, when Leslie was fourteen years of age, he hanged himself — and in the parlor, too, mind you, Anne, right in the middle of the parlor from the lamp hook in the ceiling. Wasn't that like a man? It was the anniversary of his wedding day, too. Nice, tasty time to pick for it, wasn't it? And, of course, that poor Leslie had to be the one to find him. She went into the parlor that morning, singing, with some fresh flowers for the vases, and there she saw her father hanging from the ceiling, his face as black as a coal. It was something awful, believe ME!"

"Oh, how horrible!" said Anne, shuddering. "The poor, poor child!"

"Leslie didn't cry at her father's funeral any more then she had cried at Kenneth's. Rose whooped and howled for two, however, and Leslie had all she could do trying to calm and comfort her mother. I was disgusted with Rose and so was everyone else, but Leslie never got out of patience. She loved her mother. Leslie is clannish — her own could never do wrong in her eyes. Well, they buried Frank West beside Kenneth, and Rose put up a great big monument to him. It was bigger than his character, believe ME! Anyhow, it was bigger than Rose could afford, for the farm was mortgaged for more than its value. But not long after Leslie's old grandmother West died and she left Leslie a little money — enough to give her a year at Queen's Academy. Leslie had made up her mind to pass for a teacher if she could, and then earn enough to put herself through Redmond College. That had been her father's pet scheme — he wanted her to have what he had lost. Leslie was full of ambition and her head was chock full of brains. She went to Queen's, and she took two years' work in one year and got her First; and when she came home she got the Glen school. She was so happy

and hopeful and full of life and eagerness. When I think of what she was then and what she is now, I say — drat the men!”

Miss Cornelia snipped her thread off as viciously as if, Nero-like, she was severing the neck of mankind by the stroke.

“Dick Moore came into her life that summer. His father, Abner Moore, kept store at the Glen, but Dick had a sea-going streak in him from his mother; he used to sail in summer and clerk in his father’s store in winter. He was a big, handsome fellow, with a little ugly soul. He was always wanting something till he got it, and then he stopped wanting it — just like a man. Oh, he didn’t growl at the weather when it was fine, and he was mostly real pleasant and agreeable when everything went right. But he drank a good deal, and there were some nasty stories told of him and a girl down at the fishing village. He wasn’t fit for Leslie to wipe her feet on, that’s the long and short of it. And he was a Methodist! But he was clean mad about her — because of her good looks in the first place, and because she wouldn’t have anything to say to him in the second. He vowed he’d have her — and he got her!”

“How did he bring it about?”

“Oh, it was an iniquitous thing! I’ll never forgive Rose West. You see, dearie, Abner Moore held the mortgage on the West farm, and the interest was overdue some years, and Dick just went and told Mrs. West that if Leslie wouldn’t marry him he’d get his father to foreclose the mortgage. Rose carried on terrible — fainted and wept, and pleaded with Leslie not to let her be turned out of her home. She said it would break her heart to leave the home she’d come to as a bride. I wouldn’t have blamed her for feeling dreadful bad over it — but you wouldn’t have thought she’d be so selfish as to sacrifice her own flesh and blood because of it, would you? Well, she was.

“And Leslie gave in — she loved her mother so much she would have done anything to save her pain. She married Dick Moore. None of us knew why at the time. It wasn’t till long afterward that I found out how her mother had worried her into it. I was sure there was something wrong, though, because I knew how she had snubbed him time and again, and it wasn’t

like Leslie to turn face — about like that. Besides, I knew that Dick Moore wasn't the kind of man Leslie could ever fancy, in spite of his good looks and dashing ways. Of course, there was no wedding, but Rose asked me to go and see them married. I went, but I was sorry I did. I'd seen Leslie's face at her brother's funeral and at her father's funeral — and now it seemed to me I was seeing it at her own funeral. But Rose was smiling as a basket of chips, believe ME!

“Leslie and Dick settled down on the West place — Rose couldn't bear to part with her dear daughter! — and lived there for the winter. In the spring Rose took pneumonia and died — a year too late! Leslie was heartbroken enough over it. Isn't it terrible the way some unworthy folks are loved, while others that deserve it far more, you'd think, never get much affection? As for Dick, he'd had enough of quiet married life — just like a man. He was for up and off. He went over to Nova Scotia to visit his relations — his father had come from Nova Scotia — and he wrote back to Leslie that his cousin, George Moore, was going on a voyage to Havana and he was going too. The name of the vessel was the Four Sisters and they were to be gone about nine weeks.

“It must have been a relief to Leslie. But she never said anything. From the day of her marriage she was just what she is now — cold and proud, and keeping everyone but me at a distance. I won't BE kept at a distance, believe ME! I've just stuck to Leslie as close as I knew how in spite of everything.”

“She told me you were the best friend she had,” said Anne.

“Did she?” exclaimed Miss Cornelia delightedly. “Well, I'm real thankful to hear it. Sometimes I've wondered if she really did want me around at all — she never let me think so. You must have thawed her out more than you think, or she wouldn't have said that much itself to you. Oh, that poor, heartbroken girl! I never see Dick Moore but I want to run a knife clean through him.”

Miss Cornelia wiped her eyes again and having relieved her feelings by her bloodthirsty wish, took up her tale.

“Well, Leslie was left over there alone. Dick had put in the crop before he went, and old Abner looked after it. The summer went by and the Four Sisters didn’t come back. The Nova Scotia Moores investigated, and found she had got to Havana and discharged her cargo and took on another and left for home; and that was all they ever found out about her. By degrees people began to talk of Dick Moore as one that was dead. Almost everyone believed that he was, though no one felt certain, for men have turned up here at the harbor after they’d been gone for years. Leslie never thought he was dead — and she was right. A thousand pities too! The next summer Captain Jim was in Havana — that was before he gave up the sea, of course. He thought he’d poke round a bit — Captain Jim was always meddlesome, just like a man — and he went to inquiring round among the sailors’ boarding houses and places like that, to see if he could find out anything about the crew of the Four Sisters. He’d better have let sleeping dogs lie, in my opinion! Well, he went to one out-of-the-way place, and there he found a man he knew at first sight it was Dick Moore, though he had a big beard. Captain Jim got it shaved off and then there was no doubt — Dick Moore it was — his body at least. His mind wasn’t there — as for his soul, in my opinion he never had one!”

“What had happened to him?”

“Nobody knows the rights of it. All the folks who kept the boarding house could tell was that about a year before they had found him lying on their doorstep one morning in an awful condition — his head battered to a jelly almost. They supposed he’d got hurt in some drunken row, and likely that’s the truth of it. They took him in, never thinking he could live. But he did — and he was just like a child when he got well. He hadn’t memory or intellect or reason. They tried to find out who he was but they never could. He couldn’t even tell them his name — he could only say a few simple words. He had a letter on him beginning ‘Dear Dick’ and signed ‘Leslie,’ but there was no address on it and the envelope was gone. They let him stay on — he learned to do a few odd jobs about the place — and there Captain Jim found him. He brought him home — I’ve always said it was a bad day’s work, though I s’pose there was nothing else he could do. He thought maybe when Dick got home and saw his old surroundings and familiar faces his memory would wake up. But it hadn’t any effect. There

he's been at the house up the brook ever since. He's just like a child, no more nor less. Takes fractious spells occasionally, but mostly he's just vacant and good humored and harmless. He's apt to run away if he isn't watched. That's the burden Leslie has had to carry for eleven years — and all alone. Old Abner Moore died soon after Dick was brought home and it was found he was almost bankrupt. When things were settled up there was nothing for Leslie and Dick but the old West farm. Leslie rented it to John Ward, and the rent is all she has to live on. Sometimes in summer she takes a boarder to help out. But most visitors prefer the other side of the harbor where the hotels and summer cottages are. Leslie's house is too far from the bathing shore. She's taken care of Dick and she's never been away from him for eleven years — she's tied to that imbecile for life. And after all the dreams and hopes she once had! You can imagine what it has been like for her, Anne, dearie — with her beauty and spirit and pride and cleverness. It's just been a living death.”

“Poor, poor girl!” said Anne again. Her own happiness seemed to reproach her. What right had she to be so happy when another human soul must be so miserable?

“Will you tell me just what Leslie said and how she acted the night you met her on the shore?” asked Miss Cornelia.

She listened intently and nodded her satisfaction.

“YOU thought she was stiff and cold, Anne, dearie, but I can tell you she thawed out wonderful for her. She must have taken to you real strong. I'm so glad. You may be able to help her a good deal. I was thankful when I heard that a young couple was coming to this house, for I hoped it would mean some friends for Leslie; especially if you belonged to the race that knows Joseph. You WILL be her friend, won't you, Anne, dearie?”

“Indeed I will, if she'll let me,” said Anne, with all her own sweet, impulsive earnestness.

“No, you must be her friend, whether she'll let you or not,” said Miss Cornelia resolutely. “Don't you mind if she's stiff by times — don't notice it. Remember what her life has been — and is — and must always be, I

suppose, for creatures like Dick Moore live forever, I understand. You should see how fat he's got since he came home. He used to be lean enough. Just MAKE her be friends — you can do it — you're one of those who have the knack. Only you mustn't be sensitive. And don't mind if she doesn't seem to want you to go over there much. She knows that some women don't like to be where Dick is — they complain he gives them the creeps. Just get her to come over here as often as she can. She can't get away so very much — she can't leave Dick long, for the Lord knows what he'd do — burn the house down most likely. At nights, after he's in bed and asleep, is about the only time she's free. He always goes to bed early and sleeps like the dead till next morning. That is how you came to meet her at the shore likely. She wanders there considerable."

"I will do everything I can for her," said Anne. Her interest in Leslie Moore, which had been vivid ever since she had seen her driving her geese down the hill, was intensified a thousand fold by Miss Cornelia's narration. The girl's beauty and sorrow and loneliness drew her with an irresistible fascination. She had never known anyone like her; her friends had hitherto been wholesome, normal, merry girls like herself, with only the average trials of human care and bereavement to shadow their girlish dreams. Leslie Moore stood apart, a tragic, appealing figure of thwarted womanhood. Anne resolved that she would win entrance into the kingdom of that lonely soul and find there the comradeship it could so richly give, were it not for the cruel fetters that held it in a prison not of its own making.

"And mind you this, Anne, dearie," said Miss Cornelia, who had not yet wholly relieved her mind, "You mustn't think Leslie is an infidel because she hardly ever goes to church — or even that she's a Methodist. She can't take Dick to church, of course — not that he ever troubled church much in his best days. But you just remember that she's a real strong Presbyterian at heart, Anne, dearie."

CHAPTER 1 2

LESLIE COMES OVER

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Leslie came over to the house of dreams one frosty October night, when moonlit mists were hanging over the harbor and curling like silver ribbons along the seaward glens. She looked as if she repented coming when Gilbert answered her knock; but Anne flew past him, pounced on her, and drew her in.

“I’m so glad you picked tonight for a call,” she said gaily. “I made up a lot of extra good fudge this afternoon and we want someone to help us eat it — before the fire — while we tell stories. Perhaps Captain Jim will drop in, too. This is his night.”

“No. Captain Jim is over home,” said Leslie. “He — he made me come here,” she added, half defiantly.

“I’ll say a thank-you to him for that when I see him,” said Anne, pulling easy chairs before the fire.

“Oh, I don’t mean that I didn’t want to come,” protested Leslie, flushing a little. “I — I’ve been thinking of coming — but it isn’t always easy for me to get away.”

“Of course it must be hard for you to leave Mr. Moore,” said Anne, in a matter-of-fact tone. She had decided that it would be best to mention Dick Moore occasionally as an accepted fact, and not give undue morbidity to the subject by avoiding it. She was right, for Leslie’s air of constraint suddenly vanished. Evidently she had been wondering how much Anne knew of the conditions of her life and was relieved that no explanations were needed. She allowed her cap and jacket to be taken, and sat down with a girlish snuggle in the big armchair by Magog. She was dressed

prettily and carefully, with the customary touch of color in the scarlet geranium at her white throat. Her beautiful hair gleamed like molten gold in the warm firelight. Her sea-blue eyes were full of soft laughter and allurements. For the moment, under the influence of the little house of dreams, she was a girl again — a girl forgetful of the past and its bitterness. The atmosphere of the many loves that had sanctified the little house was all about her; the companionship of two healthy, happy, young folks of her own generation encircled her; she felt and yielded to the magic of her surroundings — Miss Cornelia and Captain Jim would scarcely have recognized her; Anne found it hard to believe that this was the cold, unresponsive woman she had met on the shore — this animated girl who talked and listened with the eagerness of a starved soul. And how hungrily Leslie's eyes looked at the bookcases between the windows!

“Our library isn't very extensive,” said Anne, “but every book in it is a FRIEND. We've picked our books up through the years, here and there, never buying one until we had first read it and knew that it belonged to the race of Joseph.”

Leslie laughed — beautiful laughter that seemed akin to all the mirth that had echoed through the little house in the vanished years.

“I have a few books of father's — not many,” she said. “I've read them until I know them almost by heart. I don't get many books. There's a circulating library at the Glen store — but I don't think the committee who pick the books for Mr. Parker know what books are of Joseph's race — or perhaps they don't care. It was so seldom I got one I really liked that I gave up getting any.”

“I hope you'll look on our bookshelves as your own,” said Anne.

“You are entirely and wholeheartedly welcome to the loan of any book on them.”

“You are setting a feast of fat things before me,” said Leslie, joyously. Then, as the clock struck ten, she rose, half unwillingly.

“I must go. I didn’t realise it was so late. Captain Jim is always saying it doesn’t take long to stay an hour. But I’ve stayed two — and oh, but I’ve enjoyed them,” she added frankly.

“Come often,” said Anne and Gilbert. They had risen and stood together in the firelight’s glow. Leslie looked at them — youthful, hopeful, happy, typifying all she had missed and must forever miss. The light went out of her face and eyes; the girl vanished; it was the sorrowful, cheated woman who answered the invitation almost coldly and got herself away with a pitiful haste.

Anne watched her until she was lost in the shadows of the chill and misty night. Then she turned slowly back to the glow of her own radiant hearthstone.

“Isn’t she lovely, Gilbert? Her hair fascinates me. Miss Cornelia says it reaches to her feet. Ruby Gillis had beautiful hair — but Leslie’s is ALIVE — every thread of it is living gold.”

“She is very beautiful,” agreed Gilbert, so heartily that Anne almost wished he were a LITTLE less enthusiastic.

“Gilbert, would you like my hair better if it were like Leslie’s?” she asked wistfully.

“I wouldn’t have your hair any color but just what it is for the world,” said Gilbert, with one or two convincing accompaniments.

You wouldn’t be ANNE if you had golden hair — or hair of any color but”
—

“Red,” said Anne, with gloomy satisfaction.

“Yes, red — to give warmth to that milk-white skin and those shining gray-green eyes of yours. Golden hair wouldn’t suit you at all Queen Anne — MY Queen Anne — queen of my heart and life and home.”

“Then you may admire Leslie’s all you like,” said Anne magnanimously.

CHAPTER 13

A GHOSTLY EVENING

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One evening, a week later, Anne decided to run over the fields to the house up the brook for an informal call. It was an evening of gray fog that had crept in from the gulf, swathed the harbor, filled the glens and valleys, and clung heavily to the autumnal meadows. Through it the sea sobbed and shuddered. Anne saw Four Winds in a new aspect, and found it weird and mysterious and fascinating; but it also gave her a little feeling of loneliness. Gilbert was away and would be away until the morrow, attending a medical pow-wow in Charlottetown. Anne longed for an hour of fellowship with some girl friend. Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia were “good fellows” each, in their own way; but youth yearned to youth.

“If only Diana or Phil or Pris or Stella could drop in for a chat,” she said to herself, “how delightful it would be! This is such a GHOSTLY night. I’m sure all the ships that ever sailed out of Four Winds to their doom could be seen tonight sailing up the harbor with their drowned crews on their decks, if that shrouding fog could suddenly be drawn aside. I feel as if it concealed innumerable mysteries — as if I were surrounded by the wraiths of old generations of Four Winds people peering at me through that gray veil. If ever the dear dead ladies of this little house came back to revisit it they would come on just such a night as this. If I sit here any longer I’ll see one of them there opposite me in Gilbert’s chair. This place isn’t exactly canny tonight. Even Gog and Magog have an air of pricking up their ears to hear the footsteps of unseen guests. I’ll run over to see Leslie before I frighten myself with my own fancies, as I did long ago in the matter of the Haunted Wood. I’ll leave my house of dreams to welcome back its old inhabitants. My fire will give them my goodwill and greeting — they will be gone before I come back, and my house will be mine once more. Tonight I am sure it is keeping a tryst with the past.”

Laughing a little over her fancy, yet with something of a creepy sensation in the region of her spine, Anne kissed her hand to Gog and Magog and slipped out into the fog, with some of the new magazines under her arm for Leslie.

“Leslie’s wild for books and magazines,” Miss Cornelia had told her, “and she hardly ever sees one. She can’t afford to buy them or subscribe for them. She’s really pitifully poor, Anne. I don’t see how she makes out to live at all on the little rent the farm brings in. She never even hints a complaint on the score of poverty, but I know what it must be. She’s been handicapped by it all her life. She didn’t mind it when she was free and ambitious, but it must gall now, believe ME. I’m glad she seemed so bright and merry the evening she spent with you. Captain Jim told me he had fairly to put her cap and coat on and push her out of the door. Don’t be too long going to see her either. If you are she’ll think it’s because you don’t like the sight of Dick, and she’ll crawl into her shell again. Dick’s a great, big, harmless baby, but that silly grin and chuckle of his do get on some people’s nerves. Thank goodness, I’ve no nerves myself. I like Dick Moore better now than I ever did when he was in his right senses — though the Lord knows that isn’t saying much. I was down there one day in housecleaning time helping Leslie a bit, and I was frying doughnuts. Dick was hanging round to get one, as usual, and all at once he picked up a scalding hot one I’d just fished out and dropped it on the back of my neck when I was bending over. Then he laughed and laughed. Believe ME, Anne, it took all the grace of God in my heart to keep me from just whisking up that stewpan of boiling fat and pouring it over his head.”

Anne laughed over Miss Cornelia’s wrath as she sped through the darkness. But laughter accorded ill with that night. She was sober enough when she reached the house among the willows. Everything was very silent. The front part of the house seemed dark and deserted, so Anne slipped round to the side door, which opened from the veranda into a little sitting room. There she halted noiselessly.

The door was open. Beyond, in the dimly lighted room, sat Leslie Moore, with her arms flung out on the table and her head bent upon them. She was weeping horribly — with low, fierce, choking sobs, as if some agony in her

soul were trying to tear itself out. An old black dog was sitting by her, his nose resting on his lap, his big doggyish eyes full of mute, imploring sympathy and devotion. Anne drew back in dismay. She felt that she could not intermeddle with this bitterness. Her heart ached with a sympathy she might not utter. To go in now would be to shut the door forever on any possible help or friendship. Some instinct warned Anne that the proud, bitter girl would never forgive the one who thus surprised her in her abandonment of despair.

Anne slipped noiselessly from the veranda and found her way across the yard. Beyond, she heard voices in the gloom and saw the dim glow of a light. At the gate she met two men — Captain Jim with a lantern, and another who she knew must be Dick Moore — a big man, badly gone to fat, with a broad, round, red face, and vacant eyes. Even in the dull light Anne got the impression that there was something unusual about his eyes.

“Is this you, Mistress Blythe?” said Captain Jim. “Now, now, you hadn’t oughter be roaming about alone on a night like this. You could get lost in this fog easier than not. Jest you wait till I see Dick safe inside the door and I’ll come back and light you over the fields. I ain’t going to have Dr. Blythe coming home and finding that you walked clean over Cape Leforce in the fog. A woman did that once, forty years ago.

“So you’ve been over to see Leslie,” he said, when he rejoined her.

“I didn’t go in,” said Anne, and told what she had seen. Captain Jim sighed.

“Poor, poor, little girl! She don’t cry often, Mistress Blythe — she’s too brave for that. She must feel terrible when she does cry. A night like this is hard on poor women who have sorrows. There’s something about it that kinder brings up all we’ve suffered — or feared.”

“It’s full of ghosts,” said Anne, with a shiver. “That was why I came over — I wanted to clasp a human hand and hear a human voice.

“There seem to be so many INHUMAN presences about tonight. Even my own dear house was full of them. They fairly elbowed me out. So I fled

over here for companionship of my kind.”

“You were right not to go in, though, Mistress Blythe. Leslie wouldn’t have liked it. She wouldn’t have liked me going in with Dick, as I’d have done if I hadn’t met you. I had Dick down with me all day. I keep him with me as much as I can to help Leslie a bit.”

“Isn’t there something odd about his eyes?” asked Anne.

“You noticed that? Yes, one is blue and t’other is hazel — his father had the same. It’s a Moore peculiarity. That was what told me he was Dick Moore when I saw him first down in Cuby. If it hadn’t a-bin for his eyes I mightn’t a-known him, with his beard and fat. You know, I reckon, that it was me found him and brought him home. Miss Cornelia always says I shouldn’t have done it, but I can’t agree with her. It was the RIGHT thing to do — and so ‘twas the only thing. There ain’t no question in my mind about THAT. But my old heart aches for Leslie. She’s only twenty-eight and she’s eaten more bread with sorrow than most women do in eighty years.”

They walked on in silence for a little while. Presently Anne said, “Do you know, Captain Jim, I never like walking with a lantern. I have always the strangest feeling that just outside the circle of light, just over its edge in the darkness, I am surrounded by a ring of furtive, sinister things, watching me from the shadows with hostile eyes. I’ve had that feeling from childhood. What is the reason? I never feel like that when I’m really in the darkness — when it is close all around me — I’m not the least frightened.”

“I’ve something of that feeling myself,” admitted Captain Jim. “I reckon when the darkness is close to us it is a friend. But when we sorter push it away from us — divorce ourselves from it, so to speak, with lantern light — it becomes an enemy. But the fog is lifting.

“There’s a smart west wind rising, if you notice. The stars will be out when you get home.”

They were out; and when Anne reentered her house of dreams the red embers were still glowing on the hearth, and all the haunting presences were gone.

CHAPTER 14

NOVEMBER DAYS

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The splendor of color which had glowed for weeks along the shores of Four Winds Harbor had faded out into the soft gray-blue of late autumnal hills. There came many days when fields and shores were dim with misty rain, or shivering before the breath of a melancholy seawind — nights, too, of storm and tempest, when Anne sometimes wakened to pray that no ship might be beating up the grim north shore, for if it were so not even the great, faithful light whirling through the darkness unafraid, could avail to guide it into safe haven.

“In November I sometimes feel as if spring could never come again,” she sighed, grieving over the hopeless unsightliness of her frosted and bedraggled flower-plots. The gay little garden of the schoolmaster’s bride was rather a forlorn place now, and the Lombardies and birches were under bare poles, as Captain Jim said. But the firwood behind the little house was forever green and staunch; and even in November and December there came gracious days of sunshine and purple hazes, when the harbor danced and sparkled as blithely as in midsummer, and the gulf was so softly blue and tender that the storm and the wild wind seemed only things of a long-past dream.

Anne and Gilbert spent many an autumn evening at the lighthouse. It was always a cheery place. Even when the east wind sang in minor and the sea was dead and gray, hints of sunshine seemed to be lurking all about it. Perhaps this was because the First Mate always paraded it in panoply of gold. He was so large and effulgent that one hardly missed the sun, and his resounding purrs formed a pleasant accompaniment to the laughter and conversation which went on around Captain Jim’s fireplace. Captain Jim and Gilbert had many long discussions and high converse on matters beyond the ken of cat or king.

“I like to ponder on all kinds of problems, though I can’t solve ‘em,” said Captain Jim. “My father held that we should never talk of things we couldn’t understand, but if we didn’t, doctor, the subjects for conversation would be mighty few. I reckon the gods laugh many a time to hear us, but what matters so long as we remember that we’re only men and don’t take to fancying that we’re gods ourselves, really, knowing good and evil. I reckon our powwows won’t do us or anyone much harm, so let’s have another whack at the whence, why and whither this evening, doctor.”

While they “whacked,” Anne listened or dreamed. Sometimes Leslie went to the lighthouse with them, and she and Anne wandered along the shore in the eerie twilight, or sat on the rocks below the lighthouse until the darkness drove them back to the cheer of the driftwood fire. Then Captain Jim would brew them tea and tell them

“tales of land and sea
And whatsoever might betide
The great forgotten world outside.”

Leslie seemed always to enjoy those lighthouse carousals very much, and bloomed out for the time being into ready wit and beautiful laughter, or glowing-eyed silence. There was a certain tang and savor in the conversation when Leslie was present which they missed when she was absent. Even when she did not talk she seemed to inspire others to brilliancy. Captain Jim told his stories better, Gilbert was quicker in argument and repartee, Anne felt little gushes and trickles of fancy and imagination bubbling to her lips under the influence of Leslie’s personality.

“That girl was born to be a leader in social and intellectual circles, far away from Four Winds,” she said to Gilbert as they walked home one night. “She’s just wasted here — wasted.”

“Weren’t you listening to Captain Jim and yours truly the other night when we discussed that subject generally? We came to the comforting conclusion that the Creator probably knew how to run His universe quite as well as we do, and that, after all, there are no such things as ‘wasted’ lives, saving and except when an individual wilfully squanders and wastes

his own life — which Leslie Moore certainly hasn't done. And some people might think that a Redmond B.A., whom editors were beginning to honor, was 'wasted' as the wife of a struggling country doctor in the rural community of Four Winds."

"Gilbert!"

"If you had married Roy Gardner, now," continued Gilbert mercilessly, "YOU could have been 'a leader in social and intellectual circles far away from Four Winds.'"

"Gilbert BLYTHE!"

"You KNOW you were in love with him at one time, Anne."

"Gilbert, that's mean—'pisen mean, just like all the men,' as Miss Cornelia says. I NEVER was in love with him. I only imagined I was. YOU know that. You KNOW I'd rather be your wife in our house of dreams and fulfillment than a queen in a palace."

Gilbert's answer was not in words; but I am afraid that both of them forgot poor Leslie speeding her lonely way across the fields to a house that was neither a palace nor the fulfillment of a dream.

The moon was rising over the sad, dark sea behind them and transfiguring it. Her light had not yet reached the harbor, the further side of which was shadowy and suggestive, with dim coves and rich glooms and jewelling lights.

"How the home lights shine out tonight through the dark!" said Anne. "That string of them over the harbor looks like a necklace. And what a coruscation there is up at the Glen! Oh, look, Gilbert; there is ours. I'm so glad we left it burning. I hate to come home to a dark house. OUR homelight, Gilbert! Isn't it lovely to see?"

"Just one of earth's many millions of homes, Anne — girl — but ours — OURS — our beacon in 'a naughty world.' When a fellow has a home and a dear, little, redhaired wife in it what more need he ask of life?"

“Well, he might ask ONE thing more,” whispered Anne happily. “Oh, Gilbert, it seems as if I just COULDN’T wait for the spring.”

CHAPTER 15

CHRISTMAS AT FOUR WINDS

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At first Anne and Gilbert talked of going home to Avonlea for Christmas; but eventually they decided to stay in Four Winds. “I want to spend the first Christmas of our life together in our own home,” decreed Anne.

So it fell out that Marilla and Mrs. Rachel Lynde and the twins came to Four Winds for Christmas. Marilla had the face of a woman who had circumnavigated the globe. She had never been sixty miles away from home before; and she had never eaten a Christmas dinner anywhere save at Green Gables.

Mrs. Rachel had made and brought with her an enormous plum pudding. Nothing could have convinced Mrs. Rachel that a college graduate of the younger generation could make a Christmas plum pudding properly; but she bestowed approval on Anne’s house.

“Anne’s a good housekeeper,” she said to Marilla in the spare room the night of their arrival. “I’ve looked into her bread box and her scrap pail. I always judge a housekeeper by those, that’s what. There’s nothing in the pail that shouldn’t have been thrown away, and no stale pieces in the bread box. Of course, she was trained up with you — but, then, she went to college afterwards. I notice she’s got my tobacco stripe quilt on the bed here, and that big round braided mat of yours before her livingroom fire. It makes me feel right at home.”

Anne’s first Christmas in her own house was as delightful as she could have wished. The day was fine and bright; the first skim of snow had fallen on Christmas Eve and made the world beautiful; the harbor was still open and glittering.

Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia came to dinner. Leslie and Dick had been invited, but Leslie made excuse; they always went to her Uncle Isaac West's for Christmas, she said.

"She'd rather have it so," Miss Cornelia told Anne. "She can't bear taking Dick where there are strangers. Christmas is always a hard time for Leslie. She and her father used to make a lot of it."

Miss Cornelia and Mrs. Rachel did not take a very violent fancy to each other. "Two suns hold not their courses in one sphere." But they did not clash at all, for Mrs. Rachel was in the kitchen helping Anne and Marilla with the dinner, and it fell to Gilbert to entertain Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia, — or rather to be entertained by them, for a dialogue between those two old friends and antagonists was assuredly never dull.

"It's many a year since there was a Christmas dinner here, Mistress Blythe," said Captain Jim. "Miss Russell always went to her friends in town for Christmas. But I was here to the first Christmas dinner that was ever eaten in this house — and the schoolmaster's bride cooked it. That was sixty years ago today, Mistress Blythe — and a day very like this — just enough snow to make the hills white, and the harbor as blue as June. I was only a lad, and I'd never been invited out to dinner before, and I was too shy to eat enough. I've got all over THAT."

"Most men do," said Miss Cornelia, sewing furiously. Miss Cornelia was not going to sit with idle hands, even on Christmas.

Babies come without any consideration for holidays, and there was one expected in a poverty-stricken household at Glen St. Mary. Miss Cornelia had sent that household a substantial dinner for its little swarm, and so meant to eat her own with a comfortable conscience.

"Well, you know, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, Cornelia," explained Captain Jim.

"I believe you — when he HAS a heart," retorted Miss Cornelia. "I suppose that's why so many women kill themselves cooking — just as poor Amelia Baxter did. She died last Christmas morning, and she said it

was the first Christmas since she was married that she didn't have to cook a big, twenty-plate dinner. It must have been a real pleasant change for her. Well, she's been dead a year, so you'll soon hear of Horace Baxter taking notice."

"I heard he was taking notice already," said Captain Jim, winking at Gilbert. "Wasn't he up to your place one Sunday lately, with his funeral blacks on, and a boiled collar?"

"No, he wasn't. And he needn't come neither. I could have had him long ago when he was fresh. I don't want any secondhand goods, believe ME. As for Horace Baxter, he was in financial difficulties a year ago last summer, and he prayed to the Lord for help; and when his wife died and he got her life insurance he said he believed it was the answer to his prayer. Wasn't that like a man?"

"Have you really proof that he said that, Cornelia?"

"I have the Methodist minister's word for it — if you call THAT proof. Robert Baxter told me the same thing too, but I admit THAT isn't evidence. Robert Baxter isn't often known to tell the truth."

"Come, come, Cornelia, I think he generally tells the truth, but he changes his opinion so often it sometimes sounds as if he didn't."

"It sounds like it mighty often, believe ME. But trust one man to excuse another. I have no use for Robert Baxter. He turned Methodist just because the Presbyterian choir happened to be singing 'Behold the bridegroom cometh' for a collection piece when him and Margaret walked up the aisle the Sunday after they were married. Served him right for being late! He always insisted the choir did it on purpose to insult him, as if he was of that much importance. But that family always thought they were much bigger potatoes than they really were. His brother Eliphalet imagined the devil was always at his elbow — but I never believed the devil wasted that much time on him."

"I — don't — know," said Captain Jim thoughtfully. "Eliphalet Baxter lived too much alone — hadn't even a cat or dog to keep him human."

When a man is alone he's mighty apt to be with the devil — if he ain't with God. He has to choose which company he'll keep, I reckon. If the devil always was at Life Baxter's elbow it must have been because Life liked to have him there."

"Manlike," said Miss Cornelia, and subsided into silence over a complicated arrangement of tucks until Captain Jim deliberately stirred her up again by remarking in a casual way:

"I was up to the Methodist church last Sunday morning."

"You'd better have been home reading your Bible," was Miss Cornelia's retort.

"Come, now, Cornelia, I can't see any harm in going to the Methodist church when there's no preaching in your own. I've been a Presbyterian for seventy-six years, and it isn't likely my theology will hoist anchor at this late day."

"It's setting a bad example," said Miss Cornelia grimly.

"Besides," continued wicked Captain Jim, "I wanted to hear some good singing. The Methodists have a good choir; and you can't deny, Cornelia, that the singing in our church is awful since the split in the choir."

"What if the singing isn't good? They're doing their best, and God sees no difference between the voice of a crow and the voice of a nightingale."

"Come, come, Cornelia," said Captain Jim mildly, "I've a better opinion of the Almighty's ear for music than THAT."

"What caused the trouble in our choir?" asked Gilbert, who was suffering from suppressed laughter.

"It dates back to the new church, three years ago," answered Captain Jim. "We had a fearful time over the building of that church — fell out over the question of a new site. The two sites wasn't more'n two hundred yards apart, but you'd have thought they was a thousand by the bitterness of that

fight. We was split up into three factions — one wanted the east site and one the south, and one held to the old. It was fought out in bed and at board, and in church and at market. All the old scandals of three generations were dragged out of their graves and aired. Three matches was broken up by it. And the meetings we had to try to settle the question! Cornelia, will you ever forget the one when old Luther Burns got up and made a speech? HE stated his opinions forcibly.”

“Call a spade a spade, Captain. You mean he got red-mad and raked them all, fore and aft. They deserved it too — a pack of incapables. But what would you expect of a committee of men? That building committee held twenty-seven meetings, and at the end of the twenty-seventh weren’t no nearer having a church than when they begun — not so near, for a fact, for in one fit of hurrying things along they’d gone to work and tore the old church down, so there we were, without a church, and no place but the hall to worship in.”

“The Methodists offered us their church, Cornelia.”

“The Glen St. Mary church wouldn’t have been built to this day,” went on Miss Cornelia, ignoring Captain Jim, “if we women hadn’t just started in and took charge. We said WE meant to have a church, if the men meant to quarrel till doomsday, and we were tired of being a laughing-stock for the Methodists. We held ONE meeting and elected a committee and canvassed for subscriptions. We got them, too. When any of the men tried to sass us we told them they’d tried for two years to build a church and it was our turn now. We shut them up close, believe ME, and in six months we had our church. Of course, when the men saw we were determined they stopped fighting and went to work, manlike, as soon as they saw they had to, or quit bossing. Oh, women can’t preach or be elders; but they can build churches and scare up the money for them.”

“The Methodists allow women to preach,” said Captain Jim.

Miss Cornelia glared at him.

“I never said the Methodists hadn’t common sense, Captain. What I say is, I doubt if they have much religion.”

“I suppose you are in favor of votes for women, Miss Cornelia,” said Gilbert.

“I’m not hankering after the vote, believe ME,” said Miss Cornelia scornfully. “I know what it is to clean up after the men. But some of these days, when the men realize they’ve got the world into a mess they can’t get it out of, they’ll be glad to give us the vote, and shoulder their troubles over on us. That’s THEIR scheme. Oh, it’s well that women are patient, believe ME!”

“What about Job?” suggested Captain Jim.

“Job! It was such a rare thing to find a patient man that when one was really discovered they were determined he shouldn’t be forgotten,” retorted Miss Cornelia triumphantly. “Anyhow, the virtue doesn’t go with the name. There never was such an impatient man born as old Job Taylor over harbor.”

“Well, you know, he had a good deal to try him, Cornelia. Even you can’t defend his wife. I always remember what old William MacAllister said of her at her funeral, ‘There’s nae doot she was a Chreestian wumman, but she had the de’il’s own temper.’”

“I suppose she WAS trying,” admitted Miss Cornelia reluctantly, “but that didn’t justify what Job said when she died. He rode home from the graveyard the day of the funeral with my father. He never said a word till they got near home. Then he heaved a big sigh and said, ‘You may not believe it, Stephen, but this is the happiest day of my life!’ Wasn’t that like a man?”

“I s’pose poor old Mrs. Job did make life kinder uneasy for him,” reflected Captain Jim.

“Well, there’s such a thing as decency, isn’t there? Even if a man is rejoicing in his heart over his wife being dead, he needn’t proclaim it to the four winds of heaven. And happy day or not, Job Taylor wasn’t long in marrying again, you might notice. His second wife could manage him. She made him walk Spanish, believe me! The first thing she did was to make

him hustle round and put up a tombstone to the first Mrs. Job — and she had a place left on it for her own name. She said there'd be nobody to make Job put up a monument to HER."

"Speaking of Taylors, how is Mrs. Lewis Taylor up at the Glen, doctor?" asked Captain Jim.

"She's getting better slowly — but she has to work too hard," replied Gilbert.

"Her husband works hard too — raising prize pigs," said Miss Cornelia. "He's noted for his beautiful pigs. He's a heap prouder of his pigs than of his children. But then, to be sure, his pigs are the best pigs possible, while his children don't amount to much. He picked a poor mother for them, and starved her while she was bearing and rearing them. His pigs got the cream and his children got the skim milk.

"There are times, Cornelia, when I have to agree with you, though it hurts me," said Captain Jim. "That's just exactly the truth about Lewis Taylor. When I see those poor, miserable children of his, robbed of all children ought to have, it p'isens my own bite and sup for days afterwards."

Gilbert went out to the kitchen in response to Anne's beckoning. Anne shut the door and gave him a connubial lecture.

"Gilbert, you and Captain Jim must stop baiting Miss Cornelia. Oh, I've been listening to you — and I just won't allow it."

'Anne, Miss Cornelia is enjoying herself hugely. You know she is.'

"Well, never mind. You two needn't egg her on like that. Dinner is ready now, and, Gilbert, DON'T let Mrs. Rachel carve the geese. I know she means to offer to do it because she doesn't think you can do it properly. Show her you can."

"I ought to be able to. I've been studying A-B-C-D diagrams of carving for the past month," said Gilbert. "Only don't talk to me while I'm doing it, Anne, for if you drive the letters out of my head I'll be in a worse

predicament than you were in old geometry days when the teacher changed them.”

Gilbert carved the geese beautifully. Even Mrs. Rachel had to admit that. And everybody ate of them and enjoyed them. Anne’s first Christmas dinner was a great success and she beamed with housewifely pride. Merry was the feast and long; and when it was over they gathered around the cheer of the red hearth flame and Captain Jim told them stories until the red sun swung low over Four Winds Harbor, and the long blue shadows of the Lombardies fell across the snow in the lane.

“I must be getting back to the light,” he said finally. “I’ll jest have time to walk home before sundown. Thank you for a beautiful Christmas, Mistress Blythe. Bring Master Davy down to the light some night before he goes home.

“I want to see those stone gods,” said Davy with a relish.

CHAPTER 16

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE LIGHT

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The Green Gables folk went home after Christmas, Marilla under solemn covenant to return for a month in the spring. More snow came before New Year's, and the harbor froze over, but the gulf still was free, beyond the white, imprisoned fields. The last day of the old year was one of those bright, cold, dazzling winter days, which bombard us with their brilliancy, and command our admiration but never our love. The sky was sharp and blue; the snow diamonds sparkled insistently; the stark trees were bare and shameless, with a kind of brazen beauty; the hills shot assaulting lances of crystal. Even the shadows were sharp and stiff and clear-cut, as no proper shadows should be. Everything that was handsome seemed ten times handsomer and less attractive in the glaring splendor; and everything that was ugly seemed ten times uglier, and everything was either handsome or ugly. There was no soft blending, or kind obscurity, or elusive mistiness in that searching glitter. The only things that held their own individuality were the firs — for the fir is the tree of mystery and shadow, and yields never to the encroachments of crude radiance.

But finally the day began to realise that she was growing old. Then a certain pensiveness fell over her beauty which dimmed yet intensified it; sharp angles, glittering points, melted away into curves and enticing gleams. The white harbor put on soft grays and pinks; the faraway hills turned amethyst.

“The old year is going away beautifully,” said Anne.

She and Leslie and Gilbert were on their way to the Four Winds Point, having plotted with Captain Jim to watch the New Year in at the light. The sun had set and in the southwestern sky hung Venus, glorious and golden, having drawn as near to her earth-sister as is possible for her. For the first

time Anne and Gilbert saw the shadow cast by that brilliant star of evening, that faint, mysterious shadow, never seen save when there is white snow to reveal it, and then only with averted vision, vanishing when you gaze at it directly.

“It’s like the spirit of a shadow, isn’t it?” whispered Anne. “You can see it so plainly haunting your side when you look ahead; but when you turn and look at it — it’s gone.”

“I have heard that you can see the shadow of Venus only once in a lifetime, and that within a year of seeing it your life’s most wonderful gift will come to you,” said Leslie. But she spoke rather hardly; perhaps she thought that even the shadow of Venus could bring her no gift of life. Anne smiled in the soft twilight; she felt quite sure what the mystic shadow promised her.

They found Marshall Elliott at the lighthouse. At first Anne felt inclined to resent the intrusion of this long-haired, long-bearded eccentric into the familiar little circle. But Marshall Elliott soon proved his legitimate claim to membership in the household of Joseph. He was a witty, intelligent, well-read man, rivalling Captain Jim himself in the knack of telling a good story. They were all glad when he agreed to watch the old year out with them.

Captain Jim’s small nephew Joe had come down to spend New Year’s with his great-uncle, and had fallen asleep on the sofa with the First Mate curled up in a huge golden ball at his feet.

“Ain’t he a dear little man?” said Captain Jim gloatingly. “I do love to watch a little child asleep, Mistress Blythe. It’s the most beautiful sight in the world, I reckon. Joe does love to get down here for a night, because I have him sleep with me. At home he has to sleep with the other two boys, and he doesn’t like it. Why can’t I sleep with father, Uncle Jim?” says he. ‘Everybody in the Bible slept with their fathers.’ As for the questions he asks, the minister himself couldn’t answer them. They fair swamp me. ‘Uncle Jim, if I wasn’t ME who’d I be?’ and, ‘Uncle Jim, what would happen if God died?’ He fired them two off at me tonight, afore he went to sleep. As for his imagination, it sails away from everything. He makes up

the most remarkable yarns — and then his mother shuts him up in the closet for telling stories. And he sits down and makes up another one, and has it ready to relate to her when she lets him out. He had one for me when he come down tonight. ‘Uncle Jim,’ says he, solemn as a tombstone, ‘I had a ‘venture in the Glen today.’ ‘Yes, what was it?’ says I, expecting something quite startling, but nowise prepared for what I really got. ‘I met a wolf in the street,’ says he, ‘a ‘normous wolf with a big, red mouf and AWFUL long teeth, Uncle Jim.’ ‘I didn’t know there was any wolves up at the Glen,’ says I. ‘Oh, he comed there from far, far away,’ says Joe, ‘and I fought he was going to eat me up, Uncle Jim.’ ‘Were you scared?’ says I. ‘No, ‘cause I had a big gun,’ says Joe, ‘and I shot the wolf dead, Uncle Jim, — solid dead — and then he went up to heaven and bit God,’ says he. Well, I was fair staggered, Mistress Blythe.”

The hours bloomed into mirth around the driftwood fire. Captain Jim told tales, and Marshall Elliott sang old Scotch ballads in a fine tenor voice; finally Captain Jim took down his old brown fiddle from the wall and began to play. He had a tolerable knack of fiddling, which all appreciated save the First Mate, who sprang from the sofa as if he had been shot, emitted a shriek of protest, and fled wildly up the stairs.

“Can’t cultivate an ear for music in that cat nohow,” said Captain Jim. “He won’t stay long enough to learn to like it. When we got the organ up at the Glen church old Elder Richards bounced up from his seat the minute the organist began to play and scuttled down the aisle and out of the church at the rate of no-man’s-business. It reminded me so strong of the First Mate tearing loose as soon as I begin to fiddle that I come nearer to laughing out loud in church than I ever did before or since.”

There was something so infectious in the rollicking tunes which Captain Jim played that very soon Marshall Elliott’s feet began to twitch. He had been a noted dancer in his youth. Presently he started up and held out his hands to Leslie. Instantly she responded. Round and round the firelit room they circled with a rhythmic grace that was wonderful. Leslie danced like one inspired; the wild, sweet abandon of the music seemed to have entered into and possessed her. Anne watched her in fascinated admiration. She had never seen her like this. All the innate richness and color and charm of

her nature seemed to have broken loose and overflowed in crimson cheek and glowing eye and grace of motion. Even the aspect of Marshall Elliott, with his long beard and hair, could not spoil the picture. On the contrary, it seemed to enhance it. Marshall Elliott looked like a Viking of elder days, dancing with one of the blue-eyed, golden-haired daughters of the Northland.

“The purtiest dancing I ever saw, and I’ve seen some in my time,” declared Captain Jim, when at last the bow fell from his tired hand. Leslie dropped into her chair, laughing, breathless.

“I love dancing,” she said apart to Anne. “I haven’t danced since I was sixteen — but I love it. The music seems to run through my veins like quicksilver and I forget everything — everything — except the delight of keeping time to it. There isn’t any floor beneath me, or walls about me, or roof over me — I’m floating amid the stars.”

Captain Jim hung his fiddle up in its place, beside a large frame enclosing several banknotes.

“Is there anybody else of your acquaintance who can afford to hang his walls with banknotes for pictures?” he asked. “There’s twenty ten-dollar notes there, not worth the glass over them. They’re old Bank of P. E. Island notes. Had them by me when the bank failed, and I had ‘em framed and hung up, partly as a reminder not to put your trust in banks, and partly to give me a real luxurious, millionaire feeling. Hullo, Matey, don’t be scared. You can come back now. The music and revelry is over for tonight. The old year has just another hour to stay with us. I’ve seen seventy-six New Years come in over that gulf yonder, Mistress Blythe.”

“You’ll see a hundred,” said Marshall Elliott.

Captain Jim shook his head.

“No; and I don’t want to — at least, I think I don’t. Death grows friendlier as we grow older. Not that one of us really wants to die though, Marshall. Tennyson spoke truth when he said that. There’s old Mrs. Wallace up at the Glen. She’s had heaps of trouble all her life, poor soul, and she’s lost

almost everyone she cared about. She's always saying that she'll be glad when her time comes, and she doesn't want to sojourn any longer in this vale of tears. But when she takes a sick spell there's a fuss! Doctors from town, and a trained nurse, and enough medicine to kill a dog. Life may be a vale of tears, all right, but there are some folks who enjoy weeping, I reckon."

They spent the old year's last hour quietly around the fire. A few minutes before twelve Captain Jim rose and opened the door.

"We must let the New Year in," he said.

Outside was a fine blue night. A sparkling ribbon of moonlight garlanded the gulf. Inside the bar the harbor shone like a pavement of pearl. They stood before the door and waited — Captain Jim with his ripe, full experience, Marshall Elliott in his vigorous but empty middle life, Gilbert and Anne with their precious memories and exquisite hopes, Leslie with her record of starved years and her hopeless future. The clock on the little shelf above the fireplace struck twelve.

"Welcome, New Year," said Captain Jim, bowing low as the last stroke died away. "I wish you all the best year of your lives, mates. I reckon that whatever the New Year brings us will be the best the Great Captain has for us — and somehow or other we'll all make port in a good harbor."

CHAPTER 17

A FOUR WINDS WINTER

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Winter set in vigorously after New Year's. Big, white drifts heaped themselves about the little house, and palms of frost covered its windows. The harbor ice grew harder and thicker, until the Four Winds people began their usual winter travelling over it. The safe ways were "bushed" by a benevolent Government, and night and day the gay tinkle of the sleighbells sounded on it. On moonlit nights Anne heard them in her house of dreams like fairy chimes. The gulf froze over, and the Four Winds light flashed no more. During the months when navigation was closed Captain Jim's office was a sinecure.

"The First Mate and I will have nothing to do till spring except keep warm and amuse ourselves. The last lighthouse keeper used always to move up to the Glen in winter; but I'd rather stay at the Point. The First Mate might get poisoned or chewed up by dogs at the Glen. It's a mite lonely, to be sure, with neither the light nor the water for company, but if our friends come to see us often we'll weather it through."

Captain Jim had an ice boat, and many a wild, glorious spin Gilbert and Anne and Leslie had over the glib harbor ice with him. Anne and Leslie took long snowshoe tramps together, too, over the fields, or across the harbor after storms, or through the woods beyond the Glen. They were very good comrades in their rambles and their fireside communings. Each had something to give the other — each felt life the richer for friendly exchange of thought and friendly silence; each looked across the white fields between their homes with a pleasant consciousness of a friend beyond. But, in spite of all this, Anne felt that there was always a barrier between Leslie and herself — a constraint that never wholly vanished.

“I don’t know why I can’t get closer to her,” Anne said one evening to Captain Jim. “I like her so much — I admire her so much — I WANT to take her right into my heart and creep right into hers. But I can never cross the barrier.”

“You’ve been too happy all your life, Mistress Blythe,” said Captain Jim thoughtfully. “I reckon that’s why you and Leslie can’t get real close together in your souls. The barrier between you is her experience of sorrow and trouble. She ain’t responsible for it and you ain’t; but it’s there and neither of you can cross it.”

“My childhood wasn’t very happy before I came to Green Gables,” said Anne, gazing soberly out of the window at the still, sad, dead beauty of the leafless tree-shadows on the moonlit snow.

“Mebbe not — but it was just the usual unhappiness of a child who hasn’t anyone to look after it properly. There hasn’t been any TRAGEDY in your life, Mistress Blythe. And poor Leslie’s has been almost ALL tragedy. She feels, I reckon, though mebbe she hardly knows she feels it, that there’s a vast deal in her life you can’t enter nor understand — and so she has to keep you back from it — hold you off, so to speak, from hurting her. You know if we’ve got anything about us that hurts we shrink from anyone’s touch on or near it. It holds good with our souls as well as our bodies, I reckon. Leslie’s soul must be near raw — it’s no wonder she hides it away.”

“If that were really all, I wouldn’t mind, Captain Jim. I would understand. But there are times — not always, but now and again — when I almost have to believe that Leslie doesn’t — doesn’t like me. Sometimes I surprise a look in her eyes that seems to show resentment and dislike — it goes so quickly — but I’ve seen it, I’m sure of that. And it hurts me, Captain Jim. I’m not used to being disliked — and I’ve tried so hard to win Leslie’s friendship.”

“You have won it, Mistress Blythe. Don’t you go cherishing any foolish notion that Leslie don’t like you. If she didn’t she wouldn’t have anything to do with you, much less chumming with you as she does. I know Leslie Moore too well not to be sure of that.”

“The first time I ever saw her, driving her geese down the hill on the day I came to Four Winds, she looked at me with the same expression,” persisted Anne. “I felt it, even in the midst of my admiration of her beauty. She looked at me resentfully — she did, indeed, Captain Jim.”

“The resentment must have been about something else, Mistress Blythe, and you jest come in for a share of it because you happened past. Leslie DOES take sullen spells now and again, poor girl. I can’t blame her, when I know what she has to put up with. I don’t know why it’s permitted. The doctor and I have talked a lot about the origin of evil, but we haven’t quite found out all about it yet. There’s a vast of onunderstandable things in life, ain’t there, Mistress Blythe? Sometimes things seem to work out real proper-like, same as with you and the doctor. And then again they all seem to go catawampus. There’s Leslie, so clever and beautiful you’d think she was meant for a queen, and instead she’s cooped up over there, robbed of almost everything a woman’d value, with no prospect except waiting on Dick Moore all her life. Though, mind you, Mistress Blythe, I daresay she’d choose her life now, such as it is, rather than the life she lived with Dick before he went away. THAT’S something a clumsy old sailor’s tongue mustn’t meddle with. But you’ve helped Leslie a lot — she’s a different creature since you come to Four Winds. Us old friends see the difference in her, as you can’t. Miss Cornelia and me was talking it over the other day, and it’s one of the mighty few p’intz that we see eye to eye on. So jest you throw overboard any idea of her not liking you.”

Anne could hardly discard it completely, for there were undoubtedly times when she felt, with an instinct that was not to be combated by reason, that Leslie harbored a queer, indefinable resentment towards her. At times, this secret consciousness marred the delight of their comradeship; at others it was almost forgotten; but Anne always felt the hidden thorn was there, and might prick her at any moment. She felt a cruel sting from it on the day when she told Leslie of what she hoped the spring would bring to the little house of dreams. Leslie looked at her with hard, bitter, unfriendly eyes.

“So you are to have THAT, too,” she said in a choked voice. And without another word she had turned and gone across the fields homeward. Anne was deeply hurt; for the moment she felt as if she could never like Leslie

again. But when Leslie came over a few evenings later she was so pleasant, so friendly, so frank, and witty, and winsome, that Anne was charmed into forgiveness and forgetfulness. Only, she never mentioned her darling hope to Leslie again; nor did Leslie ever refer to it. But one evening, when late winter was listening for the word of spring, she came over to the little house for a twilight chat; and when she went away she left a small, white box on the table. Anne found it after she was gone and opened it wonderingly. In it was a tiny white dress of exquisite workmanship — delicate embroidery, wonderful tucking, sheer loveliness. Every stitch in it was handwork; and the little frills of lace at neck and sleeves were of real Valenciennes. Lying on it was a card—"with Leslie's love."

"What hours of work she must have put on it," said Anne. "And the material must have cost more than she could really afford. It is very sweet of her."

But Leslie was brusque and curt when Anne thanked her, and again the latter felt thrown back upon herself.

Leslie's gift was not alone in the little house. Miss Cornelia had, for the time being, given up sewing for unwanted, unwelcome eighth babies, and fallen to sewing for a very much wanted first one, whose welcome would leave nothing to be desired. Philippa Blake and Diana Wright each sent a marvellous garment; and Mrs. Rachel Lynde sent several, in which good material and honest stitches took the place of embroidery and frills. Anne herself made many, desecrated by no touch of machinery, spending over them the happiest hours of the happy winter.

Captain Jim was the most frequent guest of the little house, and none was more welcome. Every day Anne loved the simple-souled, true-hearted old sailor more and more. He was as refreshing as a sea breeze, as interesting as some ancient chronicle. She was never tired of listening to his stories, and his quaint remarks and comments were a continual delight to her. Captain Jim was one of those rare and interesting people who "never speak but they say something." The milk of human kindness and the wisdom of the serpent were mingled in his composition in delightful proportions.

Nothing ever seemed to put Captain Jim out or depress him in any way.

“I’ve kind of contracted a habit of enj’ying things,” he remarked once, when Anne had commented on his invariable cheerfulness. “It’s got so chronic that I believe I even enj’y the disagreeable things. It’s great fun thinking they can’t last. ‘Old rheumatiz,’ says I, when it grips me hard, ‘you’ve GOT to stop aching sometime. The worse you are the sooner you’ll stop, mebbe. I’m bound to get the better of you in the long run, whether in the body or out of the body.’”

One night, by the fireside at the light Anne saw Captain Jim’s “life-book.” He needed no coaxing to show it and proudly gave it to her to read.

“I writ it to leave to little Joe,” he said. “I don’t like the idea of everything I’ve done and seen being clean forgot after I’ve shipped for my last v’yage. Joe, he’ll remember it, and tell the yarns to his children.”

It was an old leather-bound book filled with the record of his voyages and adventures. Anne thought what a treasure trove it would be to a writer. Every sentence was a nugget. In itself the book had no literary merit; Captain Jim’s charm of storytelling failed him when he came to pen and ink; he could only jot roughly down the outline of his famous tales, and both spelling and grammar were sadly askew. But Anne felt that if anyone possessed of the gift could take that simple record of a brave, adventurous life, reading between the bald lines the tales of dangers staunchly faced and duty manfully done, a wonderful story might be made from it. Rich comedy and thrilling tragedy were both lying hidden in Captain Jim’s “life-book,” waiting for the touch of the master hand to waken the laughter and grief and horror of thousands.

Anne said something of this to Gilbert as they walked home.

“Why don’t you try your hand at it yourself, Anne?”

Anne shook her head.

“No. I only wish I could. But it’s not in the power of my gift. You know what my forte is, Gilbert — the fanciful, the fairylike, the pretty. To write

Captain Jim's life-book as it should be written one should be a master of vigorous yet subtle style, a keen psychologist, a born humorist and a born tragedian. A rare combination of gifts is needed. Paul might do it if he were older. Anyhow, I'm going to ask him to come down next summer and meet Captain Jim."

"Come to this shore," wrote Anne to Paul. "I am afraid you cannot find here Nora or the Golden Lady or the Twin Sailors; but you will find one old sailor who can tell you wonderful stories."

Paul, however wrote back, saying regretfully that he could not come that year. He was going abroad for two year's study.

"When I return I'll come to Four Winds, dear Teacher," he wrote.

"But meanwhile, Captain Jim is growing old," said Anne, sorrowfully, "and there is nobody to write his life-book."

CHAPTER 18

SPRING DAYS

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The ice in the harbor grew black and rotten in the March suns; in April there were blue waters and a windy, white-capped gulf again; and again the Four Winds light begemmed the twilights.

“I’m so glad to see it once more,” said Anne, on the first evening of its reappearance. “I’ve missed it so all winter. The northwestern sky has seemed blank and lonely without it.”

The land was tender with brand-new, golden-green, baby leaves. There was an emerald mist on the woods beyond the Glen. The seaward valleys were full of fairy mists at dawn.

Vibrant winds came and went with salt foam in their breath. The sea laughed and flashed and preened and allured, like a beautiful, coquettish woman. The herring schooled and the fishing village woke to life. The harbor was alive with white sails making for the channel. The ships began to sail outward and inward again.

“On a spring day like this,” said Anne, “I know exactly what my soul will feel like on the resurrection morning.”

“There are times in spring when I sorter feel that I might have been a poet if I’d been caught young,” remarked Captain Jim. “I catch myself conning over old lines and verses I heard the schoolmaster reciting sixty years ago. They don’t trouble me at other times. Now I feel as if I had to get out on the rocks or the fields or the water and spout them.”

Captain Jim had come up that afternoon to bring Anne a load of shells for her garden, and a little bunch of sweetgrass which he had found in a

ramble over the sand dunes.

“It’s getting real scarce along this shore now,” he said. “When I was a boy there was aplenty of it. But now it’s only once in a while you’ll find a plot — and never when you’re looking for it. You jest have to stumble on it — you’re walking along on the sand hills, never thinking of sweetgrass — and all at once the air is full of sweetness — and there’s the grass under your feet. I favor the smell of sweetgrass. It always makes me think of my mother.”

“She was fond of it?” asked Anne.

“Not that I knows on. Dunno’s she ever saw any sweetgrass. No, it’s because it has a kind of motherly perfume — not too young, you understand — something kind of seasoned and wholesome and dependable — jest like a mother. The schoolmaster’s bride always kept it among her handkerchiefs. You might put that little bunch among yours, Mistress Blythe. I don’t like these boughten scents — but a whiff of sweetgrass belongs anywhere a lady does.”

Anne had not been especially enthusiastic over the idea of surrounding her flower beds with quahog shells; as a decoration they did not appeal to her on first thought. But she would not have hurt Captain Jim’s feelings for anything; so she assumed a virtue she did not at first feel, and thanked him heartily. And when Captain Jim had proudly encircled every bed with a rim of the big, milk-white shells, Anne found to her surprise that she liked the effect. On a town lawn, or even up at the Glen, they would not have been in keeping, but here, in the old-fashioned, sea-bound garden of the little house of dreams, they BELONGED.

“They DO look nice,” she said sincerely.

“The schoolmaster’s bride always had cowhawks round her beds,” said Captain Jim. “She was a master hand with flowers. She LOOKED at ‘em — and touched ‘em — SO — and they grew like mad. Some folks have that knack — I reckon you have it, too, Mistress Blythe.”

“Oh, I don’t know — but I love my garden, and I love working in it. To potter with green, growing things, watching each day to see the dear, new sprouts come up, is like taking a hand in creation, I think. Just now my garden is like faith — the substance of things hoped for. But bide a wee.”

“It always amazes me to look at the little, wrinkled brown seeds and think of the rainbows in ‘em,” said Captain Jim. “When I ponder on them seeds I don’t find it nowise hard to believe that we’ve got souls that’ll live in other worlds. You couldn’t hardly believe there was life in them tiny things, some no bigger than grains of dust, let alone color and scent, if you hadn’t seen the miracle, could you?”

Anne, who was counting her days like silver beads on a rosary, could not now take the long walk to the lighthouse or up the Glen road. But Miss Cornelia and Captain Jim came very often to the little house. Miss Cornelia was the joy of Anne’s and Gilbert’s existence. They laughed sidesplittingly over her speeches after every visit. When Captain Jim and she happened to visit the little house at the same time there was much sport for the listening. They waged wordy warfare, she attacking, he defending. Anne once reproached the Captain for his baiting of Miss Cornelia.

“Oh, I do love to set her going, Mistress Blythe,” chuckled the unrepentant sinner. “It’s the greatest amusement I have in life. That tongue of hers would blister a stone. And you and that young dog of a doctor enj’y listening to her as much as I do.”

Captain Jim came along another evening to bring Anne some mayflowers. The garden was full of the moist, scented air of a maritime spring evening. There was a milk-white mist on the edge of the sea, with a young moon kissing it, and a silver gladness of stars over the Glen. The bell of the church across the harbor was ringing dreamily sweet. The mellow chime drifted through the dusk to mingle with the soft spring-moan of the sea. Captain Jim’s mayflowers added the last completing touch to the charm of the night.

“I haven’t seen any this spring, and I’ve missed them,” said Anne, burying her face in them.

“They ain’t to be found around Four Winds, only in the barrens away behind the Glen up yander. I took a little trip today to the Land-of-nothing-to-do, and hunted these up for you. I reckon they’re the last you’ll see this spring, for they’re nearly done.”

“How kind and thoughtful you are, Captain Jim. Nobody else — not even Gilbert” — with a shake of her head at him—”remembered that I always long for mayflowers in spring.”

“Well, I had another errand, too — I wanted to take Mr. Howard back yander a mess of trout. He likes one occasional, and it’s all I can do for a kindness he did me once. I stayed all the afternoon and talked to him. He likes to talk to me, though he’s a highly eddicated man and I’m only an ignorant old sailor, because he’s one of the folks that’s GOT to talk or they’re miserable, and he finds listeners scarce around here. The Glen folks fight shy of him because they think he’s an infidel. He ain’t that far gone exactly — few men is, I reckon — but he’s what you might call a heretic. Heretics are wicked, but they’re mighty int’resting. It’s jest that they’ve got sorter lost looking for God, being under the impression that He’s hard to find — which He ain’t never. Most of ‘em blunder to Him after awhile, I guess. I don’t think listening to Mr. Howard’s arguments is likely to do me much harm. Mind you, I believe what I was brought up to believe. It saves a vast of bother — and back of it all, God is good. The trouble with Mr. Howard is that he’s a leetle TOO clever. He thinks that he’s bound to live up to his cleverness, and that it’s smarter to thrash out some new way of getting to heaven than to go by the old track the common, ignorant folks is travelling. But he’ll get there sometime all right, and then he’ll laugh at himself.”

“Mr. Howard was a Methodist to begin with,” said Miss Cornelia, as if she thought he had not far to go from that to heresy.

“Do you know, Cornelia,” said Captain Jim gravely, “I’ve often thought that if I wasn’t a Presbyterian I’d be a Methodist.”

“Oh, well,” conceded Miss Cornelia, “if you weren’t a Presbyterian it wouldn’t matter much what you were. Speaking of heresy, reminds me, doctor — I’ve brought back that book you lent me — that Natural Law in

the Spiritual World — I didn't read more'n a third of it. I can read sense, and I can read nonsense, but that book is neither the one nor the other."

"It IS considered rather heretical in some quarters," admitted Gilbert, "but I told you that before you took it, Miss Cornelia."

"Oh, I wouldn't have minded its being heretical. I can stand wickedness, but I can't stand foolishness," said Miss Cornelia calmly, and with the air of having said the last thing there was to say about Natural Law.

"Speaking of books, A Mad Love come to an end at last two weeks ago," remarked Captain Jim musingly. "It run to one hundred and three chapters. When they got married the book stopped right off, so I reckon their troubles were all over. It's real nice that that's the way in books anyhow, isn't it, even if 'tistn't so anywhere else?"

"I never read novels," said Miss Cornelia. "Did you hear how Geordie Russell was today, Captain Jim?"

"Yes, I called in on my way home to see him. He's getting round all right — but stewing in a broth of trouble, as usual, poor man.

"Course he brews up most of it for himself, but I reckon that don't make it any easier to bear."

"He's an awful pessimist," said Miss Cornelia.

"Well, no, he ain't a pessimist exactly, Cornelia. He only jest never finds anything that suits him."

"And isn't that a pessimist?"

"No, no. A pessimist is one who never expects to find anything to suit him. Geordie hain't got THAT far yet."

"You'd find something good to say of the devil himself, Jim Boyd."

"Well, you've heard the story of the old lady who said he was persevering. But no, Cornelia, I've nothing good to say of the devil."

“Do you believe in him at all?” asked Miss Cornelia seriously.

“How can you ask that when you know what a good Presbyterian I am, Cornelia? How could a Presbyterian get along without a devil?”

“DO you?” persisted Miss Cornelia.

Captain Jim suddenly became grave.

“I believe in what I heard a minister once call ‘a mighty and malignant and INTELLIGENT power of evil working in the universe,’” he said solemnly. “I do THAT, Cornelia. You can call it the devil, or the ‘principle of evil,’ or the Old Scratch, or any name you like. It’s THERE, and all the infidels and heretics in the world can’t argue it away, any more’n they can argue God away. It’s there, and it’s working. But, mind you, Cornelia, I believe it’s going to get the worst of it in the long run.”

“I am sure I hope so,” said Miss Cornelia, none too hopefully. “But speaking of the devil, I am positive that Billy Booth is possessed by him now. Have you heard of Billy’s latest performance?”

“No, what was that?”

“He’s gone and burned up his wife’s new, brown broadcloth suit, that she paid twenty-five dollars for in Charlottetown, because he declares the men looked too admiring at her when she wore it to church the first time. Wasn’t that like a man?”

“Mistress Booth IS mighty pretty, and brown’s her color,” said Captain Jim reflectively.

“Is that any good reason why he should poke her new suit into the kitchen stove? Billy Booth is a jealous fool, and he makes his wife’s life miserable. She’s cried all the week about her suit. Oh, Anne, I wish I could write like you, believe ME. Wouldn’t I score some of the men round here!”

“Those Booths are all a mite queer,” said Captain Jim. “Billy seemed the sanest of the lot till he got married and then this queer jealous streak cropped out in him. His brother Daniel, now, was always odd.”

“Took tantrums every few days or so and wouldn’t get out of bed,” said Miss Cornelia with a relish. “His wife would have to do all the barn work till he got over his spell. When he died people wrote her letters of condolence; if I’d written anything it would have been one of congratulation. Their father, old Abram Booth, was a disgusting old sot. He was drunk at his wife’s funeral, and kept reeling round and hiccuping ‘I didn’t dri — i — i — nk much but I feel a — a — awfully que — e — e — r.’ I gave him a good jab in the back with my umbrella when he came near me, and it sobered him up until they got the casket out of the house. Young Johnny Booth was to have been married yesterday, but he couldn’t be because he’s gone and got the mumps. Wasn’t that like a man?”

“How could he help getting the mumps, poor fellow?”

“I’d poor fellow him, believe ME, if I was Kate Sterns. I don’t know how he could help getting the mumps, but I DO know the wedding supper was all prepared and everything will be spoiled before he’s well again. Such a waste! He should have had the mumps when he was a boy.”

“Come, come, Cornelia, don’t you think you’re a mite unreasonable?”

Miss Cornelia disdained to reply and turned instead to Susan Baker, a grim-faced, kindhearted elderly spinster of the Glen, who had been installed as maid-of-all-work at the little house for some weeks. Susan had been up to the Glen to make a sick call, and had just returned.

“How is poor old Aunt Mandy tonight?” asked Miss Cornelia.

Susan sighed.

“Very poorly — very poorly, Cornelia. I am afraid she will soon be in heaven, poor thing!”

“Oh, surely, it’s not so bad as that!” exclaimed Miss Cornelia, sympathetically.

Captain Jim and Gilbert looked at each other. Then they suddenly rose and went out.

“There are times,” said Captain Jim, between spasms, “when it would be a sin NOT to laugh. Them two excellent women!”

CHAPTER 19

DAWN AND DUSK

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In early June, when the sand hills were a great glory of pink wild roses, and the Glen was smothered in apple blossoms, Marilla arrived at the little house, accompanied by a black horsehair trunk, patterned with brass nails, which had reposed undisturbed in the Green Gables garret for half a century. Susan Baker, who, during her few weeks' sojourn in the little house, had come to worship "young Mrs. Doctor," as she called Anne, with blind fervor, looked rather jealously askance at Marilla at first. But as Marilla did not try to interfere in kitchen matters, and showed no desire to interrupt Susan's ministrations to young Mrs. Doctor, the good handmaiden became reconciled to her presence, and told her cronies at the Glen that Miss Cuthbert was a fine old lady and knew her place.

One evening, when the sky's limpid bowl was filled with a red glory, and the robins were thrilling the golden twilight with jubilant hymns to the stars of evening, there was a sudden commotion in the little house of dreams. Telephone messages were sent up to the Glen, Doctor Dave and a white-capped nurse came hastily down, Marilla paced the garden walks between the quahog shells, murmuring prayers between her set lips, and Susan sat in the kitchen with cotton wool in her ears and her apron over her head.

Leslie, looking out from the house up the brook, saw that every window of the little house was alight, and did not sleep that night.

The June night was short; but it seemed an eternity to those who waited and watched.

"Oh, will it NEVER end?" said Marilla; then she saw how grave the nurse and Doctor Dave looked, and she dared ask no more questions. Suppose

Anne — but Marilla could not suppose it.

“Do not tell me,” said Susan fiercely, answering the anguish in Marilla’s eyes, “that God could be so cruel as to take that darling lamb from us when we all love her so much.”

“He has taken others as well beloved,” said Marilla hoarsely.

But at dawn, when the rising sun rent apart the mists hanging over the sandbar, and made rainbows of them, joy came to the little house. Anne was safe, and a wee, white lady, with her mother’s big eyes, was lying beside her. Gilbert, his face gray and haggard from his night’s agony, came down to tell Marilla and Susan.

“Thank God,” shuddered Marilla.

Susan got up and took the cotton wool out of her ears.

“Now for breakfast,” she said briskly. “I am of the opinion that we will all be glad of a bite and sup. You tell young Mrs. Doctor not to worry about a single thing — Susan is at the helm. You tell her just to think of her baby.”

Gilbert smiled rather sadly as he went away. Anne, her pale face blanched with its baptism of pain, her eyes aglow with the holy passion of motherhood, did not need to be told to think of her baby. She thought of nothing else. For a few hours she tasted of happiness so rare and exquisite that she wondered if the angels in heaven did not envy her.

“Little Joyce,” she murmured, when Marilla came in to see the baby. “We planned to call her that if she were a girlie. There were so many we would have liked to name her for; we couldn’t choose between them, so we decided on Joyce — we can call her Joy for short — Joy — it suits so well. Oh, Marilla, I thought I was happy before. Now I know that I just dreamed a pleasant dream of happiness. THIS is the reality.”

“You mustn’t talk, Anne — wait till you’re stronger,” said Marilla warningly.

“You know how hard it is for me NOT to talk,” smiled Anne.

At first she was too weak and too happy to notice that Gilbert and the nurse looked grave and Marilla sorrowful. Then, as subtly, and coldly, and remorselessly as a sea-fog stealing landward, fear crept into her heart. Why was not Gilbert gladder? Why would he not talk about the baby? Why would they not let her have it with her after that first heavenly — happy hour? Was — was there anything wrong?

“Gilbert,” whispered Anne imploringly, “the baby — is all right — isn’t she? Tell me — tell me.”

Gilbert was a long while in turning round; then he bent over Anne and looked in her eyes. Marilla, listening fearfully outside the door, heard a pitiful, heartbroken moan, and fled to the kitchen where Susan was weeping.

“Oh, the poor lamb — the poor lamb! How can she bear it, Miss Cuthbert? I am afraid it will kill her. She has been that built up and happy, longing for that baby, and planning for it. Cannot anything be done nohow, Miss Cuthbert?”

“I’m afraid not, Susan. Gilbert says there is no hope. He knew from the first the little thing couldn’t live.”

“And it is such a sweet baby,” sobbed Susan. “I never saw one so white — they are mostly red or yellow. And it opened its big eyes as if it was months old. The little, little thing! Oh, the poor, young Mrs. Doctor!”

At sunset the little soul that had come with the dawning went away, leaving heartbreak behind it. Miss Cornelia took the wee, white lady from the kindly but stranger hands of the nurse, and dressed the tiny waxen form in the beautiful dress Leslie had made for it. Leslie had asked her to do that. Then she took it back and laid it beside the poor, broken, tear-blinded little mother.

“The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, dearie,” she said through her own tears. “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Then she went away, leaving Anne and Gilbert alone together with their dead.

The next day, the small white Joy was laid in a velvet casket which Leslie had lined with apple-blossoms, and taken to the graveyard of the church across the harbor. Miss Cornelia and Marilla put all the little love-made garments away, together with the ruffled basket which had been befrilled

and belaced for dimpled limbs and downy head. Little Joy was never to sleep there; she had found a colder, narrower bed.

“This has been an awful disappointment to me,” sighed Miss Cornelia. “I’ve looked forward to this baby — and I did want it to be a girl, too.”

“I can only be thankful that Anne’s life was spared,” said Marilla, with a shiver, recalling those hours of darkness when the girl she loved was passing through the valley of the shadow.

“Poor, poor lamb! Her heart is broken,” said Susan.

“I ENVY Anne,” said Leslie suddenly and fiercely, “and I’d envy her even if she had died! She was a mother for one beautiful day. I’d gladly give my life for THAT!”

“I wouldn’t talk like that, Leslie, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia deprecatingly. She was afraid that the dignified Miss Cuthbert would think Leslie quite terrible.

Anne’s convalescence was long, and made bitter for her by many things. The bloom and sunshine of the Four Winds world grated harshly on her; and yet, when the rain fell heavily, she pictured it beating so mercilessly down on that little grave across the harbor; and when the wind blew around the eaves she heard sad voices in it she had never heard before.

Kindly callers hurt her, too, with the wellmeant platitudes with which they strove to cover the nakedness of bereavement. A letter from Phil Blake was an added sting. Phil had heard of the baby’s birth, but not of its death, and she wrote Anne a congratulatory letter of sweet mirth which hurt her horribly.

“I would have laughed over it so happily if I had my baby,” she sobbed to Marilla. “But when I haven’t it just seems like wanton cruelty — though I know Phil wouldn’t hurt me for the world. Oh, Marilla, I don’t see how I can EVER be happy again — EVERYTHING will hurt me all the rest of my life.”

“Time will help you,” said Marilla, who was racked with sympathy but could never learn to express it in other than age-worn formulas.

“It doesn’t seem FAIR,” said Anne rebelliously. “Babies are born and live where they are not wanted — where they will be neglected — where they will have no chance. I would have loved my baby so — and cared for it so tenderly — and tried to give her every chance for good. And yet I wasn’t allowed to keep her.”

“It was God’s will, Anne,” said Marilla, helpless before the riddle of the universe — the WHY of undeserved pain. “And little Joy is better off.”

“I can’t believe THAT,” cried Anne bitterly. Then, seeing that Marilla looked shocked, she added passionately, “Why should she be born at all — why should any one be born at all — if she’s better off dead? I DON’T believe it is better for a child to die at birth than to live its life out — and love and be loved — and enjoy and suffer — and do its work — and develop a character that would give it a personality in eternity. And how do you know it was God’s will? Perhaps it was just a thwarting of His purpose by the Power of Evil. We can’t be expected to be resigned to THAT.”

“Oh, Anne, don’t talk so,” said Marilla, genuinely alarmed lest Anne were drifting into deep and dangerous waters. “We can’t understand — but we must have faith — we MUST believe that all is for the best. I know you find it hard to think so, just now. But try to be brave — for Gilbert’s sake. He’s so worried about you. You aren’t getting strong as fast as you should.”

“Oh, I know I’ve been very selfish,” sighed Anne. “I love Gilbert more than ever — and I want to live for his sake. But it seems as if part of me was buried over there in that little harbor graveyard — and it hurts so much that I’m afraid of life.”

“It won’t hurt so much always, Anne.”

“The thought that it may stop hurting sometimes hurts me worse than all else, Marilla.”

“Yes, I know, I’ve felt that too, about other things. But we all love you, Anne. Captain Jim has been up every day to ask for you — and Mrs. Moore haunts the place — and Miss Bryant spends most of her time, I think, cooking up nice things for you. Susan doesn’t like it very well. She thinks she can cook as well as Miss Bryant.”

“Dear Susan! Oh, everybody has been so dear and good and lovely to me, Marilla. I’m not ungrateful — and perhaps — when this horrible ache grows a little less — I’ll find that I can go on living.”

CHAPTER 20

LOST MARGARET

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Anne found that she could go on living; the day came when she even smiled again over one of Miss Cornelia's speeches. But there was something in the smile that had never been in Anne's smile before and would never be absent from it again.

On the first day she was able to go for a drive Gilbert took her down to Four Winds Point, and left her there while he rowed over the channel to see a patient at the fishing village. A rollicking wind was scudding across the harbor and the dunes, whipping the water into whitecaps and washing the sandshore with long lines of silvery breakers.

"I'm real proud to see you here again, Mistress Blythe," said Captain Jim. "Sit down — sit down. I'm afeared it's mighty dusty here today — but there's no need of looking at dust when you can look at such scenery, is there?"

"I don't mind the dust," said Anne, "but Gilbert says I must keep in the open air. I think I'll go and sit on the rocks down there."

"Would you like company or would you rather be alone?"

"If by company you mean yours I'd much rather have it than be alone," said Anne, smiling. Then she sighed. She had never before minded being alone. Now she dreaded it. When she was alone now she felt so dreadfully alone.

"Here's a nice little spot where the wind can't get at you," said Captain Jim, when they reached the rocks. "I often sit here. It's a great place jest to sit and dream."

“Oh — dreams,” sighed Anne. “I can’t dream now, Captain Jim — I’m done with dreams.”

“Oh, no, you’re not, Mistress Blythe — oh, no, you’re not,” said Captain Jim meditatively. “I know how you feel jest now — but if you keep on living you’ll get glad again, and the first thing you know you’ll be dreaming again — thank the good Lord for it! If it wasn’t for our dreams they might as well bury us. How’d we stand living if it wasn’t for our dream of immortality? And that’s a dream that’s BOUND to come true, Mistress Blythe. You’ll see your little Joyce again some day.”

“But she won’t be my baby,” said Anne, with trembling lips. “Oh, she may be, as Longfellow says, ‘a fair maiden clothed with celestial grace’ — but she’ll be a stranger to me.”

“God will manage better’n THAT, I believe,” said Captain Jim.

They were both silent for a little time. Then Captain Jim said very softly:

“Mistress Blythe, may I tell you about lost Margaret?”

“Of course,” said Anne gently. She did not know who “lost Margaret” was, but she felt that she was going to hear the romance of Captain Jim’s life.

“I’ve often wanted to tell you about her,” Captain Jim went on.

“Do you know why, Mistress Blythe? It’s because I want somebody to remember and think of her sometime after I’m gone. I can’t bear that her name should be forgotten by all living souls. And now nobody remembers lost Margaret but me.”

Then Captain Jim told the story — an old, old forgotten story, for it was over fifty years since Margaret had fallen asleep one day in her father’s dory and drifted — or so it was supposed, for nothing was ever certainly known as to her fate — out of the channel, beyond the bar, to perish in the black thundersquall which had come up so suddenly that long-ago summer afternoon. But to Captain Jim those fifty years were but as yesterday when it is past.

“I walked the shore for months after that,” he said sadly, “looking to find her dear, sweet little body; but the sea never give her back to me. But I’ll find her sometime, Mistress Blythe — I’ll find her sometime. She’s waiting for me. I wish I could tell you jest how she looked, but I can’t. I’ve seen a fine, silvery mist hanging over the bar at sunrise that seemed like her — and then again I’ve seen a white birch in the woods back yander that made me think of her. She had pale, brown hair and a little white, sweet face, and long slender fingers like yours, Mistress Blythe, only browner, for she was a shore girl. Sometimes I wake up in the night and hear the sea calling to me in the old way, and it seems as if lost Margaret called in it. And when there’s a storm and the waves are sobbing and moaning I hear her lamenting among them. And when they laugh on a gay day it’s HER laugh — lost Margaret’s sweet, roguish, little laugh. The sea took her from me, but some day I’ll find her. Mistress Blythe. It can’t keep us apart forever.”

“I am glad you have told me about her,” said Anne. “I have often wondered why you had lived all your life alone.”

“I couldn’t ever care for anyone else. Lost Margaret took my heart with her — out there,” said the old lover, who had been faithful for fifty years to his drowned sweetheart. “You won’t mind if I talk a good deal about her, will you, Mistress Blythe? It’s a pleasure to me — for all the pain went out of her memory years ago and jest left its blessing. I know you’ll never forget her, Mistress Blythe. And if the years, as I hope, bring other little folks to your home, I want you to promise me that you’ll tell THEM the story of lost Margaret, so that her name won’t be forgotten among humankind.”

CHAPTER 2 1

BARRIERS SWEEP AWAY

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“Anne,” said Leslie, breaking abruptly a short silence, “you don’t know how GOOD it is to be sitting here with you again — working — and talking — and being silent together.”

They were sitting among the blue-eyed grasses on the bank of the brook in Anne’s garden. The water sparkled and crooned past them; the birches threw dappled shadows over them; roses bloomed along the walks. The sun was beginning to be low, and the air was full of woven music. There was one music of the wind in the firs behind the house, and another of the waves on the bar, and still another from the distant bell of the church near which the wee, white lady slept. Anne loved that bell, though it brought sorrowful thoughts now.

She looked curiously at Leslie, who had thrown down her sewing and spoken with a lack of restraint that was very unusual with her.

“On that horrible night when you were so ill,” Leslie went on, “I kept thinking that perhaps we’d have no more talks and walks and WORKS together. And I realised just what your friendship had come to mean to me — just what YOU meant — and just what a hateful little beast I had been.”

“Leslie! Leslie! I never allow anyone to call my friends names.”

“It’s true. That’s exactly what I am — a hateful little beast. There’s something I’ve GOT to tell you, Anne. I suppose it will make you despise me, but I MUST confess it. Anne, there have been times this past winter and spring when I have HATED you.”

“I KNEW it,” said Anne calmly.

“You KNEW it?”

“Yes, I saw it in your eyes.”

“And yet you went on liking me and being my friend.”

“Well, it was only now and then you hated me, Leslie. Between times you loved me, I think.”

“I certainly did. But that other horrid feeling was always there, spoiling it, back in my heart. I kept it down — sometimes I forgot it — but sometimes it would surge up and take possession of me. I hated you because I ENVIED you — oh, I was sick with envy of you at times. You had a dear little home — and love — and happiness — and glad dreams — everything I wanted — and never had — and never could have. Oh, never could have! THAT was what stung. I wouldn’t have envied you, if I had had any HOPE that life would ever be different for me. But I hadn’t — I hadn’t — and it didn’t seem FAIR. It made me rebellious — and it hurt me — and so I hated you at times. Oh, I was so ashamed of it — I’m dying of shame now — but I couldn’t conquer it.

“That night, when I was afraid you mightn’t live — I thought I was going to be punished for my wickedness — and I loved you so then. Anne, Anne, I never had anything to love since my mother died, except Dick’s old dog — and it’s so dreadful to have nothing to love — life is so EMPTY — and there’s NOTHING worse than emptiness — and I might have loved you so much — and that horrible thing had spoiled it—”

Leslie was trembling and growing almost incoherent with the violence of her emotion.

“Don’t, Leslie,” implored Anne, “oh, don’t. I understand — don’t talk of it any more.”

“I must — I must. When I knew you were going to live I vowed that I would tell you as soon as you were well — that I wouldn’t go on accepting your friendship and companionship without telling you how unworthy I was of it. And I’ve been so afraid — it would turn you against me.”

“You needn’t fear that, Leslie.”

“Oh, I’m so glad — so glad, Anne.” Leslie clasped her brown, work-hardened hands tightly together to still their shaking. “But I want to tell you everything, now I’ve begun. You don’t remember the first time I saw you, I suppose — it wasn’t that night on the shore—”

“No, it was the night Gilbert and I came home. You were driving your geese down the hill. I should think I DO remember it! I thought you were so beautiful — I longed for weeks after to find out who you were.”

“I knew who YOU were, although I had never seen either of you before. I had heard of the new doctor and his bride who were coming to live in Miss Russell’s little house. I — I hated you that very moment, Anne.”

“I felt the resentment in your eyes — then I doubted — I thought I must be mistaken — because WHY should it be?”

“It was because you looked so happy. Oh, you’ll agree with me now that I AM a hateful beast — to hate another woman just because she was happy, — and when her happiness didn’t take anything from me! That was why I never went to see you. I knew quite well I ought to go — even our simple Four Winds customs demanded that. But I couldn’t. I used to watch you from my window — I could see you and your husband strolling about your garden in the evening — or you running down the poplar lane to meet him. And it hurt me. And yet in another way I wanted to go over. I felt that, if I were not so miserable, I could have liked you and found in you what I’ve never had in my life — an intimate, REAL friend of my own age. And then you remember that night at the shore? You were afraid I would think you crazy. You must have thought I was.”

“No, but I couldn’t understand you, Leslie. One moment you drew me to you — the next you pushed me back.”

“I was very unhappy that evening. I had had a hard day. Dick had been very — very hard to manage that day. Generally he is quite goodnatured and easily controlled, you know, Anne. But some days he is very different. I was so heartsick — I ran away to the shore as soon as he went to sleep. It

was my only refuge. I sat there thinking of how my poor father had ended his life, and wondering if I wouldn't be driven to it some day. Oh, my heart was full of black thoughts! And then you came dancing along the cove like a glad, lighthearted child. I — I hated you more than I've ever done since. And yet I craved your friendship. The one feeling swayed me one moment; the other feeling the next. When I got home that night I cried for shame of what you must think of me. But it's always been just the same when I came over here. Sometimes I'd be happy and enjoy my visit. And at other times that hideous feeling would mar it all. There were times when everything about you and your house hurt me. You had so many dear little things I couldn't have. Do you know — it's ridiculous — but I had an especial spite at those china dogs of yours. There were times when I wanted to catch up Gog and Magog and bang their pert black noses together! Oh, you smile, Anne — but it was never funny to me. I would come here and see you and Gilbert with your books and your flowers, and your household gods, and your little family jokes — and your love for each other showing in every look and word, even when you didn't know it — and I would go home to — you know what I went home to! Oh, Anne, I don't believe I'm jealous and envious by nature. When I was a girl I lacked many things my schoolmates had, but I never cared — I never disliked them for it. But I seem to have grown so hateful—”

“Leslie, dearest, stop blaming yourself. You are NOT hateful or jealous or envious. The life you have to live has warped you a little, perhaps-but it would have ruined a nature less fine and noble than yours. I'm letting you tell me all this because I believe it's better for you to talk it out and rid your soul of it. But don't blame yourself any more.”

“Well, I won't. I just wanted you to know me as I am. That time you told me of your darling hope for the spring was the worst of all, Anne. I shall never forgive myself for the way I behaved then. I repented it with tears. And I DID put many a tender and loving thought of you into the little dress I made. But I might have known that anything I made could only be a shroud in the end.”

“Now, Leslie, that IS bitter and morbid — put such thoughts away.

“I was so glad when you brought the little dress; and since I had to lose little Joyce I like to think that the dress she wore was the one you made for her when you let yourself love me.”

“Anne, do you know, I believe I shall always love you after this. I don’t think I’ll ever feel that dreadful way about you again. Talking it all out seems to have done away with it, somehow. It’s very strange — and I thought it so real and bitter. It’s like opening the door of a dark room to show some hideous creature you’ve believed to be there — and when the light streams in your monster turns out to have been just a shadow, vanishing when the light comes. It will never come between us again.”

“No, we are real friends now, Leslie, and I am very glad.”

“I hope you won’t misunderstand me if I say something else. Anne, I was grieved to the core of my heart when you lost your baby; and if I could have saved her for you by cutting off one of my hands I would have done it. But your sorrow has brought us closer together. Your perfect happiness isn’t a barrier any longer. Oh, don’t misunderstand, dearest — I’m NOT glad that your happiness isn’t perfect any longer — I can say that sincerely; but since it isn’t, there isn’t such a gulf between us.”

“I DO understand that, too, Leslie. Now, we’ll just shut up the past and forget what was unpleasant in it. It’s all going to be different. We’re both of the race of Joseph now. I think you’ve been wonderful — wonderful. And, Leslie, I can’t help believing that life has something good and beautiful for you yet.”

Leslie shook her head.

“No,” she said dully. “There isn’t any hope. Dick will never be better — and even if his memory were to come back — oh, Anne, it would be worse, even worse, than it is now. This is something you can’t understand, you happy bride. Anne, did Miss Cornelia ever tell you how I came to marry Dick?”

“Yes.”

“I’m glad — I wanted you to know — but I couldn’t bring myself to talk of it if you hadn’t known. Anne, it seems to me that ever since I was twelve years old life has been bitter. Before that I had a happy childhood. We were very poor — but we didn’t mind. Father was so splendid — so clever and loving and sympathetic. We were chums as far back as I can remember. And mother was so sweet. She was very, very beautiful. I look like her, but I am not so beautiful as she was.”

“Miss Cornelia says you are far more beautiful.”

“She is mistaken — or prejudiced. I think my figure IS better — mother was slight and bent by hard work — but she had the face of an angel. I used just to look up at her in worship. We all worshipped her, — father and Kenneth and I.”

Anne remembered that Miss Cornelia had given her a very different impression of Leslie’s mother. But had not love the truer vision? Still, it WAS selfish of Rose West to make her daughter marry Dick Moore.

“Kenneth was my brother,” went on Leslie. “Oh, I can’t tell you how I loved him. And he was cruelly killed. Do you know how?”

“Yes.”

“Anne, I saw his little face as the wheel went over him. He fell on his back. Anne — Anne — I can see it now. I shall always see it. Anne, all I ask of heaven is that that recollection shall be blotted out of my memory. O my God!”

“Leslie, don’t speak of it. I know the story — don’t go into details that only harrow your soul up unavailingly. It WILL be blotted out.”

After a moment’s struggle, Leslie regained a measure of self-control.

“Then father’s health got worse and he grew despondent — his mind became unbalanced — you’ve heard all that, too?”

“Yes.”

“After that I had just mother to live for. But I was very ambitious. I meant to teach and earn my way through college. I meant to climb to the very top — oh, I won’t talk of that either. It’s no use. You know what happened. I couldn’t see my dear little heartbroken mother, who had been such a slave all her life, turned out of her home. Of course, I could have earned enough for us to live on. But mother COULDN’T leave her home. She had come there as a bride — and she had loved father so — and all her memories were there. Even yet, Anne, when I think that I made her last year happy I’m not sorry for what I did. As for Dick — I didn’t hate him when I married him — I just felt for him the indifferent, friendly feeling I had for most of my schoolmates. I knew he drank some — but I had never heard the story of the girl down at the fishing cove. If I had, I COULDN’T have married him, even for mother’s sake. Afterwards — I DID hate him — but mother never knew. She died — and then I was alone. I was only seventeen and I was alone. Dick had gone off in the Four Sisters. I hoped he wouldn’t be home very much more. The sea had always been in his blood. I had no other hope. Well, Captain Jim brought him home, as you know — and that’s all there is to say. You know me now, Anne — the worst of me — the barriers are all down. And you still want to be my friend?”

Anne looked up through the birches, at the white paper-lantern of a half moon drifting downwards to the gulf of sunset. Her face was very sweet.

“I am your friend and you are mine, for always,” she said. “Such a friend as I never had before. I have had many dear and beloved friends — but there is a something in you, Leslie, that I never found in anyone else. You have more to offer me in that rich nature of yours, and I have more to give you than I had in my careless girlhood. We are both women — and friends forever.”

They clasped hands and smiled at each other through the tears that filled the gray eyes and the blue.

CHAPTER 2 2

MISS CORNELIA ARRANGES MATTERS

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Gilbert insisted that Susan should be kept on at the little house for the summer. Anne protested at first.

“Life here with just the two of us is so sweet, Gilbert. It spoils it a little to have anyone else. Susan is a dear soul, but she is an outsider. It won’t hurt me to do the work here.”

“You must take your doctor’s advice,” said Gilbert. “There’s an old proverb to the effect that shoemakers’ wives go barefoot and doctors’ wives die young. I don’t mean that it shall be true in my household. You will keep Susan until the old spring comes back into your step, and those little hollows on your cheeks fill out.”

“You just take it easy, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, coming abruptly in. “Have a good time and do not worry about the pantry. Susan is at the helm. There is no use in keeping a dog and doing your own barking. I am going to take your breakfast up to you every morning.”

“Indeed you are not,” laughed Anne. “I agree with Miss Cornelia that it’s a scandal for a woman who isn’t sick to eat her breakfast in bed, and almost justifies the men in any enormities.”

“Oh, Cornelia!” said Susan, with ineffable contempt. “I think you have better sense, Mrs. Doctor, dear, than to heed what Cornelia Bryant says. I cannot see why she must be always running down the men, even if she is an old maid. I am an old maid, but you never hear ME abusing the men. I like ‘em. I would have married one if I could. Is it not funny nobody ever asked me to marry him, Mrs. Doctor, dear? I am no beauty, but I am as

goodlooking as most of the married women you see. But I never had a beau. What do you suppose is the reason?"

"It may be predestination," suggested Anne, with unearthly solemnity.

Susan nodded.

"That is what I have often thought, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and a great comfort it is. I do not mind nobody wanting me if the Almighty decreed it so for His own wise purposes. But sometimes doubt creeps in, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and I wonder if maybe the Old Scratch has not more to do with it than anyone else. I cannot feel resigned THEN. But maybe," added Susan, brightening up, "I will have a chance to get married yet. I often and often think of the old verse my aunt used to repeat:

There never was a goose so gray but sometime soon or late
Some honest gander came her way and took her for his mate!

A woman cannot ever be sure of not being married till she is buried, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and meanwhile I will make a batch of cherry pies. I notice the doctor favors 'em, and I DO like cooking for a man who appreciates his victuals."

Miss Cornelia dropped in that afternoon, puffing a little.

"I don't mind the world or the devil much, but the flesh DOES rather bother me," she admitted. "You always look as cool as a cucumber, Anne, dearie. Do I smell cherry pie? If I do, ask me to stay to tea. Haven't tasted a cherry pie this summer. My cherries have all been stolen by those scamps of Gilman boys from the Glen."

"Now, now, Cornelia," remonstrated Captain Jim, who had been reading a sea novel in a corner of the living room, "you shouldn't say that about those two poor, motherless Gilman boys, unless you've got certain proof. Jest because their father ain't none too honest isn't any reason for calling them thieves. It's more likely it's been the robins took your cherries. They're turrible thick this year."

“Robins!” said Miss Cornelia disdainfully. “Humph! Two-legged robins, believe ME!”

“Well, most of the Four Winds robins ARE constructed on that principle,” said Captain Jim gravely.

Miss Cornelia stared at him for a moment. Then she leaned back in her rocker and laughed long and ungrudgingly.

“Well, you HAVE got one on me at last, Jim Boyd, I’ll admit. Just look how pleased he is, Anne, dearie, grinning like a Chessy-cat. As for the robins’ legs if robins have great, big, bare, sunburned legs, with ragged trousers hanging on ‘em, such as I saw up in my cherry tree one morning at sunrise last week, I’ll beg the Gilman boys’ pardon. By the time I got down they were gone. I couldn’t understand how they had disappeared so quick, but Captain Jim has enlightened me. They flew away, of course.”

Captain Jim laughed and went away, regretfully declining an invitation to stay to supper and partake of cherry pie.

“I’m on my way to see Leslie and ask her if she’ll take a boarder,” Miss Cornelia resumed. “I’d a letter yesterday from a Mrs. Daly in Toronto, who boarded a spell with me two years ago. She wanted me to take a friend of hers for the summer. His name is Owen Ford, and he’s a newspaper man, and it seems he’s a grandson of the schoolmaster who built this house. John Selwyn’s oldest daughter married an Ontario man named Ford, and this is her son. He wants to see the old place his grandparents lived in. He had a bad spell of typhoid in the spring and hasn’t got rightly over it, so his doctor has ordered him to the sea. He doesn’t want to go to the hotel — he just wants a quiet home place. I can’t take him, for I have to be away in August. I’ve been appointed a delegate to the W.F.M.S. convention in Kingsport and I’m going. I don’t know whether Leslie’ll want to be bothered with him, either, but there’s no one else. If she can’t take him he’ll have to go over the harbor.”

“When you’ve seen her come back and help us eat our cherry pies,” said Anne. “Bring Leslie and Dick, too, if they can come. And so you’re going

to Kingsport? What a nice time you will have. I must give you a letter to a friend of mine there — Mrs. Jonas Blake.”

“I’ve prevailed on Mrs. Thomas Holt to go with me,” said Miss Cornelia complacently. “It’s time she had a little holiday, believe ME. She has just about worked herself to death. Tom Holt can crochet beautifully, but he can’t make a living for his family. He never seems to be able to get up early enough to do any work, but I notice he can always get up early to go fishing. Isn’t that like a man?”

Anne smiled. She had learned to discount largely Miss Cornelia’s opinions of the Four Winds men. Otherwise she must have believed them the most hopeless assortment of reprobates and ne’er-do-wells in the world, with veritable slaves and martyrs for wives. This particular Tom Holt, for example, she knew to be a kind husband, a much loved father, and an excellent neighbor. If he were rather inclined to be lazy, liking better the fishing he had been born for than the farming he had not, and if he had a harmless eccentricity for doing fancy work, nobody save Miss Cornelia seemed to hold it against him. His wife was a “hustler,” who gloried in hustling; his family got a comfortable living off the farm; and his strapping sons and daughters, inheriting their mother’s energy, were all in a fair way to do well in the world. There was not a happier household in Glen St. Mary than the Holts’.

Miss Cornelia returned satisfied from the house up the brook.

“Leslie’s going to take him,” she announced. “She jumped at the chance. She wants to make a little money to shingle the roof of her house this fall, and she didn’t know how she was going to manage it. I expect Captain Jim’ll be more than interested when he hears that a grandson of the Selwyns’ is coming here. Leslie said to tell you she hankered after cherry pie, but she couldn’t come to tea because she has to go and hunt up her turkeys. They’ve strayed away. But she said, if there was a piece left, for you to put it in the pantry and she’d run over in the cat’s light, when prowling’s in order, to get it. You don’t know, Anne, dearie, what good it did my heart to hear Leslie send you a message like that, laughing like she used to long ago.

“There’s a great change come over her lately. She laughs and jokes like a girl, and from her talk I gather she’s here real often.”

“Every day — or else I’m over there,” said Anne. “I don’t know what I’d do without Leslie, especially just now when Gilbert is so busy. He’s hardly ever home except for a few hours in the wee sma’s. He’s really working himself to death. So many of the over-harbor people send for him now.”

“They might better be content with their own doctor,” said Miss Cornelia. “Though to be sure I can’t blame them, for he’s a Methodist. Ever since Dr. Blythe brought Mrs. Allonby round folks think he can raise the dead. I believe Dr. Dave is a mite jealous — just like a man. He thinks Dr. Blythe has too many new-fangled notions! ‘Well,’ I says to him, ‘it was a new-fangled notion saved Rhoda Allonby. If YOU’D been attending her she’d have died, and had a tombstone saying it had pleased God to take her away.’ Oh, I DO like to speak my mind to Dr. Dave! He’s bossed the Glen for years, and he thinks he’s forgotten more than other people ever knew. Speaking of doctors, I wish Dr. Blythe’d run over and see to that boil on Dick Moore’s neck. It’s getting past Leslie’s skill. I’m sure I don’t know what Dick Moore wants to start in having boils for — as if he wasn’t enough trouble without that!”

“Do you know, Dick has taken quite a fancy to me,” said Anne. “He follows me round like a dog, and smiles like a pleased child when I notice him.”

“Does it make you creepy?”

“Not at all. I rather like poor Dick Moore. He seems so pitiful and appealing, somehow.”

“You wouldn’t think him very appealing if you’d see him on his cantankerous days, believe ME. But I’m glad you don’t mind him — it’s all the nicer for Leslie. She’ll have more to do when her boarder comes. I hope he’ll be a decent creature. You’ll probably like him — he’s a writer.”

“I wonder why people so commonly suppose that if two individuals are both writers they must therefore be hugely congenial,” said Anne, rather

scornfully. "Nobody would expect two blacksmiths to be violently attracted toward each other merely because they were both blacksmiths."

Nevertheless, she looked forward to the advent of Owen Ford with a pleasant sense of expectation. If he were young and likeable he might prove a very pleasant addition to society in Four Winds. The latchstring of the little house was always out for the race of Joseph.

CHAPTER 2 3

OWEN FORD COMES

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One evening Miss Cornelia telephoned down to Anne.

“The writer man has just arrived here. I’m going to drive him down to your place, and you can show him the way over to Leslie’s. It’s shorter than driving round by the other road, and I’m in a mortal hurry. The Reese baby has gone and fallen into a pail of hot water at the Glen, and got nearly scalded to death and they want me right off — to put a new skin on the child, I presume. Mrs. Reese is always so careless, and then expects other people to mend her mistakes. You won’t mind, will you, dearie? His trunk can go down tomorrow.”

“Very well,” said Anne. “What is he like, Miss Cornelia?”

“You’ll see what he’s like outside when I take him down. As for what he’s like inside only the Lord who made him knows THAT. I’m not going to say another word, for every receiver in the Glen is down.”

“Miss Cornelia evidently can’t find much fault with Mr. Ford’s looks, or she would find it in spite of the receivers,” said Anne. “I conclude therefore, Susan, that Mr. Ford is rather handsome than otherwise.”

“Well, Mrs. Doctor, dear, I DO enjoy seeing a well-looking man,” said Susan candidly. “Had I not better get up a snack for him? There is a strawberry pie that would melt in your mouth.”

“No, Leslie is expecting him and has his supper ready. Besides, I want that strawberry pie for my own poor man. He won’t be home till late, so leave the pie and a glass of milk out for him, Susan.”

“That I will, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Susan is at the helm. After all, it is better to give pie to your own men than to strangers, who may be only seeking to devour, and the doctor himself is as well-looking a man as you often come across.”

When Owen Ford came Anne secretly admitted, as Miss Cornelia towed him in, that he was very “well-looking” indeed. He was tall and broad-shouldered, with thick, brown hair, finely-cut nose and chin, large and brilliant dark-gray eyes.

“And did you notice his ears and his teeth, Mrs. Doctor, dear?” queried Susan later on. “He has got the nicest-shaped ears I ever saw on a man’s head. I am choice about ears. When I was young I was scared that I might have to marry a man with ears like flaps. But I need not have worried, for never a chance did I have with any kind of ears.”

Anne had not noticed Owen Ford’s ears, but she did see his teeth, as his lips parted over them in a frank and friendly smile. Unsmiling, his face was rather sad and absent in expression, not unlike the melancholy, inscrutable hero of Anne’s own early dreams; but mirth and humor and charm lighted it up when he smiled. Certainly, on the outside, as Miss Cornelia said, Owen Ford was a very presentable fellow.

“You cannot realise how delighted I am to be here, Mrs. Blythe,” he said, looking around him with eager, interested eyes. “I have an odd feeling of coming home. My mother was born and spent her childhood here, you know. She used to talk a great deal to me of her old home. I know the geography of it as well as of the one I lived in, and, of course, she told me the story of the building of the house, and of my grandfather’s agonised watch for the Royal William. I had thought that so old a house must have vanished years ago, or I should have come to see it before this.”

“Old houses don’t vanish easily on this enchanted coast,” smiled Anne. “This is a ‘land where all things always seem the same’ — nearly always, at least. John Selwyn’s house hasn’t even been much changed, and outside the rosebushes your grandfather planted for his bride are blooming this very minute.”

“How the thought links me with them! With your leave I must explore the whole place soon.”

“Our latchstring will always be out for you,” promised Anne. “And do you know that the old sea captain who keeps the Four Winds light knew John Selwyn and his bride well in his boyhood? He told me their story the night I came here — the third bride of the old house.”

“Can it be possible? This IS a discovery. I must hunt him up.”

“It won’t be difficult; we are all cronies of Captain Jim. He will be as eager to see you as you could be to see him. Your grandmother shines like a star in his memory. But I think Mrs. Moore is expecting you. I’ll show you our ‘cross-lots’ road.”

Anne walked with him to the house up the brook, over a field that was as white as snow with daisies. A boatload of people were singing far across the harbor. The sound drifted over the water like faint, unearthly music windblown across a starlit sea. The big light flashed and beacons. Owen Ford looked around him with satisfaction.

“And so this is Four Winds,” he said. “I wasn’t prepared to find it quite so beautiful, in spite of all mother’s praises. What colors — what scenery — what charm! I shall get as strong as a horse in no time. And if inspiration comes from beauty, I should certainly be able to begin my great Canadian novel here.”

“You haven’t begun it yet?” asked Anne.

“Alack-a-day, no. I’ve never been able to get the right central idea for it. It lurks beyond me — it allures — and beckons — and recedes — I almost grasp it and it is gone. Perhaps amid this peace and loveliness, I shall be able to capture it. Miss Bryant tells me that you write.”

“Oh, I do little things for children. I haven’t done much since I was married. And — I have no designs on a great Canadian novel,” laughed Anne. “That is quite beyond me.”

Owen Ford laughed too.

“I dare say it is beyond me as well. All the same I mean to have a try at it some day, if I can ever get time. A newspaper man doesn’t have much chance for that sort of thing. I’ve done a good deal of short story writing for the magazines, but I’ve never had the leisure that seems to be necessary for the writing of a book. With three months of liberty I ought to make a start, though — if I could only get the necessary motif for it — the SOUL of the book.”

An idea whisked through Anne’s brain with a suddenness that made her jump. But she did not utter it, for they had reached the Moore house. As they entered the yard Leslie came out on the veranda from the side door, peering through the gloom for some sign of her expected guest. She stood just where the warm yellow light flooded her from the open door. She wore a plain dress of cheap, cream-tinted cotton voile, with the usual girdle of crimson. Leslie was never without her touch of crimson. She had told Anne that she never felt satisfied without a gleam of red somewhere about her, if it were only a flower. To Anne, it always seemed to symbolise Leslie’s glowing, pent-up personality, denied all expression save in that flaming glint. Leslie’s dress was cut a little away at the neck and had short sleeves. Her arms gleamed like ivory-tinted marble. Every exquisite curve of her form was outlined in soft darkness against the light. Her hair shone in it like flame. Beyond her was a purple sky, flowering with stars over the harbor.

Anne heard her companion give a gasp. Even in the dusk she could see the amazement and admiration on his face.

“Who is that beautiful creature?” he asked.

“That is Mrs. Moore,” said Anne. “She is very lovely, isn’t she?”

“I — I never saw anything like her,” he answered, rather dazedly. “I wasn’t prepared — I didn’t expect — good heavens, one DOESN’T expect a goddess for a landlady! Why, if she were clothed in a gown of sea-purple, with a rope of amethysts in her hair, she would be a veritable sea-queen. And she takes in boarders!”

“Even goddesses must live,” said Anne. “And Leslie isn’t a goddess. She’s just a very beautiful woman, as human as the rest of us. Did Miss Bryant tell you about Mr. Moore?”

“Yes, — he’s mentally deficient, or something of the sort, isn’t he? But she said nothing about Mrs. Moore, and I supposed she’d be the usual hustling country housewife who takes in boarders to earn an honest penny.”

“Well, that’s just what Leslie is doing,” said Anne crisply. “And it isn’t altogether pleasant for her, either. I hope you won’t mind Dick. If you do, please don’t let Leslie see it. It would hurt her horribly. He’s just a big baby, and sometimes a rather annoying one.”

“Oh, I won’t mind him. I don’t suppose I’ll be much in the house anyhow, except for meals. But what a shame it all is! Her life must be a hard one.”

“It is. But she doesn’t like to be pitied.”

Leslie had gone back into the house and now met them at the front door. She greeted Owen Ford with cold civility, and told him in a businesslike tone that his room and his supper were ready for him. Dick, with a pleased grin, shambled upstairs with the valise, and Owen Ford was installed as an inmate of the old house among the willows.

CHAPTER 2 4

THE LIFE-BOOK OF CAPTAIN JIM

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“I have a little brown cocoon of an idea that may possibly expand into a magnificent moth of fulfilment,” Anne told Gilbert when she reached home. He had returned earlier than she had expected, and was enjoying Susan’s cherry pie. Susan herself hovered in the background, like a rather grim but beneficent guardian spirit, and found as much pleasure in watching Gilbert eat pie as he did in eating it.

“What is your idea?” he asked.

“I sha’n’t tell you just yet — not till I see if I can bring the thing about.”

“What sort of a chap is Ford?”

“Oh, very nice, and quite goodlooking.”

“Such beautiful ears, doctor, dear,” interjected Susan with a relish.

“He is about thirty or thirty-five, I think, and he meditates writing a novel. His voice is pleasant and his smile delightful, and he knows how to dress. He looks as if life hadn’t been altogether easy for him, somehow.”

Owen Ford came over the next evening with a note to Anne from Leslie; they spent the sunset time in the garden and then went for a moonlit sail on the harbor, in the little boat Gilbert had set up for summer outings. They liked Owen immensely and had that feeling of having known him for many years which distinguishes the freemasonry of the house of Joseph. “He is as nice as his ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, when he had gone. He had told Susan that he had never tasted anything like her strawberry shortcake and Susan’s susceptible heart was his forever.

“He has got a way with him,” she reflected, as she cleared up the relics of the supper. “It is real queer he is not married, for a man like that could have anybody for the asking. Well, maybe he is like me, and has not met the right one yet.”

Susan really grew quite romantic in her musings as she washed the supper dishes.

Two nights later Anne took Owen Ford down to Four Winds Point to introduce him to Captain Jim. The clover fields along the harbor shore were whitening in the western wind, and Captain Jim had one of his finest sunsets on exhibition. He himself had just returned from a trip over the harbor.

“I had to go over and tell Henry Pollack he was dying. Everybody else was afraid to tell him. They expected he’d take on turrible, for he’s been dreadful determined to live, and been making no end of plans for the fall. His wife thought he oughter be told and that I’d be the best one to break it to him that he couldn’t get better. Henry and me are old cronies — we sailed in the Gray Gull for years together. Well, I went over and sat down by Henry’s bed and I says to him, says I, jest right out plain and simple, for if a thing’s got to be told it may as well be told first as last, says I, ‘Mate, I reckon you’ve got your sailing orders this time,’ I was sorter quaking inside, for it’s an awful thing to have to tell a man who hain’t any idea he’s dying that he is. But lo and behold, Mistress Blythe, Henry looks up at me, with those bright old black eyes of his in his wizened face and says, says he, ‘Tell me something I don’t know, Jim Boyd, if you want to give me information. I’ve known THAT for a week.’ I was too astonished to speak, and Henry, he chuckled. ‘To see you coming in here,’ says he, ‘with your face as solemn as a tombstone and sitting down there with your hands clasped over your stomach, and passing me out a blue-mouldy old item of news like that! It’d make a cat laugh, Jim Boyd,’ says he. ‘Who told you?’ says I, stupid like. ‘Nobody,’ says he. ‘A week ago Tuesday night I was lying here awake — and I jest knew. I’d suspicioned it before, but then I KNEW. I’ve been keeping up for the wife’s sake. And I’d LIKE to have got that barn built, for Eben’ll never get it right. But anyhow, now that you’ve eased your mind, Jim, put on a smile and tell me something

interesting,' Well, there it was. They'd been so scared to tell him and he knew it all the time. Strange how nature looks out for us, ain't it, and lets us know what we should know when the time comes? Did I never tell you the yarn about Henry getting the fish hook in his nose, Mistress Blythe?"

"No."

"Well, him and me had a laugh over it today. It happened nigh unto thirty years ago. Him and me and several more was out mackerel fishing one day. It was a great day — never saw such a school of mackerel in the gulf — and in the general excitement Henry got quite wild and contrived to stick a fish hook clean through one side of his nose. Well, there he was; there was barb on one end and a big piece of lead on the other, so it couldn't be pulled out. We wanted to take him ashore at once, but Henry was game; he said he'd be jiggered if he'd leave a school like that for anything short of lockjaw; then he kept fishing away, hauling in hand over fist and groaning between times. Fin'lly the school passed and we come in with a load; I got a file and begun to try to file through that hook. I tried to be as easy as I could, but you should have heard Henry — no, you shouldn't either. It was well no ladies were around. Henry wasn't a swearing man, but he'd heard some few matters of that sort along shore in his time, and he fished 'em all out of his recollection and hurled 'em at me. Fin'lly he declared he couldn't stand it and I had no bowels of compassion. So we hitched up and I drove him to a doctor in Charlottetown, thirty-five miles — there weren't none nearer in them days — with that blessed hook still hanging from his nose. When we got there old Dr. Crabb jest took a file and filed that hook jest the same as I'd tried to do, only he weren't a mite particular about doing it easy!"

Captain Jim's visit to his old friend had revived many recollections and he was now in the full tide of reminiscences.

"Henry was asking me today if I remembered the time old Father Chiniquy blessed Alexander MacAllister's boat. Another odd yarn — and true as gospel. I was in the boat myself. We went out, him and me, in Alexander MacAllister's boat one morning at sunrise. Besides, there was a French boy in the boat — Catholic of course. You know old Father Chiniquy had turned Protestant, so the Catholics hadn't much use for him. Well, we sat

out in the gulf in the broiling sun till noon, and not a bite did we get. When we went ashore old Father Chiniquy had to go, so he said in that polite way of his, 'I'm very sorry I cannot go out with you dis afternoon, Mr. MacAllister, but I leave you my blessing. You will catch a t'ousand dis afternoon. 'Well, we did not catch a thousand, but we caught exactly nine hundred and ninety-nine — the biggest catch for a small boat on the whole north shore that summer. Curious, wasn't it? Alexander MacAllister, he says to Andrew Peters, 'Well, and what do you think of Father Chiniquy now?' 'Vell,' growled Andrew, 'I t'ink de old devil has got a blessing left yet.' Laws, how Henry did laugh over that today!"

"Do you know who Mr. Ford is, Captain Jim?" asked Anne, seeing that Captain Jim's fountain of reminiscence had run out for the present. "I want you to guess."

Captain Jim shook his head.

"I never was any hand at guessing, Mistress Blythe, and yet somehow when I come in I thought, 'Where have I seen them eyes before?' — for I HAVE seen 'em."

"Think of a September morning many years ago," said Anne, softly. "Think of a ship sailing up the harbor — a ship long waited for and despaired of. Think of the day the Royal William came in and the first look you had at the schoolmaster's bride."

Captain Jim sprang up.

"They're Persis Selwyn's eyes," he almost shouted. "You can't be her son — you must be her—"

"Grandson; yes, I am Alice Selwyn's son."

Captain Jim swooped down on Owen Ford and shook his hand over again.

"Alice Selwyn's son! Lord, but you're welcome! Many's the time I've wondered where the descendants of the schoolmaster were living. I knew there was none on the Island. Alice — Alice — the first baby ever born in

that little house. No baby ever brought more joy! I've dandled her a hundred times. It was from my knee she took her first steps alone. Can't I see her mother's face watching her — and it was near sixty years ago. Is she living yet?"

"No, she died when I was only a boy."

"Oh, it doesn't seem right that I should be living to hear that," sighed Captain Jim. "But I'm heart-glad to see you. It's brought back my youth for a little while. You don't know yet what a boon THAT is. Mistress Blythe here has the trick — she does it quite often for me."

Captain Jim was still more excited when he discovered that Owen Ford was what he called a "real writing man." He gazed at him as at a superior being. Captain Jim knew that Anne wrote, but he had never taken that fact very seriously. Captain Jim thought women were delightful creatures, who ought to have the vote, and everything else they wanted, bless their hearts; but he did not believe they could write.

"Jest look at A Mad Love," he would protest. "A woman wrote that and jest look at it — one hundred and three chapters when it could all have been told in ten. A writing woman never knows when to stop; that's the trouble. The p'int of good writing is to know when to stop."

"Mr. Ford wants to hear some of your stories, Captain Jim" said Anne. "Tell him the one about the captain who went crazy and imagined he was the Flying Dutchman."

This was Captain Jim's best story. It was a compound of horror and humor, and though Anne had heard it several times she laughed as heartily and shivered as fearsomely over it as Mr. Ford did. Other tales followed, for Captain Jim had an audience after his own heart. He told how his vessel had been run down by a steamer; how he had been boarded by Malay pirates; how his ship had caught fire; how he helped a political prisoner escape from a South African republic; how he had been wrecked one fall on the Magdalens and stranded there for the winter; how a tiger had broken loose on board ship; how his crew had mutinied and marooned him on a barren island — these and many other tales, tragic or humorous or

grotesque, did Captain Jim relate. The mystery of the sea, the fascination of far lands, the lure of adventure, the laughter of the world — his hearers felt and realised them all. Owen Ford listened, with his head on his hand, and the First Mate purring on his knee, his brilliant eyes fastened on Captain Jim's rugged, eloquent face.

"Won't you let Mr. Ford see your life-book, Captain Jim?" asked Anne, when Captain Jim finally declared that yarn-spinning must end for the time.

"Oh, he don't want to be bothered with THAT," protested Captain Jim, who was secretly dying to show it.

"I should like nothing better than to see it, Captain Boyd," said Owen. "If it is half as wonderful as your tales it will be worth seeing."

With pretended reluctance Captain Jim dug his life-book out of his old chest and handed it to Owen.

"I reckon you won't care to wrastle long with my old hand o' write. I never had much schooling," he observed carelessly. "Just wrote that there to amuse my nephew Joe. He's always wanting stories. Comes here yesterday and says to me, reproachful-like, as I was lifting a twenty-pound codfish out of my boat, 'Uncle Jim, ain't a codfish a dumb animal?' I'd been atelling him, you see, that he must be real kind to dumb animals, and never hurt 'em in any way. I got out of the scrape by saying a codfish was dumb enough but it wasn't an animal, but Joe didn't look satisfied, and I wasn't satisfied myself. You've got to be mighty careful what you tell them little critters. THEY can see through you."

While talking, Captain Jim watched Owen Ford from the corner of his eye as the latter examined the life-book; and presently observing that his guest was lost in its pages, he turned smilingly to his cupboard and proceeded to make a pot of tea. Owen Ford separated himself from the life-book, with as much reluctance as a miser wrenches himself from his gold, long enough to drink his tea, and then returned to it hungrily.

“Oh, you can take that thing home with you if you want to,” said Captain Jim, as if the “thing” were not his most treasured possession. “I must go down and pull my boat up a bit on the skids. There’s a wind coming. Did you notice the sky tonight?”

Mackerel skies and mares’ tails
Make tall ships carry short sails.”

Owen Ford accepted the offer of the life-book gladly. On their way home Anne told him the story of lost Margaret.

“That old captain is a wonderful old fellow,” he said. “What a life he has led! Why, the man had more adventures in one week of his life than most of us have in a lifetime. Do you really think his tales are all true?”

“I certainly do. I am sure Captain Jim could not tell a lie; and besides, all the people about here say that everything happened as he relates it. There used to be plenty of his old shipmates alive to corroborate him. He’s one of the last of the old type of P.E. Island sea-captains. They are almost extinct now.”

CHAPTER 25

THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

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Owen Ford came over to the little house the next morning in a state of great excitement. “Mrs. Blythe, this is a wonderful book — absolutely wonderful. If I could take it and use the material for a book I feel certain I could make the novel of the year out of it. Do you suppose Captain Jim would let me do it?”

“Let you! I’m sure he would be delighted,” cried Anne. “I admit that it was what was in my head when I took you down last night. Captain Jim has always been wishing he could get somebody to write his life-book properly for him.”

“Will you go down to the Point with me this evening, Mrs. Blythe? I’ll ask him about that life-book myself, but I want you to tell him that you told me the story of lost Margaret and ask him if he will let me use it as a thread of romance with which to weave the stories of the life-book into a harmonious whole.”

Captain Jim was more excited than ever when Owen Ford told him of his plan. At last his cherished dream was to be realized and his “life-book” given to the world. He was also pleased that the story of lost Margaret should be woven into it.

“It will keep her name from being forgotten,” he said wistfully.

“That’s why I want it put in.”

“We’ll collaborate,” cried Owen delightedly. “You will give the soul and I the body. Oh, we’ll write a famous book between us, Captain Jim. And we’ll get right to work.”

“And to think my book is to be writ by the schoolmaster’s grandson!” exclaimed Captain Jim. “Lad, your grandfather was my dearest friend. I thought there was nobody like him. I see now why I had to wait so long. It couldn’t be writ till the right man come. You BELONG here — you’ve got the soul of this old north shore in you — you’re the only one who COULD write it.”

It was arranged that the tiny room off the living room at the lighthouse should be given over to Owen for a workshop. It was necessary that Captain Jim should be near him as he wrote, for consultation upon many matters of seafaring and gulf lore of which Owen was quite ignorant.

He began work on the book the very next morning, and flung himself into it heart and soul. As for Captain Jim, he was a happy man that summer. He looked upon the little room where Owen worked as a sacred shrine. Owen talked everything over with Captain Jim, but he would not let him see the manuscript.

“You must wait until it is published,” he said. “Then you’ll get it all at once in its best shape.”

He delved into the treasures of the life-book and used them freely. He dreamed and brooded over lost Margaret until she became a vivid reality to him and lived in his pages. As the book progressed it took possession of him and he worked at it with feverish eagerness. He let Anne and Leslie read the manuscript and criticise it; and the concluding chapter of the book, which the critics, later on, were pleased to call idyllic, was modelled upon a suggestion of Leslie’s.

Anne fairly hugged herself with delight over the success of her idea.

“I knew when I looked at Owen Ford that he was the very man for it,” she told Gilbert. “Both humor and passion were in his face, and that, together with the art of expression, was just what was necessary for the writing of such a book. As Mrs. Rachel would say, he was predestined for the part.”

Owen Ford wrote in the mornings. The afternoons were generally spent in some merry outing with the Blythes. Leslie often went, too, for Captain

Jim took charge of Dick frequently, in order to set her free. They went boating on the harbor and up the three pretty rivers that flowed into it; they had clambakes on the bar and mussel-bakes on the rocks; they picked strawberries on the sand-dunes; they went out codfishing with Captain Jim; they shot plover in the shore fields and wild ducks in the cove — at least, the men did. In the evenings they rambled in the lowlying, daisied, shore fields under a golden moon, or they sat in the living room at the little house where often the coolness of the sea breeze justified a driftwood fire, and talked of the thousand and one things which happy, eager, clever young people can find to talk about.

Ever since the day on which she had made her confession to Anne Leslie had been a changed creature. There was no trace of her old coldness and reserve, no shadow of her old bitterness. The girlhood of which she had been cheated seemed to come back to her with the ripeness of womanhood; she expanded like a flower of flame and perfume; no laugh was readier than hers, no wit quicker, in the twilight circles of that enchanted summer. When she could not be with them all felt that some exquisite savor was lacking in their intercourse. Her beauty was illumined by the awakened soul within, as some rosy lamp might shine through a flawless vase of alabaster. There were hours when Anne's eyes seemed to ache with the splendor of her. As for Owen Ford, the "Margaret" of his book, although she had the soft brown hair and elfin face of the real girl who had vanished so long ago, "pillowed where lost Atlantis sleeps," had the personality of Leslie Moore, as it was revealed to him in those halcyon days at Four Winds Harbor.

All in all, it was a never-to-be-forgotten summer — one of those summers which come seldom into any life, but leave a rich heritage of beautiful memories in their going — one of those summers which, in a fortunate combination of delightful weather, delightful friends and delightful doings, come as near to perfection as anything can come in this world.

"Too good to last," Anne told herself with a little sigh, on the September day when a certain nip in the wind and a certain shade of intense blue on the gulf water said that autumn was hard by.

That evening Owen Ford told them that he had finished his book and that his vacation must come to an end.

“I have a good deal to do to it yet — revising and pruning and so forth,” he said, “but in the main it’s done. I wrote the last sentence this morning. If I can find a publisher for it it will probably be out next summer or fall.”

Owen had not much doubt that he would find a publisher. He knew that he had written a great book — a book that would score a wonderful success — a book that would LIVE. He knew that it would bring him both fame and fortune; but when he had written the last line of it he had bowed his head on the manuscript and so sat for a long time. And his thoughts were not of the good work he had done.

CHAPTER 2 6

OWEN FORD'S CONFESSION

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“I’m so sorry Gilbert is away,” said Anne. “He had to go — Allan Lyons at the Glen has met with a serious accident. He will not likely be home till very late. But he told me to tell you he’d be up and over early enough in the morning to see you before you left. It’s too provoking. Susan and I had planned such a nice little jamboree for your last night here.”

She was sitting beside the garden brook on the little rustic seat Gilbert had built. Owen Ford stood before her, leaning against the bronze column of a yellow birch. He was very pale and his face bore the marks of the preceding sleepless night. Anne, glancing up at him, wondered if, after all, his summer had brought him the strength it should. Had he worked too hard over his book? She remembered that for a week he had not been looking well.

“I’m rather glad the doctor is away,” said Owen slowly. “I wanted to see you alone, Mrs. Blythe. There is something I must tell somebody, or I think it will drive me mad. I’ve been trying for a week to look it in the face — and I can’t. I know I can trust you — and, besides, you will understand. A woman with eyes like yours always understands. You are one of the folks people instinctively tell things to. Mrs. Blythe, I love Leslie. LOVE her! That seems too weak a word!”

His voice suddenly broke with the suppressed passion of his utterance. He turned his head away and hid his face on his arm. His whole form shook. Anne sat looking at him, pale and aghast. She had never thought of this! And yet — how was it she had never thought of it? It now seemed a natural and inevitable thing. She wondered at her own blindness. But — but — things like this did not happen in Four Winds. Elsewhere in the world human passions might set at defiance human conventions and laws

— but not HERE, surely. Leslie had kept summer boarders off and on for ten years, and nothing like this had happened. But perhaps they had not been like Owen Ford; and the vivid, LIVING Leslie of this summer was not the cold, sullen girl of other years. Oh, SOMEBODY should have thought of this! Why hadn't Miss Cornelia thought of it? Miss Cornelia was always ready enough to sound the alarm where men were concerned. Anne felt an unreasonable resentment against Miss Cornelia. Then she gave a little inward groan. No matter who was to blame the mischief was done. And Leslie — what of Leslie? It was for Leslie Anne felt most concerned.

“Does Leslie know this, Mr. Ford?” she asked quietly.

“No — no, — unless she has guessed it. You surely don't think I'd be cad and scoundrel enough to tell her, Mrs. Blythe. I couldn't help loving her — that's all — and my misery is greater than I can bear.”

“Does SHE care?” asked Anne. The moment the question crossed her lips she felt that she should not have asked it. Owen Ford answered it with overeager protest.

“No — no, of course not. But I could make her care if she were free — I know I could.”

“She does care — and he knows it,” thought Anne. Aloud she said, sympathetically but decidedly:

“But she is not free, Mr. Ford. And the only thing you can do is to go away in silence and leave her to her own life.”

“I know — I know,” groaned Owen. He sat down on the grassy bank and stared moodily into the amber water beneath him. “I know there's nothing to do — nothing but to say conventionally, ‘Goodbye, Mrs. Moore. Thank you for all your kindness to me this summer,’ just as I would have said it to the sonsy, bustling, keen-eyed housewife I expected her to be when I came. Then I'll pay my board money like any honest boarder and go! Oh, it's very simple. No doubt — no perplexity — a straight road to the end of the world!

“And I’ll walk it — you needn’t fear that I won’t, Mrs. Blythe. But it would be easier to walk over red-hot ploughshares.”

Anne flinched with the pain of his voice. And there was so little she could say that would be adequate to the situation. Blame was out of the question — advice was not needed — sympathy was mocked by the man’s stark agony. She could only feel with him in a maze of compassion and regret. Her heart ached for Leslie! Had not that poor girl suffered enough without this?

“It wouldn’t be so hard to go and leave her if she were only happy,” resumed Owen passionately. “But to think of her living death — to realise what it is to which I do leave her! THAT is the worst of all. I would give my life to make her happy — and I can do nothing even to help her — nothing. She is bound forever to that poor wretch — with nothing to look forward to but growing old in a succession of empty, meaningless, barren years. It drives me mad to think of it. But I must go through my life, never seeing her, but always knowing what she is enduring. It’s hideous — hideous!”

“It is very hard,” said Anne sorrowfully. “We — her friends here — all know how hard it is for her.”

“And she is so richly fitted for life,” said Owen rebelliously.

“Her beauty is the least of her dower — and she is the most beautiful woman I’ve ever known. That laugh of hers! I’ve angled all summer to evoke that laugh, just for the delight of hearing it. And her eyes — they are as deep and blue as the gulf out there. I never saw such blueness — and gold! Did you ever see her hair down, Mrs. Blythe?”

“No.”

“I did — once. I had gone down to the Point to go fishing with Captain Jim but it was too rough to go out, so I came back. She had taken the opportunity of what she expected to be an afternoon alone to wash her hair, and she was standing on the veranda in the sunshine to dry it. It fell all about her to her feet in a fountain of living gold. When she saw me she

hurried in, and the wind caught her hair and swirled it all around her — Danae in her cloud. Somehow, just then the knowledge that I loved her came home to me — and realised that I had loved her from the moment I first saw her standing against the darkness in that glow of light. And she must live on here — petting and soothing Dick, pinching and saving for a mere existence, while I spend my life longing vainly for her, and debarred, by that very fact, from even giving her the little help a friend might. I walked the shore last night, almost till dawn, and thrashed it all out over and over again. And yet, in spite of everything, I can't find it in my heart to be sorry that I came to Four Winds. It seems to me that, bad as everything is, it would be still worse never to have known Leslie. It's burning, searing pain to love her and leave her — but not to have loved her is unthinkable. I suppose all this sounds very crazy — all these terrible emotions always do sound foolish when we put them into our inadequate words. They are not meant to be spoken — only felt and endured. I shouldn't have spoken — but it has helped — some. At least, it has given me strength to go away respectably tomorrow morning, without making a scene. You'll write me now and then, won't you, Mrs. Blythe, and give me what news there is to give of her?"

"Yes," said Anne. "Oh, I'm so sorry you are going — we'll miss you so — we've all been such friends! If it were not for this you could come back other summers. Perhaps, even yet — by-and-by — when you've forgotten, perhaps—"

"I shall never forget — and I shall never come back to Four Winds," said Owen briefly.

Silence and twilight fell over the garden. Far away the sea was lapping gently and monotonously on the bar. The wind of evening in the poplars sounded like some sad, weird, old rune — some broken dream of old memories. A slender shapely young aspen rose up before them against the fine maize and emerald and paling rose of the western sky, which brought out every leaf and twig in dark, tremulous, elfin loveliness.

"Isn't that beautiful?" said Owen, pointing to it with the air of a man who puts a certain conversation behind him.

“It’s so beautiful that it hurts me,” said Anne softly. “Perfect things like that always did hurt me — I remember I called it ‘the queer ache’ when I was a child. What is the reason that pain like this seems inseparable from perfection? Is it the pain of finality — when we realise that there can be nothing beyond but retrogression?”

“Perhaps,” said Owen dreamily, “it is the prisoned infinite in us calling out to its kindred infinite as expressed in that visible perfection.”

“You seem to have a cold in the head. Better rub some tallow on your nose when you go to bed,” said Miss Cornelia, who had come in through the little gate between the firs in time to catch Owen’s last remark. Miss Cornelia liked Owen; but it was a matter of principle with her to visit any “highfalutin” language from a man with a snub.

Miss Cornelia personated the comedy that ever peeps around the corner at the tragedy of life. Anne, whose nerves had been rather strained, laughed hysterically, and even Owen smiled. Certainly, sentiment and passion had a way of shrinking out of sight in Miss Cornelia’s presence. And yet to Anne nothing seemed quite as hopeless and dark and painful as it had seemed a few moments before. But sleep was far from her eyes that night.

CHAPTER 27

ON THE SAND BAR

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Owen Ford left Four Winds the next morning. In the evening Anne went over to see Leslie, but found nobody. The house was locked and there was no light in any window. It looked like a home left soulless. Leslie did not run over on the following day — which Anne thought a bad sign.

Gilbert having occasion to go in the evening to the fishing cove, Anne drove with him to the Point, intending to stay awhile with Captain Jim. But the great light, cutting its swathes through the fog of the autumn evening, was in care of Alec Boyd and Captain Jim was away.

“What will you do?” asked Gilbert. “Come with me?”

“I don’t want to go to the cove — but I’ll go over the channel with you, and roam about on the sand shore till you come back. The rock shore is too slippery and grim tonight.”

Alone on the sands of the bar Anne gave herself up to the eerie charm of the night. It was warm for September, and the late afternoon had been very foggy; but a full moon had in part lessened the fog and transformed the harbor and the gulf and the surrounding shores into a strange, fantastic, unreal world of pale silver mist, through which everything loomed phantom-like. Captain Josiah Crawford’s black schooner sailing down the channel, laden with potatoes for Bluenose ports, was a spectral ship bound for a far uncharted land, ever receding, never to be reached. The calls of unseen gulls overhead were the cries of the souls of doomed seamen. The little curls of foam that blew across the sand were elfin things stealing up from the sea-caves. The big, round-shouldered sand-dunes were the sleeping giants of some old northern tale. The lights that glimmered palely across the harbor were the delusive beacons on some coast of fairyland.

Anne pleased herself with a hundred fancies as she wandered through the mist. It was delightful — romantic — mysterious to be roaming here alone on this enchanted shore.

But was she alone? Something loomed in the mist before her — took shape and form — suddenly moved towards her across the wave-rippled sand.

“Leslie!” exclaimed Anne in amazement. “Whatever are you doing — HERE — tonight?”

“If it comes to that, whatever are YOU doing here?” said Leslie, trying to laugh. The effort was a failure. She looked very pale and tired; but the love locks under her scarlet cap were curling about her face and eyes like little sparkling rings of gold.

“I’m waiting for Gilbert — he’s over at the Cove. I intended to stay at the light, but Captain Jim is away.”

“Well, I came here because I wanted to walk — and walk — and WALK,” said Leslie restlessly. “I couldn’t on the rock shore — the tide was too high and the rocks prisoned me. I had to come here — or I should have gone mad, I think. I rowed myself over the channel in Captain Jim’s flat. I’ve been here for an hour. Come — come — let us walk. I can’t stand still. Oh, Anne!”

“Leslie, dearest, what is the trouble?” asked Anne, though she knew too well already.

“I can’t tell you — don’t ask me. I wouldn’t mind your knowing — I wish you did know — but I can’t tell you — I can’t tell anyone. I’ve been such a fool, Anne — and oh, it hurts so terribly to be a fool. There’s nothing so painful in the world.”

She laughed bitterly. Anne slipped her arm around her.

“Leslie, is it that you have learned to care for Mr. Ford?”

Leslie turned herself about passionately.

“How did you know?” she cried. “Anne, how did you know? Oh, is it written in my face for everyone to see? Is it as plain as that?”

“No, no. I — I can’t tell you how I knew. It just came into my mind, somehow. Leslie, don’t look at me like that!”

“Do you despise me?” demanded Leslie in a fierce, low tone. “Do you think I’m wicked — unwomanly? Or do you think I’m just plain fool?”

“I don’t think you any of those things. Come, dear, let’s just talk it over sensibly, as we might talk over any other of the great crises of life. You’ve been brooding over it and let yourself drift into a morbid view of it. You know you have a little tendency to do that about everything that goes wrong, and you promised me that you would fight against it.”

“But — oh, it’s so — so shameful,” murmured Leslie. “To love him — unsought — and when I’m not free to love anybody.”

“There’s nothing shameful about it. But I’m very sorry that you have learned to care for Owen, because, as things are, it will only make you more unhappy.”

“I didn’t LEARN to care,” said Leslie, walking on and speaking passionately. “If it had been like that I could have prevented it. I never dreamed of such a thing until that day, a week ago, when he told me he had finished his book and must soon go away. Then — then I knew. I felt as if someone had struck me a terrible blow. I didn’t say anything — I couldn’t speak — but I don’t know what I looked like. I’m so afraid my face betrayed me. Oh, I would die of shame if I thought he knew — or suspected.”

Anne was miserably silent, hampered by her deductions from her conversation with Owen. Leslie went on feverishly, as if she found relief in speech.

“I was so happy all this summer, Anne — happier than I ever was in my life. I thought it was because everything had been made clear between you and me, and that it was our friendship which made life seem so beautiful and full once more. And it WAS, in part — but not all — oh, not nearly all. I know now why everything was so different. And now it’s all over — and he has gone. How can I live, Anne? When I turned back into the house this morning after he had gone the solitude struck me like a blow in the face.”

“It won’t seem so hard by and by, dear,” said Anne, who always felt the pain of her friends so keenly that she could not speak easy, fluent words of comforting. Besides, she remembered how wellmeant speeches had hurt her in her own sorrow and was afraid.

“Oh, it seems to me it will grow harder all the time,” said Leslie miserably. “I’ve nothing to look forward to. Morning will come after morning — and he will not come back — he will never come back. Oh, when I think that I will never see him again I feel as if a great brutal hand had twisted itself among my heartstrings, and was wrenching them. Once, long ago, I dreamed of love — and I thought it must be beautiful — and NOW — its like THIS. When he went away yesterday morning he was so cold and indifferent. He said ‘Goodbye, Mrs. Moore’ in the coldest tone in the world — as if we had not even been friends — as if I meant absolutely nothing to him. I know I don’t — I didn’t want him to care — but he MIGHT have been a little kinder.”

“Oh, I wish Gilbert would come,” thought Anne. She was racked between her sympathy for Leslie and the necessity of avoiding anything that would betray Owen’s confidence. She knew why his goodbye had been so cold — why it could not have the cordiality that their good-comradeship demanded — but she could not tell Leslie.

“I couldn’t help it, Anne — I couldn’t help it,” said poor Leslie.

“I know that.”

“Do you blame me so very much?”

“I don’t blame you at all.”

“And you won’t — you won’t tell Gilbert?”

“Leslie! Do you think I would do such a thing?”

“Oh, I don’t know — you and Gilbert are such CHUMS. I don’t see how you could help telling him everything.”

“Everything about my own concerns — yes. But not my friends’ secrets.”

“I couldn’t have HIM know. But I’m glad YOU know. I would feel guilty if there were anything I was ashamed to tell you. I hope Miss Cornelia won’t find out. Sometimes I feel as if those terrible, kind brown eyes of hers read my very soul. Oh, I wish this mist would never lift — I wish I could just stay in it forever, hidden away from every living being. I don’t see how I can go on with life. This summer has been so full. I never was lonely for a moment. Before Owen came there used to be horrible moments — when I had been with you and Gilbert — and then had to leave you. You two would walk away together and I would walk away ALONE. After Owen came he was always there to walk home with me — we would laugh and talk as you and Gilbert were doing — there were no more lonely, envious moments for me. And NOW! Oh, yes, I’ve been a fool. Let’s have done talking about my folly. I’ll never bore you with it again.”

“Here is Gilbert, and you are coming back with us,” said Anne, who had no intention of leaving Leslie to wander alone on the sandbar on such a night and in such a mood. “There’s plenty of room in our boat for three, and we’ll tie the flat on behind.”

“Oh, I suppose I must reconcile myself to being the odd one again,” said poor Leslie with another bitter laugh. “Forgive me, Anne — that was hateful. I ought to be thankful — and I AM — that I have two good friends who are glad to count me in as a third. Don’t mind my hateful speeches. I just seem to be one great pain all over and everything hurts me.”

“Leslie seemed very quiet tonight, didn’t she?” said Gilbert, when he and Anne reached home. “What in the world was she doing over there on the bar alone?”

“Oh, she was tired — and you know she likes to go to the shore after one of Dick’s bad days.”

“What a pity she hadn’t met and married a fellow like Ford long ago,” ruminated Gilbert. “They’d have made an ideal couple, wouldn’t they?”

“For pity’s sake, Gilbert, don’t develop into a matchmaker. It’s an abominable profession for a man,” cried Anne rather sharply, afraid that Gilbert might blunder on the truth if he kept on in this strain.

“Bless us, Anne-girl, I’m not matchmaking,” protested Gilbert, rather surprised at her tone. “I was only thinking of one of the might-have-beens.”

“Well, don’t. It’s a waste of time,” said Anne. Then she added suddenly:

“Oh, Gilbert, I wish everybody could be as happy as we are.”

CHAPTER 2 8

ODDS AND ENDS

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“I’ve been reading obituary notices,” said Miss Cornelia, laying down the Daily Enterprise and taking up her sewing.

The harbor was lying black and sullen under a dour November sky; the wet, dead leaves clung drenched and sodden to the window sills; but the little house was gay with firelight and springlike with Anne’s ferns and geraniums.

“It’s always summer here, Anne,” Leslie had said one day; and all who were the guests of that house of dreams felt the same.

“The Enterprise seems to run to obituaries these days,” quoth Miss Cornelia. “It always has a couple of columns of them, and I read every line. It’s one of my forms of recreation, especially when there’s some original poetry attached to them. Here’s a choice sample for you:

She’s gone to be with her Maker,
Never more to roam.
She used to play and sing with joy
The song of Home, Sweet Home.

Who says we haven’t any poetical talent on the Island! Have you ever noticed what heaps of good people die, Anne, dearie? It’s kind of pitiful. Here’s ten obituaries, and every one of them saints and models, even the men. Here’s old Peter Stimson, who has ‘left a large circle of friends to mourn his untimely loss.’ Lord, Anne, dearie, that man was eighty, and everybody who knew him had been wishing him dead these thirty years. Read obituaries when you’re blue, Anne, dearie — especially the ones of folks you know. If you’ve any sense of humor at all they’ll cheer you up,

believe ME. I just wish I had the writing of the obituaries of some people. Isn't 'obituary' an awful ugly word? This very Peter I've been speaking of had a face exactly like one. I never saw it but I thought of the word OBITUARY then and there. There's only one uglier word that I know of, and that's RELICT. Lord, Anne, dearie, I may be an old maid, but there's this comfort in it — I'll never be any man's 'relict.'"

"It IS an ugly word," said Anne, laughing. "Avonlea graveyard was full of old tombstones 'sacred to the memory of So-and-So, RELICT of the late So-and-So.' It always made me think of something worn out and moth eaten. Why is it that so many of the words connected with death are so disagreeable? I do wish that the custom of calling a dead body 'the remains' could be abolished. I positively shiver when I hear the undertaker say at a funeral, 'All who wish to see the remains please step this way.' It always gives me the horrible impression that I am about to view the scene of a cannibal feast."

"Well, all I hope," said Miss Cornelia calmly, "is that when I'm dead nobody will call me 'our departed sister.' I took a scunner at this sister-and-brothering business five years ago when there was a travelling evangelist holding meetings at the Glen. I hadn't any use for him from the start. I felt in my bones that there was something wrong with him. And there was. Mind you, he was pretending to be a Presbyterian — PresbyTARian, HE called it — and all the time he was a Methodist. He brothered and sistered everybody. He had a large circle of relations, that man had. He clutched my hand fervently one night, and said imploringly, 'My DEAR sister Bryant, are you a Christian?' I just looked him over a bit, and then I said calmly, 'The only brother I ever had, MR. Fiske, was buried fifteen years ago, and I haven't adopted any since. As for being a Christian, I was that, I hope and believe, when you were crawling about the floor in petticoats.' THAT squelched him, believe ME. Mind you, Anne dearie, I'm not down on all evangelists. We've had some real fine, earnest men, who did a lot of good and made the old sinners squirm. But this Fiske-man wasn't one of them. I had a good laugh all to myself one evening. Fiske had asked all who were Christians to stand up. I didn't, believe me! I never had any use for that sort of thing. But most of them did, and then he asked all who wanted to be Christians to stand up. Nobody

stirred for a spell, so Fiske started up a hymn at the top of his voice. Just in front of me poor little Ikey Baker was sitting in the Millison pew. He was a home boy, ten years old, and Millison just about worked him to death. The poor little creature was always so tired he fell asleep right off whenever he went to church or anywhere he could sit still for a few minutes. He'd been sleeping all through the meeting, and I was thankful to see the poor child getting a rest, believe ME. Well, when Fiske's voice went soaring skyward and the rest joined in, poor Ikey wakened with a start. He thought it was just an ordinary singing and that everybody ought to stand up, so he scrambled to his feet mighty quick, knowing he'd get a combing down from Maria Millison for sleeping in meeting. Fiske saw him, stopped and shouted, 'Another soul saved! Glory Hallelujah!' And there was poor, frightened Ikey, only half awake and yawning, never thinking about his soul at all. Poor child, he never had time to think of anything but his tired, overworked little body.

"Leslie went one night and the Fiske-man got right after her — oh, he was especially anxious about the souls of the nicelooking girls, believe me! — and he hurt her feelings so she never went again. And then he prayed every night after that, right in public, that the Lord would soften her hard heart. Finally I went to Mr. Leavitt, our minister then, and told him if he didn't make Fiske stop that I'd just rise up the next night and throw my hymn book at him when he mentioned that 'beautiful but unrepentant young woman.' I'd have done it too, believe ME. Mr. Leavitt did put a stop to it, but Fiske kept on with his meetings until Charley Douglas put an end to his career in the Glen. Mrs. Charley had been out in California all winter. She'd been real melancholy in the fall — religious melancholy — it ran in her family. Her father worried so much over believing that he had committed the unpardonable sin that he died in the asylum. So when Rose Douglas got that way Charley packed her off to visit her sister in Los Angeles. She got perfectly well and came home just when the Fiske revival was in full swing. She stepped off the train at the Glen, real smiling and chipper, and the first thing she saw staring her in the face on the black, gable-end of the freight shed, was the question, in big white letters, two feet high, 'Whither goest thou — to heaven or hell?' That had been one of Fiske's ideas, and he had got Henry Hammond to paint it. Rose just gave a shriek and fainted; and when they got her home she was

worse than ever. Charley Douglas went to Mr. Leavitt and told him that every Douglas would leave the church if Fiske was kept there any longer. Mr. Leavitt had to give in, for the Douglasses paid half his salary, so Fiske departed, and we had to depend on our Bibles once more for instructions on how to get to heaven. After he was gone Mr. Leavitt found out he was just a masquerading Methodist, and he felt pretty sick, believe ME. Mr. Leavitt fell short in some ways, but he was a good, sound Presbyterian.”

“By the way, I had a letter from Mr. Ford yesterday,” said Anne. “He asked me to remember him kindly to you.”

“I don’t want his remembrances,” said Miss Cornelia, curtly.

“Why?” said Anne, in astonishment. “I thought you liked him.”

“Well, so I did, in a kind of way. But I’ll never forgive him for what he done to Leslie. There’s that poor child eating her heart out about him — as if she hadn’t had trouble enough — and him ranting round Toronto, I’ve no doubt, enjoying himself same as ever. Just like a man.”

“Oh, Miss Cornelia, how did you find out?”

“Lord, Anne, dearie, I’ve got eyes, haven’t I? And I’ve known Leslie since she was a baby. There’s been a new kind of heartbreak in her eyes all the fall, and I know that writer-man was behind it somehow. I’ll never forgive myself for being the means of bringing him here. But I never expected he’d be like he was. I thought he’d just be like the other men Leslie had boarded — conceited young asses, every one of them, that she never had any use for. One of them did try to flirt with her once and she froze him out — so bad, I feel sure he’s never got himself thawed since. So I never thought of any danger.”

“Don’t let Leslie suspect you know her secret,” said Anne hurriedly. “I think it would hurt her.”

“Trust me, Anne, dearie. I wasn’t born yesterday. Oh, a plague on all the men! One of them ruined Leslie’s life to begin with, and now another of

the tribe comes and makes her still more wretched. Anne, this world is an awful place, believe me.”

“There’s something in the world amiss
Will be unriddled by and by,”

quoted Anne dreamily.

“If it is, it’ll be in a world where there aren’t any men,” said Miss Cornelia gloomily.

“What have the men been doing now?” asked Gilbert, entering.

“Mischief — mischief! What else did they ever do?”

“It was Eve ate the apple, Miss Cornelia.”

“‘Twas a he-creature tempted her,” retorted Miss Cornelia triumphantly.

Leslie, after her first anguish was over, found it possible to go on with life after all, as most of us do, no matter what our particular form of torment has been. It is even possible that she enjoyed moments of it, when she was one of the gay circle in the little house of dreams. But if Anne ever hoped that she was forgetting Owen Ford she would have been undeceived by the furtive hunger in Leslie’s eyes whenever his name was mentioned. Pitiful to that hunger, Anne always contrived to tell Captain Jim or Gilbert bits of news from Owen’s letters when Leslie was with them. The girl’s flush and pallor at such moments spoke all too eloquently of the emotion that filled her being. But she never spoke of him to Anne, or mentioned that night on the sandbar.

One day her old dog died and she grieved bitterly over him.

“He’s been my friend so long,” she said sorrowfully to Anne. “He was Dick’s old dog, you know — Dick had him for a year or so before we were married. He left him with me when he sailed on the Four Sisters. Carlo got very fond of me — and his dog-love helped me through that first dreadful year after mother died, when I was alone. When I heard that Dick was

coming back I was afraid Carlo wouldn't be so much mine. But he never seemed to care for Dick, though he had been so fond of him once. He would snap and growl at him as if he were a stranger. I was glad. It was nice to have one thing whose love was all mine. That old dog has been such a comfort to me, Anne. He got so feeble in the fall that I was afraid he couldn't live long — but I hoped I could nurse him through the winter. He seemed pretty well this morning. He was lying on the rug before the fire; then, all at once, he got up and crept over to me; he put his head on my lap and gave me one loving look out of his big, soft, dog eyes — and then he just shivered and died. I shall miss him so."

"Let me give you another dog, Leslie," said Anne. "I'm getting a lovely Gordon setter for a Christmas present for Gilbert. Let me give you one too."

Leslie shook her head.

"Not just now, thank you, Anne. I don't feel like having another dog yet. I don't seem to have any affection left for another. Perhaps — in time — I'll let you give me one. I really need one as a kind of protection. But there was something almost human about Carlo — it wouldn't be DECENT to fill his place too hurriedly, dear old fellow."

Anne went to Avonlea a week before Christmas and stayed until after the holidays. Gilbert came up for her, and there was a glad New Year celebration at Green Gables, when Barrys and Blythes and Wrights assembled to devour a dinner which had cost Mrs. Rachel and Marilla much careful thought and preparation. When they went back to Four Winds the little house was almost drifted over, for the third storm of a winter that was to prove phenomenally stormy had whirled up the harbor and heaped huge snow mountains about everything it encountered. But Captain Jim had shovelled out doors and paths, and Miss Cornelia had come down and kindled the hearth-fire.

"It's good to see you back, Anne, dearie! But did you ever see such drifts? You can't see the Moore place at all unless you go upstairs. Leslie'll be so glad you're back. She's almost buried alive over there. Fortunately Dick

can shovel snow, and thinks it's great fun. Susan sent me word to tell you she would be on hand tomorrow. Where are you off to now, Captain?"

"I reckon I'll plough up to the Glen and sit a bit with old Martin Strong. He's not far from his end and he's lonesome. He hasn't many friends — been too busy all his life to make any. He's made heaps of money, though."

"Well, he thought that since he couldn't serve God and Mammon he'd better stick to Mammon," said Miss Cornelia crisply. "So he shouldn't complain if he doesn't find Mammon very good company now."

Captain Jim went out, but remembered something in the yard and turned back for a moment.

"I'd a letter from Mr. Ford, Mistress Blythe, and he says the life-book is accepted and is going to be published next fall. I felt fair uplifted when I got the news. To think that I'm to see it in print at last."

"That man is clean crazy on the subject of his life-book," said Miss Cornelia compassionately. "For my part, I think there's far too many books in the world now."

CHAPTER 29

GILBERT AND ANNE DISAGREE

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Gilbert laid down the ponderous medical tome over which he had been poring until the increasing dusk of the March evening made him desist. He leaned back in his chair and gazed meditatively out of the window. It was early spring — probably the ugliest time of the year. Not even the sunset could redeem the dead, sodden landscape and rotten black harbor ice upon which he looked. No sign of life was visible, save a big black crow winging his solitary way across a leaden field. Gilbert speculated idly concerning that crow. Was he a family crow, with a black but comely crow wife awaiting him in the woods beyond the Glen? Or was he a glossy young buck of a crow on courting thoughts intent? Or was he a cynical bachelor crow, believing that he travels the fastest who travels alone? Whatever he was, he soon disappeared in congenial gloom and Gilbert turned to the cheerier view indoors.

The firelight flickered from point to point, gleaming on the white and green coats of Gog and Magog, on the sleek, brown head of the beautiful setter basking on the rug, on the picture frames on the walls, on the vaseful of daffodils from the window garden, on Anne herself, sitting by her little table, with her sewing beside her and her hands clasped over her knee while she traced out pictures in the fire — Castles in Spain whose airy turrets pierced moonlit cloud and sunset bar-ships sailing from the Haven of Good Hopes straight to Four Winds Harbor with precious burthen. For Anne was again a dreamer of dreams, albeit a grim shape of fear went with her night and day to shadow and darken her visions.

Gilbert was accustomed to refer to himself as “an old married man.” But he still looked upon Anne with the incredulous eyes of a lover. He couldn’t wholly believe yet that she was really his. It MIGHT be only a dream after

all, part and parcel of this magic house of dreams. His soul still went on tip-toe before her, lest the charm be shattered and the dream dispelled.

“Anne,” he said slowly, “lend me your ears. I want to talk with you about something.”

Anne looked across at him through the firelit gloom.

“What is it?” she asked gaily. “You look fearfully solemn, Gilbert. I really haven’t done anything naughty today. Ask Susan.”

“It’s not of you — or ourselves — I want to talk. It’s about Dick Moore.”

“Dick Moore?” echoed Anne, sitting up alertly. “Why, what in the world have you to say about Dick Moore?”

“I’ve been thinking a great deal about him lately. Do you remember that time last summer I treated him for those carbuncles on his neck?”

“Yes — yes.”

“I took the opportunity to examine the scars on his head thoroughly. I’ve always thought Dick was a very interesting case from a medical point of view. Lately I’ve been studying the history of trephining and the cases where it has been employed. Anne, I have come to the conclusion that if Dick Moore were taken to a good hospital and the operation of trephining performed on several places in his skull, his memory and faculties might be restored.”

“Gilbert!” Anne’s voice was full of protest. “Surely you don’t mean it!”

“I do, indeed. And I have decided that it is my duty to broach the subject to Leslie.”

“Gilbert Blythe, you shall NOT do any such thing,” cried Anne vehemently. “Oh, Gilbert, you won’t — you won’t. You couldn’t be so cruel. Promise me you won’t.”

“Why, Anne-girl, I didn’t suppose you would take it like this. Be reasonable—”

“I won’t be reasonable — I can’t be reasonable — I AM reasonable. It is you who are unreasonable. Gilbert, have you ever once thought what it would mean for Leslie if Dick Moore were to be restored to his right senses? Just stop and think! She’s unhappy enough now; but life as Dick’s nurse and attendant is a thousand times easier for her than life as Dick’s wife. I know — I KNOW! It’s unthinkable. Don’t you meddle with the matter. Leave well enough alone.”

“I HAVE thought over that aspect of the case thoroughly, Anne. But I believe that a doctor is bound to set the sanctity of a patient’s mind and body above all other considerations, no matter what the consequences may be. I believe it his duty to endeavor to restore health and sanity, if there is any hope whatever of it.”

“But Dick isn’t your patient in that respect,” cried Anne, taking another tack. “If Leslie had asked you if anything could be done for him, THEN it might be your duty to tell her what you really thought. But you’ve no right to meddle.”

“I don’t call it meddling. Uncle Dave told Leslie twelve years ago that nothing could be done for Dick. She believes that, of course.”

“And why did Uncle Dave tell her that, if it wasn’t true?” cried Anne, triumphantly. “Doesn’t he know as much about it as you?”

“I think not — though it may sound conceited and presumptuous to say it. And you know as well as I that he is rather prejudiced against what he calls ‘these new-fangled notions of cutting and carving.’ He’s even opposed to operating for appendicitis.”

“He’s right,” exclaimed Anne, with a complete change of front. ‘I believe myself that you modern doctors are entirely too fond of making experiments with human flesh and blood.’”

“Rhoda Allonby would not be a living woman today if I had been afraid of making a certain experiment,” argued Gilbert. “I took the risk — and saved her life.”

“I’m sick and tired of hearing about Rhoda Allonby,” cried Anne — most unjustly, for Gilbert had never mentioned Mrs. Allonby’s name since the day he had told Anne of his success in regard to her. And he could not be blamed for other people’s discussion of it.

Gilbert felt rather hurt.

“I had not expected you to look at the matter as you do, Anne,” he said a little stiffly, getting up and moving towards the office door. It was their first approach to a quarrel.

But Anne flew after him and dragged him back.

“Now, Gilbert, you are not ‘going off mad.’ Sit down here and I’ll apologise bee-YEW-tifully, I shouldn’t have said that. But — oh, if you knew—”

Anne checked herself just in time. She had been on the very verge of betraying Leslie’s secret.

“Knew what a woman feels about it,” she concluded lamely.

“I think I do know. I’ve looked at the matter from every point of view — and I’ve been driven to the conclusion that it is my duty to tell Leslie that I believe it is possible that Dick can be restored to himself; there my responsibility ends. It will be for her to decide what she will do.”

“I don’t think you’ve any right to put such a responsibility on her. She has enough to bear. She is poor — how could she afford such an operation?”

“That is for her to decide,” persisted Gilbert stubbornly.

“You say you think that Dick can be cured. But are you SURE of it?”

“Certainly not. Nobody could be sure of such a thing. There may have been lesions of the brain itself, the effect of which can never be removed. But if, as I believe, his loss of memory and other faculties is due merely to the pressure on the brain centers of certain depressed areas of bone, then he can be cured.”

“But it’s only a possibility!” insisted Anne. “Now, suppose you tell Leslie and she decides to have the operation. It will cost a great deal. She will have to borrow the money, or sell her little property. And suppose the operation is a failure and Dick remains the same.

“How will she be able to pay back the money she borrows, or make a living for herself and that big helpless creature if she sells the farm?”

“Oh, I know — I know. But it is my duty to tell her. I can’t get away from that conviction.”

“Oh, I know the Blythe stubbornness,” groaned Anne. “But don’t do this solely on your own responsibility. Consult Doctor Dave.”

“I HAVE done so,” said Gilbert reluctantly.

“And what did he say?”

“In brief — as you say — leave well enough alone. Apart from his prejudice against new-fangled surgery, I’m afraid he looks at the case from your point of view — don’t do it, for Leslie’s sake.”

“There now,” cried Anne triumphantly. “I do think, Gilbert, that you ought to abide by the judgment of a man nearly eighty, who has seen a great deal and saved scores of lives himself — surely his opinion ought to weigh more than a mere boy’s.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t laugh. It’s too serious.”

“That’s just my point. It IS serious. Here is a man who is a helpless burden. He may be restored to reason and usefulness—”

“He was so very useful before,” interjected Anne witheringly.

“He may be given a chance to make good and redeem the past. His wife doesn’t know this. I do. It is therefore my duty to tell her that there is such a possibility. That, boiled down, is my decision.”

“Don’t say ‘decision’ yet, Gilbert. Consult somebody else. Ask Captain Jim what he thinks about it.”

“Very well. But I’ll not promise to abide by his opinion, Anne.

“This is something a man must decide for himself. My conscience would never be easy if I kept silent on the subject.”

“Oh, your conscience!” moaned Anne. “I suppose that Uncle Dave has a conscience too, hasn’t he?”

“Yes. But I am not the keeper of his conscience. Come, Anne, if this affair did not concern Leslie — if it were a purely abstract case, you would agree with me, — you know you would.”

“I wouldn’t,” vowed Anne, trying to believe it herself. “Oh, you can argue all night, Gilbert, but you won’t convince me. Just you ask Miss Cornelia what she thinks of it.”

“You’re driven to the last ditch, Anne, when you bring up Miss Cornelia as a reinforcement. She will say, ‘Just like a man,’ and rage furiously. No matter. This is no affair for Miss Cornelia to settle. Leslie alone must decide it.”

“You know very well how she will decide it,” said Anne, almost in tears. “She has ideals of duty, too. I don’t see how you can take such a responsibility on your shoulders. I couldn’t.”

“‘Because right is right to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence,’”

quoted Gilbert.

“Oh, you think a couplet of poetry a convincing argument!” scoffed Anne.
“That is so like a man.”

And then she laughed in spite of herself. It sounded so like an echo of Miss Cornelia.

“Well, if you won’t accept Tennyson as an authority, perhaps you will believe the words of a Greater than he,” said Gilbert seriously. “‘Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ I believe that, Anne, with all my heart. It’s the greatest and grandest verse in the Bible — or in any literature — and the TRUEST, if there are comparative degrees of trueness. And it’s the first duty of a man to tell the truth, as he sees it and believes it.”

“In this case the truth won’t make poor Leslie free,” sighed Anne. “It will probably end in still more bitter bondage for her. Oh, Gilbert, I CAN’T think you are right.”

CHAPTER 3 0

LESLIE DECIDES

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A sudden outbreak of a virulent type of influenza at the Glen and down at the fishing village kept Gilbert so busy for the next fortnight that he had no time to pay the promised visit to Captain Jim. Anne hoped against hope that he had abandoned the idea about Dick Moore, and, resolving to let sleeping dogs lie, she said no more about the subject. But she thought of it incessantly.

“I wonder if it would be right for me to tell him that Leslie cares for Owen,” she thought. “He would never let her suspect that he knew, so her pride would not suffer, and it MIGHT convince him that he should let Dick Moore alone. Shall I — shall I? No, after all, I cannot. A promise is sacred, and I’ve no right to betray Leslie’s secret. But oh, I never felt so worried over anything in my life as I do over this. It’s spoiling the spring — it’s spoiling everything.”

One evening Gilbert abruptly proposed that they go down and see Captain Jim. With a sinking heart Anne agreed, and they set forth. Two weeks of kind sunshine had wrought a miracle in the bleak landscape over which Gilbert’s crow had flown. The hills and fields were dry and brown and warm, ready to break into bud and blossom; the harbor was laughter-shaken again; the long harbor road was like a gleaming red ribbon; down on the dunes a crowd of boys, who were out smelt fishing, were burning the thick, dry sandhill grass of the preceding summer. The flames swept over the dunes rosily, flinging their cardinal banners against the dark gulf beyond, and illuminating the channel and the fishing village. It was a picturesque scene which would at other times have delighted Anne’s eyes; but she was not enjoying this walk. Neither was Gilbert. Their usual good-comradeship and Josephian community of taste and viewpoint were sadly lacking. Anne’s disapproval of the whole project showed itself in the

haughty uplift of her head and the studied politeness of her remarks. Gilbert's mouth was set in all the Blythe obstinacy, but his eyes were troubled. He meant to do what he believed to be his duty; but to be at outs with Anne was a high price to pay. Altogether, both were glad when they reached the light — and remorseful that they should be glad.

Captain Jim put away the fishing net upon which he was working, and welcomed them joyfully. In the searching light of the spring evening he looked older than Anne had ever seen him. His hair had grown much grayer, and the strong old hand shook a little. But his blue eyes were clear and steady, and the staunch soul looked out through them gallant and unafraid.

Captain Jim listened in amazed silence while Gilbert said what he had come to say. Anne, who knew how the old man worshipped Leslie, felt quite sure that he would side with her, although she had not much hope that this would influence Gilbert. She was therefore surprised beyond measure when Captain Jim, slowly and sorrowfully, but unhesitatingly, gave it as his opinion that Leslie should be told.

“Oh, Captain Jim, I didn't think you'd say that,” she exclaimed reproachfully. “I thought you wouldn't want to make more trouble for her.”

Captain Jim shook his head.

“I don't want to. I know how you feel about it, Mistress Blythe — just as I feel meself. But it ain't our feelings we have to steer by through life — no, no, we'd make shipwreck mighty often if we did that. There's only the one safe compass and we've got to set our course by that — what it's right to do. I agree with the doctor. If there's a chance for Dick, Leslie should be told of it. There's no two sides to that, in my opinion.”

“Well,” said Anne, giving up in despair, “wait until Miss Cornelia gets after you two men.”

“Cornelia'll rake us fore and aft, no doubt,” assented Captain Jim. “You women are lovely critters, Mistress Blythe, but you're just a mite illogical.

You're a highly eddicated lady and Cornelia isn't, but you're like as two peas when it comes to that. I dunno's you're any the worse for it. Logic is a sort of hard, merciless thing, I reckon. Now, I'll brew a cup of tea and we'll drink it and talk of pleasant things, jest to calm our minds a bit."

At least, Captain Jim's tea and conversation calmed Anne's mind to such an extent that she did not make Gilbert suffer so acutely on the way home as she had deliberately intended to do. She did not refer to the burning question at all, but she chatted amiably of other matters, and Gilbert understood that he was forgiven under protest.

"Captain Jim seems very frail and bent this spring. The winter has aged him," said Anne sadly. "I am afraid that he will soon be going to seek lost Margaret. I can't bear to think of it."

“Four Winds won’t be the same place when Captain Jim ‘sets out to sea,’” agreed Gilbert.

The following evening he went to the house up the brook. Anne wandered dismally around until his return.

“Well, what did Leslie say?” she demanded when he came in.

“Very little. I think she felt rather dazed.”

“And is she going to have the operation?”

“She is going to think it over and decide very soon.”

Gilbert flung himself wearily into the easy chair before the fire. He looked tired. It had not been an easy thing for him to tell Leslie. And the terror that had sprung into her eyes when the meaning of what he told her came home to her was not a pleasant thing to remember. Now, when the die was cast, he was beset with doubts of his own wisdom.

Anne looked at him remorsefully; then she slipped down on the rug beside him and laid her glossy red head on his arm.

“Gilbert, I’ve been rather hateful over this. I won’t be any more. Please just call me redheaded and forgive me.”

By which Gilbert understood that, no matter what came of it, there would be no I-told-you-so’s. But he was not wholly comforted. Duty in the abstract is one thing; duty in the concrete is quite another, especially when the doer is confronted by a woman’s stricken eyes.

Some instinct made Anne keep away from Leslie for the next three days. On the third evening Leslie came down to the little house and told Gilbert that she had made up her mind; she would take Dick to Montreal and have the operation.

She was very pale and seemed to have wrapped herself in her old mantle of aloofness. But her eyes had lost the look which had haunted Gilbert;

they were cold and bright; and she proceeded to discuss details with him in a crisp, businesslike way. There were plans to be made and many things to be thought over. When Leslie had got the information she wanted she went home. Anne wanted to walk part of the way with her.

“Better not,” said Leslie curtly. “Today’s rain has made the ground damp. Goodnight.”

“Have I lost my friend?” said Anne with a sigh. “If the operation is successful and Dick Moore finds himself again Leslie will retreat into some remote fastness of her soul where none of us can ever find her.”

“Perhaps she will leave him,” said Gilbert.

“Leslie would never do that, Gilbert. Her sense of duty is very strong. She told me once that her Grandmother West always impressed upon her the fact that when she assumed any responsibility she must never shirk it, no matter what the consequences might be. That is one of her cardinal rules. I suppose it’s very old-fashioned.”

“Don’t be bitter, Anne-girl. You know you don’t think it old-fashioned — you know you have the very same idea of sacredness of assumed responsibilities yourself. And you are right. Shirking responsibilities is the curse of our modern life — the secret of all the unrest and discontent that is seething in the world.”

“Thus saith the preacher,” mocked Anne. But under the mockery she felt that he was right; and she was very sick at heart for Leslie.

A week later Miss Cornelia descended like an avalanche upon the little house. Gilbert was away and Anne was compelled to bear the shock of the impact alone.

Miss Cornelia hardly waited to get her hat off before she began.

“Anne, do you mean to tell me it’s true what I’ve heard — that Dr. Blythe has told Leslie Dick can be cured, and that she is going to take him to Montreal to have him operated on?”

“Yes, it is quite true, Miss Cornelia,” said Anne bravely.

“Well, it’s inhuman cruelty, that’s what it is,” said Miss Cornelia, violently agitated. “I did think Dr. Blythe was a decent man. I didn’t think he could have been guilty of this.”

“Dr. Blythe thought it was his duty to tell Leslie that there was a chance for Dick,” said Anne with spirit, “and,” she added, loyalty to Gilbert getting the better of her, “I agree with him.”

“Oh, no, you don’t, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia. “No person with any bowels of compassion could.”

“Captain Jim does.”

“Don’t quote that old ninny to me,” cried Miss Cornelia. “And I don’t care who agrees with him. Think — THINK what it means to that poor hunted, harried girl.”

“We DO think of it. But Gilbert believes that a doctor should put the welfare of a patient’s mind and body before all other considerations.”

“That’s just like a man. But I expected better things of you, Anne,” said Miss Cornelia, more in sorrow than in wrath; then she proceeded to bombard Anne with precisely the same arguments with which the latter had attacked Gilbert; and Anne valiantly defended her husband with the weapons he had used for his own protection. Long was the fray, but Miss Cornelia made an end at last.

“It’s an iniquitous shame,” she declared, almost in tears. “That’s just what it is — an iniquitous shame. Poor, poor Leslie!”

“Don’t you think Dick should be considered a little too?” pleaded Anne.

“Dick! Dick Moore! HE’S happy enough. He’s a better behaved and more reputable member of society now than he ever was before.

“Why, he was a drunkard and perhaps worse. Are you going to set him loose again to roar and to devour?”

“He may reform,” said poor Anne, beset by foe without and traitor within.

“Reform your grandmother!” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Dick Moore got the injuries that left him as he is in a drunken brawl. He DESERVES his fate. It was sent on him for a punishment. I don’t believe the doctor has any business to tamper with the visitations of God.”

“Nobody knows how Dick was hurt, Miss Cornelia. It may not have been in a drunken brawl at all. He may have been waylaid and robbed.”

“Pigs MAY whistle, but they’ve poor mouths for it,” said Miss Cornelia.

“Well, the gist of what you tell me is that the thing is settled and there’s no use in talking. If that’s so I’ll hold my tongue. I don’t propose to wear MY teeth out gnawing files. When a thing has to be I give in to it. But I like to make mighty sure first that it HAS to be. Now, I’ll devote MY energies to comforting and sustaining Leslie. And after all,” added Miss Cornelia, brightening up hopefully, “perhaps nothing can be done for Dick.”

CHAPTER 3 1

THE TRUTH MAKES FREE

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Leslie, having once made up her mind what to do, proceeded to do it with characteristic resolution and speed. Housecleaning must be finished with first, whatever issues of life and death might await beyond. The gray house up the brook was put into flawless order and cleanliness, with Miss Cornelia's ready assistance. Miss Cornelia, having said her say to Anne, and later on to Gilbert and Captain Jim — sparing neither of them, let it be assured — never spoke of the matter to Leslie. She accepted the fact of Dick's operation, referred to it when necessary in a businesslike way, and ignored it when it was not. Leslie never attempted to discuss it. She was very cold and quiet during these beautiful spring days. She seldom visited Anne, and though she was invariably courteous and friendly, that very courtesy was as an icy barrier between her and the people of the little house. The old jokes and laughter and chumminess of common things could not reach her over it. Anne refused to feel hurt. She knew that Leslie was in the grip of a hideous dread — a dread that wrapped her away from all little glimpses of happiness and hours of pleasure. When one great passion seizes possession of the soul all other feelings are crowded aside. Never in all her life had Leslie Moore shuddered away from the future with more intolerable terror. But she went forward as unswervingly in the path she had elected as the martyrs of old walked their chosen way, knowing the end of it to be the fiery agony of the stake.

The financial question was settled with greater ease than Anne had feared. Leslie borrowed the necessary money from Captain Jim, and, at her insistence, he took a mortgage on the little farm.

“So that is one thing off the poor girl's mind,” Miss Cornelia told Anne, “and off mine too. Now, if Dick gets well enough to work again he'll be able to earn enough to pay the interest on it; and if he doesn't I know

Captain Jim'll manage someway that Leslie won't have to. He said as much to me. 'I'm getting old, Cornelia,' he said, 'and I've no chick or child of my own. Leslie won't take a gift from a living man, but mebbe she will from a dead one.' So it will be all right as far as THAT goes. I wish everything else might be settled as satisfactorily. As for that wretch of a Dick, he's been awful these last few days. The devil was in him, believe ME! Leslie and I couldn't get on with our work for the tricks he'd play. He chased all her ducks one day around the yard till most of them died. And not one thing would he do for us. Sometimes, you know, he'll make himself quite handy, bringing in pails of water and wood. But this week if we sent him to the well he'd try to climb down into it. I thought once, 'If you'd only shoot down there headfirst everything would be nicely settled.'"

"Oh, Miss Cornelia!"

"Now, you needn't Miss Cornelia me, Anne, dearie. ANYBODY would have thought the same. If the Montreal doctors can make a rational creature out of Dick Moore they're wonders."

Leslie took Dick to Montreal early in May. Gilbert went with her, to help her, and make the necessary arrangements for her. He came home with the report that the Montreal surgeon whom they had consulted agreed with him that there was a good chance of Dick's restoration.

"Very comforting," was Miss Cornelia's sarcastic comment.

Anne only sighed. Leslie had been very distant at their parting.

But she had promised to write. Ten days after Gilbert's return the letter came. Leslie wrote that the operation had been successfully performed and that Dick was making a good recovery.

"What does she mean by 'successfully?'" asked Anne. "Does she mean that Dick's memory is really restored?"

"Not likely — since she says nothing of it," said Gilbert. "She uses the word 'successfully' from the surgeon's point of view. The operation has

been performed and followed by normal results. But it is too soon to know whether Dick's faculties will be eventually restored, wholly or in part. His memory would not be likely to return to him all at once. The process will be gradual, if it occurs at all. Is that all she says?"

"Yes — there's her letter. It's very short. Poor girl, she must be under a terrible strain. Gilbert Blythe, there are heaps of things I long to say to you, only it would be mean."

"Miss Cornelia says them for you," said Gilbert with a rueful smile. "She combs me down every time I encounter her. She makes it plain to me that she regards me as little better than a murderer, and that she thinks it a great pity that Dr. Dave ever let me step into his shoes. She even told me that the Methodist doctor over the harbor was to be preferred before me. With Miss Cornelia the force of condemnation can no further go."

"If Cornelia Bryant was sick, it would not be Doctor Dave or the Methodist doctor she would send for," sniffed Susan. "She would have you out of your hard-earned bed in the middle of the night, doctor, dear, if she took a spell of misery, that she would. And then she would likely say your bill was past all reason. But do not mind her, doctor, dear. It takes all kinds of people to make a world."

No further word came from Leslie for some time. The May days crept away in a sweet succession and the shores of Four Winds Harbor greened and bloomed and purpled. One day in late May Gilbert came home to be met by Susan in the stable yard.

"I am afraid something has upset Mrs. Doctor, doctor, dear," she said mysteriously. "She got a letter this afternoon and since then she has just been walking round the garden and talking to herself. You know it is not good for her to be on her feet so much, doctor, dear. She did not see fit to tell me what her news was, and I am no pry, doctor, dear, and never was, but it is plain something has upset her. And it is not good for her to be upset."

Gilbert hurried rather anxiously to the garden. Had anything happened at Green Gables? But Anne, sitting on the rustic seat by the brook, did not

look troubled, though she was certainly much excited. Her eyes were their grayest, and scarlet spots burned on her cheeks.

“What has happened, Anne?”

Anne gave a queer little laugh.

“I think you’ll hardly believe it when I tell you, Gilbert. I can’t believe it yet. As Susan said the other day, ‘I feel like a fly coming to live in the sun — dazed-like.’ It’s all so incredible. I’ve read the letter a score of times and every time it’s just the same — I can’t believe my own eyes. Oh, Gilbert, you were right — so right. I can see that clearly enough now — and I’m so ashamed of myself — and will you ever really forgive me?”

“Anne, I’ll shake you if you don’t grow coherent. Redmond would be ashamed of you. WHAT has happened?”

“You won’t believe it — you won’t believe it—”

“I’m going to phone for Uncle Dave,” said Gilbert, pretending to start for the house.

“Sit down, Gilbert. I’ll try to tell you. I’ve had a letter, and oh, Gilbert, it’s all so amazing — so incredibly amazing — we never thought — not one of us ever dreamed—”

“I suppose,” said Gilbert, sitting down with a resigned air, “the only thing to do in a case of this kind is to have patience and go at the matter categorically. Whom is your letter from?”

“Leslie — and, oh, Gilbert—”

“Leslie! Whew! What has she to say? What’s the news about Dick?”

Anne lifted the letter and held it out, calmly dramatic in a moment.

“There is NO Dick! The man we have thought Dick Moore — whom everybody in Four Winds has believed for twelve years to be Dick Moore — is his cousin, George Moore, of Nova Scotia, who, it seems, always

resembled him very strikingly. Dick Moore died of yellow fever thirteen years ago in Cuba.”

CHAPTER 3 2

MISS CORNELIA DISCUSSES THE AFFAIR

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“And do you mean to tell me, Anne, dearie, that Dick Moore has turned out not to be Dick Moore at all but somebody else? Is THAT what you phoned up to me today?”

“Yes, Miss Cornelia. It is very amazing, isn’t it?”

“It’s — it’s — just like a man,” said Miss Cornelia helplessly. She took off her hat with trembling fingers. For once in her life Miss Cornelia was undeniably staggered.

“I can’t seem to sense it, Anne,” she said. “I’ve heard you say it — and I believe you — but I can’t take it in. Dick Moore is dead — has been dead all these years — and Leslie is free?”

“Yes. The truth has made her free. Gilbert was right when he said that verse was the grandest in the Bible.”

“Tell me everything, Anne, dearie. Since I got your phone I’ve been in a regular muddle, believe ME. Cornelia Bryant was never so kerflummuxed before.”

“There isn’t a very great deal to tell. Leslie’s letter was short. She didn’t go into particulars. This man — George Moore — has recovered his memory and knows who he is. He says Dick took yellow fever in Cuba, and the Four Sisters had to sail without him. George stayed behind to nurse him. But he died very shortly afterwards.

“George did not write Leslie because he intended to come right home and tell her himself.”

“And why didn’t he?”

“I suppose his accident must have intervened. Gilbert says it is quite likely that George Moore remembers nothing of his accident, or what led to it, and may never remember it. It probably happened very soon after Dick’s death. We may find out more particulars when Leslie writes again.”

“Does she say what she is going to do? When is she coming home?”

“She says she will stay with George Moore until he can leave the hospital. She has written to his people in Nova Scotia. It seems that George’s only near relative is a married sister much older than himself. She was living when George sailed on the Four Sisters, but of course we do not know what may have happened since. Did you ever see George Moore, Miss Cornelia?”

“I did. It is all coming back to me. He was here visiting his Uncle Abner eighteen years ago, when he and Dick would be about seventeen. They were double cousins, you see. Their fathers were brothers and their mothers were twin sisters, and they did look a terrible lot alike. Of course,” added Miss Cornelia scornfully, “it wasn’t one of those freak resemblances you read of in novels where two people are so much alike that they can fill each other’s places and their nearest and dearest can’t tell between them. In those days you could tell easy enough which was George and which was Dick, if you saw them together and near at hand. Apart, or some distance away, it wasn’t so easy. They played lots of tricks on people and thought it great fun, the two scamps. George Moore was a little taller and a good deal fatter than Dick — though neither of them was what you would call fat — they were both of the lean kind. Dick had higher color than George, and his hair was a shade lighter. But their features were just alike, and they both had that queer freak of eyes — one blue and one hazel. They weren’t much alike in any other way, though. George was a real nice fellow, though he was a scalawag for mischief, and some said he had a liking for a glass even then. But everybody liked him better than Dick. He spent about a month here. Leslie never saw him; she was only about eight or nine then and I remember now that she spent that whole winter over harbor with her grandmother West. Captain Jim was away, too — that was the winter he was wrecked on the Magdalens. I don’t suppose either he or

Leslie had ever heard about the Nova Scotia cousin looking so much like Dick. Nobody ever thought of him when Captain Jim brought Dick — George, I should say — home. Of course, we all thought Dick had changed considerable — he'd got so lumpish and fat. But we put that down to what had happened to him, and no doubt that was the reason, for, as I've said, George wasn't fat to begin with either. And there was no other way we could have guessed, for the man's senses were clean gone. I can't see that it is any wonder we were all deceived. But it's a staggering thing. And Leslie has sacrificed the best years of her life to nursing a man who hadn't any claim on her! Oh, drat the men! No matter what they do, it's the wrong thing. And no matter who they are, it's somebody they shouldn't be. They do exasperate me."

"Gilbert and Captain Jim are men, and it is through them that the truth has been discovered at last," said Anne.

"Well, I admit that," conceded Miss Cornelia reluctantly. "I'm sorry I raked the doctor off so. It's the first time in my life I've ever felt ashamed of anything I said to a man. I don't know as I shall tell him so, though. He'll just have to take it for granted. Well, Anne, dearie, it's a mercy the Lord doesn't answer all our prayers. I've been praying hard right along that the operation wouldn't cure Dick. Of course I didn't put it just quite so plain. But that was what was in the back of my mind, and I have no doubt the Lord knew it."

"Well, He has answered the spirit of your prayer. You really wished that things shouldn't be made any harder for Leslie. I'm afraid that in my secret heart I've been hoping the operation wouldn't succeed, and I am wholesomely ashamed of it."

"How does Leslie seem to take it?"

"She writes like one dazed. I think that, like ourselves, she hardly realises it yet. She says, 'It all seems like a strange dream to me, Anne.' That is the only reference she makes to herself."

"Poor child! I suppose when the chains are struck off a prisoner he'd feel queer and lost without them for a while. Anne, dearie, here's a thought

keeps coming into my mind. What about Owen Ford? We both know Leslie was fond of him. Did it ever occur to you that he was fond of her?"

"It — did — once," admitted Anne, feeling that she might say so much.

"Well, I hadn't any reason to think he was, but it just appeared to me he **MUST** be. Now, Anne, dearie, the Lord knows I'm not a matchmaker, and I scorn all such doings. But if I were you and writing to that Ford man I'd just mention, casual-like, what has happened. That is what I'd do."

"Of course I will mention it when I write him," said Anne, a trifle distantly. Somehow, this was a thing she could not discuss with Miss Cornelia. And yet, she had to admit that the same thought had been lurking in her mind ever since she had heard of Leslie's freedom. But she would not desecrate it by free speech.

"Of course there is no great rush, dearie. But Dick Moore's been dead for thirteen years and Leslie has wasted enough of her life for him. We'll just see what comes of it. As for this George Moore, who's gone and come back to life when everyone thought he was dead and done for, just like a man, I'm real sorry for him. He won't seem to fit in anywhere."

"He is still a young man, and if he recovers completely, as seems likely, he will be able to make a place for himself again. It must be very strange for him, poor fellow. I suppose all these years since his accident will not exist for him."

CHAPTER 3 3

LESLIE RETURNS

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A fortnight later Leslie Moore came home alone to the old house where she had spent so many bitter years. In the June twilight she went over the fields to Anne's, and appeared with ghostlike suddenness in the scented garden.

"Leslie!" cried Anne in amazement. "Where have you sprung from? We never knew you were coming. Why didn't you write? We would have met you."

"I couldn't write somehow, Anne. It seemed so futile to try to say anything with pen and ink. And I wanted to get back quietly and unobserved."

Anne put her arms about Leslie and kissed her. Leslie returned the kiss warmly. She looked pale and tired, and she gave a little sigh as she dropped down on the grasses beside a great bed of daffodils that were gleaming through the pale, silvery twilight like golden stars.

"And you have come home alone, Leslie?"

"Yes. George Moore's sister came to Montreal and took him home with her. Poor fellow, he was sorry to part with me — though I was a stranger to him when his memory first came back. He clung to me in those first hard days when he was trying to realise that Dick's death was not the thing of yesterday that it seemed to him. It was all very hard for him. I helped him all I could. When his sister came it was easier for him, because it seemed to him only the other day that he had seen her last. Fortunately she had not changed much, and that helped him, too."

“It is all so strange and wonderful, Leslie. I think we none of us realise it yet.”

“I cannot. When I went into the house over there an hour ago, I felt that it **MUST** be a dream — that Dick must be there, with his childish smile, as he had been for so long. Anne, I seem stunned yet. I’m not glad or sorry — or **ANYTHING**. I feel as if something had been torn suddenly out of my life and left a terrible hole. I feel as if I couldn’t be I — as if I must have changed into somebody else and couldn’t get used to it. It gives me a horrible lonely, dazed, helpless feeling. It’s good to see you again — it seems as if you were a sort of anchor for my drifting soul. Oh, Anne, I dread it all — the gossip and wonderment and questioning. When I think of that, I wish that I need not have come home at all. Dr. Dave was at the station when I came off the train — he brought me home. Poor old man, he feels very badly because he told me years ago that nothing could be done for Dick. ‘I honestly thought so, Leslie,’ he said to me today. ‘But I should have told you not to depend on my opinion — I should have told you to go to a specialist. If I had, you would have been saved many bitter years, and poor George Moore many wasted ones. I blame myself very much, Leslie.’ I told him not to do that — he had done what he thought right. He has always been so kind to me — I couldn’t bear to see him worrying over it.”

“And Dick — George, I mean? Is his memory fully restored?”

“Practically. Of course, there are a great many details he can’t recall yet — but he remembers more and more every day. He went out for a walk on the evening after Dick was buried. He had Dick’s money and watch on him; he meant to bring them home to me, along with my letter. He admits he went to a place where the sailors resorted — and he remembers drinking — and nothing else. Anne, I shall never forget the moment he remembered his own name. I saw him looking at me with an intelligent but puzzled expression. I said, ‘Do you know me, Dick?’ He answered, ‘I never saw you before. Who are you? And my name is not Dick. I am George Moore, and Dick died of yellow fever yesterday! Where am I? What has happened to me?’ I — I fainted, Anne. And ever since I have felt as if I were in a dream.”

“You will soon adjust yourself to this new state of things, Leslie. And you are young — life is before you — you will have many beautiful years yet.”

“Perhaps I shall be able to look at it in that way after a while, Anne. Just now I feel too tired and indifferent to think about the future. I’m — I’m — Anne, I’m lonely. I miss Dick. Isn’t it all very strange? Do you know, I was really fond of poor Dick — George, I suppose I should say — just as I would have been fond of a helpless child who depended on me for everything. I would never have admitted it — I was really ashamed of it — because, you see, I had hated and despised Dick so much before he went away. When I heard that Captain Jim was bringing him home I expected I would just feel the same to him. But I never did — although I continued to loathe him as I remembered him before. From the time he came home I felt only pity — a pity that hurt and wrung me. I supposed then that it was just because his accident had made him so helpless and changed. But now I believe it was because there was really a different personality there. Carlo knew it, Anne — I know now that Carlo knew it. I always thought it strange that Carlo shouldn’t have known Dick. Dogs are usually so faithful. But HE knew it was not his master who had come back, although none of the rest of us did. I had never seen George Moore, you know. I remember now that Dick once mentioned casually that he had a cousin in Nova Scotia who looked as much like him as a twin; but the thing had gone out of my memory, and in any case I would never have thought it of any importance. You see, it never occurred to me to question Dick’s identity. Any change in him seemed to me just the result of the accident.

“Oh, Anne, that night in April when Gilbert told me he thought Dick might be cured! I can never forget it. It seemed to me that I had once been a prisoner in a hideous cage of torture, and then the door had been opened and I could get out. I was still chained to the cage but I was not in it. And that night I felt that a merciless hand was drawing me back into the cage — back to a torture even more terrible than it had once been. I didn’t blame Gilbert. I felt he was right. And he had been very good — he said that if, in view of the expense and uncertainty of the operation, I should decide not to risk it, he would not blame me in the least. But I knew how I ought to decide — and I couldn’t face it. All night I walked the floor like a

mad woman, trying to compel myself to face it. I couldn't, Anne — I thought I couldn't — and when morning broke I set my teeth and resolved that I WOULDN'T. I would let things remain as they were. It was very wicked, I know. It would have been just punishment for such wickedness if I had just been left to abide by that decision. I kept to it all day. That afternoon I had to go up to the Glen to do some shopping. It was one of Dick's quiet, drowsy days, so I left him alone. I was gone a little longer than I had expected, and he missed me. He felt lonely. And when I got home, he ran to meet me just like a child, with such a pleased smile on his face. Somehow, Anne, I just gave way then. That smile on his poor vacant face was more than I could endure. I felt as if I were denying a child the chance to grow and develop. I knew that I must give him his chance, no matter what the consequences might be. So I came over and told Gilbert. Oh, Anne, you must have thought me hateful in those weeks before I went away. I didn't mean to be — but I couldn't think of anything except what I had to do, and everything and everybody about me were like shadows."

"I know — I understood, Leslie. And now it is all over — your chain is broken — there is no cage."

"There is no cage," repeated Leslie absently, plucking at the fringing grasses with her slender, brown hands. "But — it doesn't seem as if there were anything else, Anne. You — you remember what I told you of my folly that night on the sandbar? I find one doesn't get over being a fool very quickly. Sometimes I think there are people who are fools forever. And to be a fool — of that kind — is almost as bad as being a — a dog on a chain."

"You will feel very differently after you get over being tired and bewildered," said Anne, who, knowing a certain thing that Leslie did not know, did not feel herself called upon to waste overmuch sympathy.

Leslie laid her splendid golden head against Anne's knee.

"Anyhow, I have YOU," she said. "Life can't be altogether empty with such a friend. Anne, pat my head — just as if I were a little girl — MOTHER me a bit — and let me tell you while my stubborn tongue is

loosed a little just what you and your comradeship have meant to me since that night I met you on the rock shore.”

CHAPTER 3 4

THE SHIP O'DREAMS COMES TO HARBOR

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One morning, when a windy golden sunrise was billowing over the gulf in waves of light, a certain weary stork flew over the bar of Four Winds Harbor on his way from the Land of Evening Stars. Under his wing was tucked a sleepy, starry-eyed, little creature. The stork was tired, and he looked wistfully about him. He knew he was somewhere near his destination, but he could not yet see it. The big, white lighthouse on the red sandstone cliff had its good points; but no stork possessed of any gumption would leave a new, velvet baby there. An old gray house, surrounded by willows, in a blossomy brook valley, looked more promising, but did not seem quite the thing either. The staring green abode further on was manifestly out of the question. Then the stork brightened up. He had caught sight of the very place — a little white house nestled against a big, whispering firwood, with a spiral of blue smoke winding up from its kitchen chimney — a house which just looked as if it were meant for babies. The stork gave a sigh of satisfaction, and softly alighted on the ridgepole.

Half an hour later Gilbert ran down the hall and tapped on the spare-room door. A drowsy voice answered him and in a moment Marilla's pale, scared face peeped out from behind the door.

"Marilla, Anne has sent me to tell you that a certain young gentleman has arrived here. He hasn't brought much luggage with him, but he evidently means to stay."

"For pity's sake!" said Marilla blankly. "You don't mean to tell me, Gilbert, that it's all over. Why wasn't I called?"

“Anne wouldn’t let us disturb you when there was no need. Nobody was called until about two hours ago. There was no ‘passage perilous’ this time.”

“And — and — Gilbert — will this baby live?”

“He certainly will. He weighs ten pounds and — why, listen to him. Nothing wrong with his lungs, is there? The nurse says his hair will be red. Anne is furious with her, and I’m tickled to death.”

That was a wonderful day in the little house of dreams.

“The best dream of all has come true,” said Anne, pale and rapturous. “Oh, Marilla, I hardly dare believe it, after that horrible day last summer. I have had a heartache ever since then — but it is gone now.”

“This baby will take Joy’s place,” said Marilla.

“Oh, no, no, NO, Marilla. He can’t — nothing can ever do that. He has his own place, my dear, wee man-child. But little Joy has hers, and always will have it. If she had lived she would have been over a year old. She would have been toddling around on her tiny feet and lisping a few words. I can see her so plainly, Marilla. Oh, I know now that Captain Jim was right when he said God would manage better than that my baby would seem a stranger to me when I found her Beyond. I’ve learned THAT this past year. I’ve followed her development day by day and week by week — I always shall. I shall know just how she grows from year to year — and when I meet her again I’ll know her — she won’t be a stranger. Oh, Marilla, LOOK at his dear, darling toes! Isn’t it strange they should be so perfect?”

“It would be stranger if they weren’t,” said Marilla crisply. Now that all was safely over, Marilla was herself again.

“Oh, I know — but it seems as if they couldn’t be quite FINISHED, you know — and they are, even to the tiny nails. And his hands — JUST look at his hands, Marilla.”

“They appear to be a good deal like hands,” Marilla conceded.

“See how he clings to my finger. I’m sure he knows me already. He cries when the nurse takes him away. Oh, Marilla, do you think — you don’t think, do you — that his hair is going to be red?”

“I don’t see much hair of any color,” said Marilla. “I wouldn’t worry about it, if I were you, until it becomes visible.”

“Marilla, he HAS hair — look at that fine little down all over his head. Anyway, nurse says his eyes will be hazel and his forehead is exactly like Gilbert’s.”

“And he has the nicest little ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan. “The first thing I did was to look at his ears. Hair is deceitful and noses and eyes change, and you cannot tell what is going to come of them, but ears is ears from start to finish, and you always know where you are with them. Just look at their shape — and they are set right back against his precious head. You will never need to be ashamed of his ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

Anne’s convalescence was rapid and happy. Folks came and worshipped the baby, as people have bowed before the kingship of the newborn since long before the Wise Men of the East knelt in homage to the Royal Babe of the Bethlehem manger. Leslie, slowly finding herself amid the new conditions of her life, hovered over it, like a beautiful, golden-crowned Madonna. Miss Cornelia nursed it as knackily as could any mother in Israel. Captain Jim held the small creature in his big brown hands and gazed tenderly at it, with eyes that saw the children who had never been born to him.

“What are you going to call him?” asked Miss Cornelia.

“Anne has settled his name,” answered Gilbert.

“James Matthew — after the two finest gentlemen I’ve ever known — not even saving your presence,” said Anne with a saucy glance at Gilbert.

Gilbert smiled.

“I never knew Matthew very well; he was so shy we boys couldn’t get acquainted with him — but I quite agree with you that Captain Jim is one of the rarest and finest souls God ever clothed in clay. He is so delighted over the fact that we have given his name to our small lad. It seems he has no other namesake.”

“Well, James Matthew is a name that will wear well and not fade in the washing,” said Miss Cornelia. “I’m glad you didn’t load him down with some highfalutin, romantic name that he’d be ashamed of when he gets to be a grandfather. Mrs. William Drew at the Glen has called her baby Bertie Shakespeare. Quite a combination, isn’t it? And I’m glad you haven’t had much trouble picking on a name. Some folks have an awful time. When the Stanley Flaggs’ first boy was born there was so much rivalry as to who the child should be named for that the poor little soul had to go for two years without a name. Then a brother came along and there it was—’Big Baby’ and ‘Little Baby.’ Finally they called Big Baby Peter and Little Baby Isaac, after the two grandfathers, and had them both christened together. And each tried to see if it couldn’t howl the other down. You know that Highland Scotch family of MacNabs back of the Glen? They’ve got twelve boys and the oldest and the youngest are both called Neil — Big Neil and Little Neil in the same family. Well, I s’pose they ran out of names.”

“I have read somewhere,” laughed Anne, “that the first child is a poem but the tenth is very prosy prose. Perhaps Mrs. MacNab thought that the twelfth was merely an old tale re-told.”

“Well, there’s something to be said for large families,” said Miss Cornelia, with a sigh. “I was an only child for eight years and I did long for a brother and sister. Mother told me to pray for one — and pray I did, believe ME. Well, one day Aunt Nellie came to me and said, ‘Cornelia, there is a little brother for you upstairs in your ma’s room. You can go up and see him.’ I was so excited and delighted I just flew upstairs. And old Mrs. Flagg lifted up the baby for me to see. Lord, Anne, dearie, I never was so disappointed in my life. You see, I’d been praying for A BROTHER TWO YEARS OLDER THAN MYSELF.”

“How long did it take you to get over your disappointment?” asked Anne, amid her laughter.

“Well, I had a spite at Providence for a good spell, and for weeks I wouldn’t even look at the baby. Nobody knew why, for I never told. Then he began to get real cute, and held out his wee hands to me and I began to get fond of him. But I didn’t get really reconciled to him until one day a school chum came to see him and said she thought he was awful small for his age. I just got boiling mad, and I sailed right into her, and told her she didn’t know a nice baby when she saw one, and ours was the nicest baby in the world. And after that I just worshipped him. Mother died before he was three years old and I was sister and mother to him both. Poor little lad, he was never strong, and he died when he wasn’t much over twenty. Seems to me I’d have given anything on earth, Anne, dearie, if he’d only lived.”

Miss Cornelia sighed. Gilbert had gone down and Leslie, who had been crooning over the small James Matthew in the dormer window, laid him asleep in his basket and went her way. As soon as she was safely out of earshot, Miss Cornelia bent forward and said in a conspirator’s whisper:

“Anne, dearie, I’d a letter from Owen Ford yesterday. He’s in Vancouver just now, but he wants to know if I can board him for a month later on. YOU know what that means. Well, I hope we’re doing right.”

“We’ve nothing to do with it — we couldn’t prevent him from coming to Four Winds if he wanted to,” said Anne quickly. She did not like the feeling of matchmaking Miss Cornelia’s whispers gave her; and then she weakly succumbed herself.

“Don’t let Leslie know he is coming until he is here,” she said. “If she found out I feel sure she would go away at once. She intends to go in the fall anyhow — she told me so the other day. She is going to Montreal to take up nursing and make what she can of her life.”

“Oh, well, Anne, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia, nodding sagely “that is all as it may be. You and I have done our part and we must leave the rest to Higher Hands.”

CHAPTER 3 5

POLITICS AT FOUR WINDS

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When Anne came downstairs again, the Island, as well as all Canada, was in the throes of a campaign preceding a general election. Gilbert, who was an ardent Conservative, found himself caught in the vortex, being much in demand for speech-making at the various county rallies. Miss Cornelia did not approve of his mixing up in politics and told Anne so.

“Dr. Dave never did it. Dr. Blythe will find he is making a mistake, believe ME. Politics is something no decent man should meddle with.”

“Is the government of the country to be left solely to the rogues then?” asked Anne.

“Yes — so long as it’s Conservative rogues,” said Miss Cornelia, marching off with the honors of war. “Men and politicians are all tarred with the same brush. The Grits have it laid on thicker than the Conservatives, that’s all — CONSIDERABLY thicker. But Grit or Tory, my advice to Dr. Blythe is to steer clear of politics. First thing you know, he’ll be running an election himself, and going off to Ottawa for half the year and leaving his practice to go to the dogs.”

“Ah, well, let’s not borrow trouble,” said Anne. “The rate of interest is too high. Instead, let’s look at Little Jem. It should be spelled with a G. Isn’t he perfectly beautiful? Just see the dimples in his elbows. We’ll bring him up to be a good Conservative, you and I, Miss Cornelia.”

“Bring him up to be a good man,” said Miss Cornelia. “They’re scarce and valuable; though, mind you, I wouldn’t like to see him a Grit. As for the election, you and I may be thankful we don’t live over harbor. The air there is blue these days. Every Elliott and Crawford and MacAllister is on

the warpath, loaded for bear. This side is peaceful and calm, seeing there's so few men. Captain Jim's a Grit, but it's my opinion he's ashamed of it, for he never talks politics. There isn't any earthly doubt that the Conservatives will be returned with a big majority again."

Miss Cornelia was mistaken. On the morning after the election Captain Jim dropped in at the little house to tell the news. So virulent is the microbe of party politics, even in a peaceable old man, that Captain Jim's cheeks were flushed and his eyes were flashing with all his old-time fire.

"Mistress Blythe, the Liberals are in with a sweeping majority. After eighteen years of Tory mismanagement this downtrodden country is going to have a chance at last."

"I never heard you make such a bitter partisan speech before, Captain Jim. I didn't think you had so much political venom in you," laughed Anne, who was not much excited over the tidings. Little Jem had said "Wow-ga" that morning. What were principalities and powers, the rise and fall of dynasties, the overthrow of Grit or Tory, compared with that miraculous occurrence?

"It's been accumulating for a long while," said Captain Jim, with a deprecating smile. "I thought I was only a moderate Grit, but when the news came that we were in I found out how Gritty I really was."

"You know the doctor and I are Conservatives."

"Ah, well, it's the only bad thing I know of either of you, Mistress Blythe. Cornelia is a Tory, too. I called in on my way from the Glen to tell her the news."

"Didn't you know you took your life in your hands?"

"Yes, but I couldn't resist the temptation."

"How did she take it?"

“Comparatively calm, Mistress Blythe, comparatively calm. She says, says she, ‘Well, Providence sends seasons of humiliation to a country, same as to individuals. You Grits have been cold and hungry for many a year. Make haste to get warmed and fed, for you won’t be in long.’ ‘Well, now Cornelia,’ I says, ‘mebbe Providence thinks Canada needs a real long spell of humiliation.’ Ah, Susan, have YOU heard the news? The Liberals are in.”

Susan had just come in from the kitchen, attended by the odor of delectable dishes which always seemed to hover around her.

“Now, are they?” she said, with beautiful unconcern. “Well, I never could see but that my bread rose just as light when Grits were in as when they were not. And if any party, Mrs. Doctor, dear, will make it rain before the week is out, and save our kitchen garden from entire ruination, that is the party Susan will vote for. In the meantime, will you just step out and give me your opinion on the meat for dinner? I am fearing that it is very tough, and I think that we had better change our butcher as well as our government.”

One evening, a week later, Anne walked down to the Point, to see if she could get some fresh fish from Captain Jim, leaving Little Jem for the first time. It was quite a tragedy. Suppose he cried? Suppose Susan did not know just exactly what to do for him? Susan was calm and serene.

“I have had as much experience with him as you, Mrs. Doctor, dear, have I not?”

“Yes, with him — but not with other babies. Why, I looked after three pairs of twins, when I was a child, Susan. When they cried, I gave them peppermint or castor oil quite coolly. It’s quite curious now to recall how lightly I took all those babies and their woes.”

“Oh, well, if Little Jem cries, I will just clap a hot water bag on his little stomach,” said Susan.

“Not too hot, you know,” said Anne anxiously. Oh, was it really wise to go?

“Do not you fret, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Susan is not the woman to burn a wee man. Bless him, he has no notion of crying.”

Anne tore herself away finally and enjoyed her walk to the Point after all, through the long shadows of the sunsetting. Captain Jim was not in the living room of the lighthouse, but another man was — a handsome, middle-aged man, with a strong, clean-shaven chin, who was unknown to Anne. Nevertheless, when she sat down, he began to talk to her with all the assurance of an old acquaintance. There was nothing amiss in what he said or the way he said it, but Anne rather resented such a cool taking-for-granted in a complete stranger. Her replies were frosty, and as few as decency required. Nothing daunted, her companion talked on for several minutes, then excused himself and went away. Anne could have sworn there was a twinkle in his eye and it annoyed her. Who was the creature? There was something vaguely familiar about him but she was certain she had never seen him before.

“Captain Jim, who was that who just went out?” she asked, as Captain Jim came in.

“Marshall Elliott,” answered the captain.

“Marshall Elliott!” cried Anne. “Oh, Captain Jim — it wasn’t — yes, it WAS his voice — oh, Captain Jim, I didn’t know him — and I was quite insulting to him! WHY didn’t he tell me? He must have seen I didn’t know him.”

“He wouldn’t say a word about it — he’d just enjoy the joke. Don’t worry over snubbing him — he’ll think it fun. Yes, Marshall’s shaved off his beard at last and cut his hair. His party is in, you know. I didn’t know him myself first time I saw him. He was up in Carter Flagg’s store at the Glen the night after election day, along with a crowd of others, waiting for the news. About twelve the ‘phone came through — the Liberals were in. Marshall just got up and walked out — he didn’t cheer or shout — he left the others to do that, and they nearly lifted the roof off Carter’s store, I reckon. Of course, all the Tories were over in Raymond Russell’s store. Not much cheering THERE. Marshall went straight down the street to the side door of Augustus Palmer’s barber shop. Augustus was in bed asleep,

but Marshall hammered on the door until he got up and come down, wanting to know what all the racket was about.

“Come into your shop and do the best job you ever did in your life, Gus,” said Marshall. “The Liberals are in and you’re going to barber a good Grit before the sun rises.”

“Gus was mad as hops — partly because he’d been dragged out of bed, but more because he’s a Tory. He vowed he wouldn’t shave any man after twelve at night.

“‘You’ll do what I want you to do, sonny,’ said Marshall, ‘or I’ll jest turn you over my knee and give you one of those spankings your mother forgot.’

“He’d have done it, too, and Gus knew it, for Marshall is as strong as an ox and Gus is only a midget of a man. So he gave in and towed Marshall in to the shop and went to work. ‘Now,’ says he, ‘I’ll barber you up, but if you say one word to me about the Grits getting in while I’m doing it I’ll cut your throat with this razor,’ says he. You wouldn’t have thought mild little Gus could be so bloodthirsty, would you? Shows what party politics will do for a man. Marshall kept quiet and got his hair and beard disposed of and went home. When his old housekeeper heard him come upstairs she peeked out of her bedroom door to see whether ‘twas him or the hired boy. And when she saw a strange man striding down the hall with a candle in his hand she screamed blue murder and fainted dead away. They had to send for the doctor before they could bring her to, and it was several days before she could look at Marshall without shaking all over.”

Captain Jim had no fish. He seldom went out in his boat that summer, and his long tramping expeditions were over. He spent a great deal of his time sitting by his seaward window, looking out over the gulf, with his swiftly-whitening head leaning on his hand. He sat there tonight for many silent minutes, keeping some tryst with the past which Anne would not disturb. Presently he pointed to the iris of the West:

“That’s beautiful, isn’t, it, Mistress Blythe? But I wish you could have seen the sunrise this morning. It was a wonderful thing — wonderful. I’ve

seen all kinds of sunrises come over that gulf. I've been all over the world, Mistress Blythe, and take it all in all, I've never seen a finer sight than a summer sunrise over the gulf. A man can't pick his time for dying, Mistress Blythe — jest got to go when the Great Captain gives His sailing orders. But if I could I'd go out when the morning comes across that water. I've watched it many a time and thought what a thing it would be to pass out through that great white glory to whatever was waiting beyant, on a sea that ain't mapped out on any airthly chart. I think, Mistress Blythe, that I'd find lost Margaret there."

Captain Jim had often talked to Anne of lost Margaret since he had told her the old story. His love for her trembled in every tone — that love that had never grown faint or forgetful.

"Anyway, I hope when my time comes I'll go quick and easy. I don't think I'm a coward, Mistress Blythe — I've looked an ugly death in the face more than once without blenching. But the thought of a lingering death does give me a queer, sick feeling of horror."

"Don't talk about leaving us, dear, DEAR Captain, Jim," pleaded Anne, in a choked voice, patting the old brown hand, once so strong, but now grown very feeble. "What would we do without you?"

Captain Jim smiled beautifully.

"Oh, you'd get along nicely — nicely — but you wouldn't forget the old man altogether, Mistress Blythe — no, I don't think you'll ever quite forget him. The race of Joseph always remembers one another. But it'll be a memory that won't hurt — I like to think that my memory won't hurt my friends — it'll always be kind of pleasant to them, I hope and believe. It won't be very long now before lost Margaret calls me, for the last time. I'll be all ready to answer. I jest spoke of this because there's a little favor I want to ask you. Here's this poor old Matey of mine" — Captain Jim reached out a hand and poked the big, warm, velvety, golden ball on the sofa. The First Mate uncoiled himself like a spring with a nice, throaty, comfortable sound, half purr, half meow, stretched his paws in air, turned over and coiled himself up again. "HE'll miss me when I start on the V'yage. I can't bear to think of leaving the poor critter to starve, like he

was left before. If anything happens to me will you give Matey a bite and a corner, Mistress Blythe?"

"Indeed I will."

"Then that is all I had on my mind. Your Little Jem is to have the few curious things I picked up — I've seen to that. And now I don't like to see tears in those pretty eyes, Mistress Blythe. I'll mebbe hang on for quite a spell yet. I heard you reading a piece of poetry one day last winter — one of Tennyson's pieces. I'd sorter like to hear it again, if you could recite it for me."

Softly and clearly, while the seawind blew in on them, Anne repeated the beautiful lines of Tennyson's wonderful swan song—"Crossing the Bar." The old captain kept time gently with his sinewy hand.

"Yes, yes, Mistress Blythe," he said, when she had finished, "that's it, that's it. He wasn't a sailor, you tell me — I dunno how he could have put an old sailor's feelings into words like that, if he wasn't one. He didn't want any 'sadness o' farewells' and neither do I, Mistress Blythe — for all will be well with me and mine beyant the bar."

CHAPTER 3 6

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

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“Any news from Green Gables, Anne?”

“Nothing very especial,” replied Anne, folding up Marilla’s letter. “Jake Donnell has been there shingling the roof. He is a full-fledged carpenter now, so it seems he has had his own way in regard to the choice of a lifework. You remember his mother wanted him to be a college professor. I shall never forget the day she came to the school and rated me for failing to call him St. Clair.”

“Does anyone ever call him that now?”

“Evidently not. It seems that he has completely lived it down. Even his mother has succumbed. I always thought that a boy with Jake’s chin and mouth would get his own way in the end. Diana writes me that Dora has a beau. Just think of it — that child!”

“Dora is seventeen,” said Gilbert. “Charlie Sloane and I were both mad about you when you were seventeen, Anne.”

“Really, Gilbert, we must be getting on in years,” said Anne, with a half-rueful smile, “when children who were six when we thought ourselves grown up are old enough now to have beaux. Dora’s is Ralph Andrews — Jane’s brother. I remember him as a little, round, fat, white-headed fellow who was always at the foot of his class. But I understand he is quite a fine-looking young man now.”

“Dora will probably marry young. She’s of the same type as Charlotta the Fourth — she’ll never miss her first chance for fear she might not get another.”

“Well; if she marries Ralph I hope he will be a little more up-and-coming than his brother Billy,” mused Anne.

“For instance,” said Gilbert, laughing, “let us hope he will be able to propose on his own account. Anne, would you have married Billy if he had asked you himself, instead of getting Jane to do it for him?”

“I might have.” Anne went off into a shriek of laughter over the recollection of her first proposal. “The shock of the whole thing might have hypnotized me into some such rash and foolish act. Let us be thankful he did it by proxy.”

“I had a letter from George Moore yesterday,” said Leslie, from the corner where she was reading.

“Oh, how is he?” asked Anne interestedly, yet with an unreal feeling that she was inquiring about some one whom she did not know.

“He is well, but he finds it very hard to adapt himself to all the changes in his old home and friends. He is going to sea again in the spring. It’s in his blood, he says, and he longs for it. But he told me something that made me glad for him, poor fellow. Before he sailed on the Four Sisters he was engaged to a girl at home. He did not tell me anything about her in Montreal, because he said he supposed she would have forgotten him and married someone else long ago, and with him, you see, his engagement and love was still a thing of the present. It was pretty hard on him, but when he got home he found she had never married and still cared for him. They are to be married this fall. I’m going to ask him to bring her over here for a little trip; he says he wants to come and see the place where he lived so many years without knowing it.”

“What a nice little romance,” said Anne, whose love for the romantic was immortal. “And to think,” she added with a sigh of self-reproach, “that if I had had my way George Moore would never have come up from the grave in which his identity was buried. How I did fight against Gilbert’s suggestion! Well, I am punished: I shall never be able to have a different opinion from Gilbert’s again! If I try to have, he will squelch me by casting George Moore’s case up to me!”

“As if even that would squelch a woman!” mocked Gilbert. “At least do not become my echo, Anne. A little opposition gives spice to life. I do not want a wife like John MacAllister’s over the harbor. No matter what he says, she at once remarks in that drab, lifeless little voice of hers, ‘That is very true, John, dear me!’”

Anne and Leslie laughed. Anne’s laughter was silver and Leslie’s golden, and the combination of the two was as satisfactory as a perfect chord in music.

Susan, coming in on the heels of the laughter, echoed it with a resounding sigh.

“Why, Susan, what is the matter?” asked Gilbert.

“There’s nothing wrong with little Jem, is there, Susan?” cried Anne, starting up in alarm.

“No, no, calm yourself, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Something has happened, though. Dear me, everything has gone catawampus with me this week. I spoiled the bread, as you know too well — and I scorched the doctor’s best shirt bosom — and I broke your big platter. And now, on the top of all this, comes word that my sister Matilda has broken her leg and wants me to go and stay with her for a spell.”

“Oh, I’m very sorry — sorry that your sister has met with such an accident, I mean,” exclaimed Anne.

“Ah, well, man was made to mourn, Mrs. Doctor, dear. That sounds as if it ought to be in the Bible, but they tell me a person named Burns wrote it. And there is no doubt that we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. As for Matilda, I do not know what to think of her. None of our family ever broke their legs before. But whatever she has done she is still my sister, and I feel that it is my duty to go and wait on her, if you can spare me for a few weeks, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

“Of course, Susan, of course. I can get someone to help me while you are gone.”

“If you cannot I will not go, Mrs. Doctor, dear, Matilda’s leg to the contrary notwithstanding. I will not have you worried, and that blessed child upset in consequence, for any number of legs.”

“Oh, you must go to your sister at once, Susan. I can get a girl from the cove, who will do for a time.”

“Anne, will you let me come and stay with you while Susan is away?” exclaimed Leslie. “Do! I’d love to — and it would be an act of charity on your part. I’m so horribly lonely over there in that big barn of a house. There’s so little to do — and at night I’m worse than lonely — I’m frightened and nervous in spite of locked doors. There was a tramp around two days ago.”

Anne joyfully agreed, and next day Leslie was installed as an inmate of the little house of dreams. Miss Cornelia warmly approved of the arrangement.

“It seems Providential,” she told Anne in confidence. “I’m sorry for Matilda Clow, but since she had to break her leg it couldn’t have happened at a better time. Leslie will be here while Owen Ford is in Four Winds, and those old cats up at the Glen won’t get the chance to meow, as they would if she was living over there alone and Owen going to see her. They are doing enough of it as it is, because she doesn’t put on mourning. I said to one of them, ‘If you mean she should put on mourning for George Moore, it seems to me more like his resurrection than his funeral; and if it’s Dick you mean, I confess I can’t see the propriety of going into weeds for a man who died thirteen years ago and good riddance then!’ And when old Louisa Baldwin remarked to me that she thought it very strange that Leslie should never have suspected it wasn’t her own husband I said, ‘YOU never suspected it wasn’t Dick Moore, and you were next-door neighbor to him all his life, and by nature you’re ten times as suspicious as Leslie.’ But you can’t stop some people’s tongues, Anne, dearie, and I’m real thankful Leslie will be under your roof while Owen is courting her.”

Owen Ford came to the little house one August evening when Leslie and Anne were absorbed in worshipping the baby. He paused at the open door of the living room, unseen by the two within, gazing with greedy eyes at

the beautiful picture. Leslie sat on the floor with the baby in her lap, making ecstatic dabs at his fat little hands as he fluttered them in the air.

“Oh, you dear, beautiful, beloved baby,” she mumbled, catching one wee hand and covering it with kisses.

“Isn’t him ze darlingest itty sing,” crooned Anne, hanging over the arm of her chair adoringly. “Dem itty wee pads are ze very tweetest handies in ze whole big world, isn’t dey, you darling itty man.”

Anne, in the months before Little Jem’s coming, had pored diligently over several wise volumes, and pinned her faith to one in especial, “Sir Oracle on the Care and Training of Children.” Sir Oracle implored parents by all they held sacred never to talk “baby talk” to their children. Infants should invariably be addressed in classical language from the moment of their birth. So should they learn to speak English undefiled from their earliest utterance. “How,” demanded Sir Oracle, “can a mother reasonably expect her child to learn correct speech, when she continually accustoms its impressionable gray matter to such absurd expressions and distortions of our noble tongue as thoughtless mothers inflict every day on the helpless creatures committed to their care? Can a child who is constantly called ‘tweet itty wee singie’ ever attain to any proper conception of his own being and possibilities and destiny?”

Anne was vastly impressed with this, and informed Gilbert that she meant to make it an inflexible rule never, under any circumstances, to talk “baby talk” to her children. Gilbert agreed with her, and they made a solemn compact on the subject — a compact which Anne shamelessly violated the very first moment Little Jem was laid in her arms. “Oh, the darling itty wee sing!” she had exclaimed. And she had continued to violate it ever since. When Gilbert teased her she laughed Sir Oracle to scorn.

“He never had any children of his own, Gilbert — I am positive he hadn’t or he would never have written such rubbish. You just can’t help talking baby talk to a baby. It comes natural — and it’s RIGHT. It would be inhuman to talk to those tiny, soft, velvety little creatures as we do to great big boys and girls. Babies want love and cuddling and all the sweet baby

talk they can get, and Little Jem is going to have it, bless his dear itty heartums.”

“But you’re the worst I ever heard, Anne,” protested Gilbert, who, not being a mother but only a father, was not wholly convinced yet that Sir Oracle was wrong. “I never heard anything like the way you talk to that child.”

“Very likely you never did. Go away — go away. Didn’t I bring up three pairs of Hammond twins before I was eleven? You and Sir Oracle are nothing but coldblooded theorists. Gilbert, JUST look at him! He’s smiling at me — he knows what we’re talking about. And oo dest agwees wif evy word muzzer says, don’t oo, angel-lover?”

Gilbert put his arm about them. “Oh you mothers!” he said. “You mothers! God knew what He was about when He made you.”

So Little Jem was talked to and loved and cuddled; and he throve as became a child of the house of dreams. Leslie was quite as foolish over him as Anne was. When their work was done and Gilbert was out of the way, they gave themselves over to shameless orgies of lovemaking and ecstasies of adoration, such as that in which Owen Ford had surprised them.

Leslie was the first to become aware of him. Even in the twilight Anne could see the sudden whiteness that swept over her beautiful face, blotting out the crimson of lip and cheeks.

Owen came forward, eagerly, blind for a moment to Anne.

“Leslie!” he said, holding out his hand. It was the first time he had ever called her by her name; but the hand Leslie gave him was cold; and she was very quiet all the evening, while Anne and Gilbert and Owen laughed and talked together. Before his call ended she excused herself and went upstairs. Owen’s gay spirits flagged and he went away soon after with a downcast air.

Gilbert looked at Anne.

“Anne, what are you up to? There’s something going on that I don’t understand. The whole air here tonight has been charged with electricity. Leslie sits like the muse of tragedy; Owen Ford jokes and laughs on the surface, and watches Leslie with the eyes of his soul. You seem all the time to be bursting with some suppressed excitement. Own up. What secret have you been keeping from your deceived husband?”

“Don’t be a goose, Gilbert,” was Anne’s conjugal reply. “As for Leslie, she is absurd and I’m going up to tell her so.”

Anne found Leslie at the dormer window of her room. The little place was filled with the rhythmic thunder of the sea. Leslie sat with locked hands in the misty moonshine — a beautiful, accusing presence.

“Anne,” she said in a low, reproachful voice, “did you know Owen Ford was coming to Four Winds?”

“I did,” said Anne brazenly.

“Oh, you should have told me, Anne,” Leslie cried passionately. “If I had known I would have gone away — I wouldn’t have stayed here to meet him. You should have told me. It wasn’t fair of you, Anne — oh, it wasn’t fair!”

Leslie’s lips were trembling and her whole form was tense with emotion. But Anne laughed heartlessly. She bent over and kissed Leslie’s upturned reproachful face.

“Leslie, you are an adorable goose. Owen Ford didn’t rush from the Pacific to the Atlantic from a burning desire to see ME. Neither do I believe that he was inspired by any wild and frenzied passion for Miss Cornelia. Take off your tragic airs, my dear friend, and fold them up and put them away in lavender. You’ll never need them again. There are some people who can see through a grindstone when there is a hole in it, even if you cannot. I am not a prophetess, but I shall venture on a prediction. The bitterness of life is over for you. After this you are going to have the joys and hopes — and I daresay the sorrows, too — of a happy woman. The omen of the shadow of Venus did come true for you, Leslie. The year in which you saw

it brought your life's best gift for you — your love for Owen Ford. Now, go right to bed and have a good sleep.”

Leslie obeyed orders in so far that she went to bed: but it may be questioned if she slept much. I do not think she dared to dream wakenly; life had been so hard for this poor Leslie, the path on which she had had to walk had been so strait, that she could not whisper to her own heart the hopes that might wait on the future. But she watched the great revolving light bestarring the short hours of the summer night, and her eyes grew soft and bright and young once more. Nor, when Owen Ford came next day, to ask her to go with him to the shore, did she say him nay.

CHAPTER 3 7

MISS CORNELIA MAKES A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

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Miss Cornelia sailed down to the little house one drowsy afternoon, when the gulf was the faint, bleached blue of the August seas, and the orange lilies at the gate of Anne's garden held up their imperial cups to be filled with the molten gold of August sunshine. Not that Miss Cornelia concerned herself with painted oceans or sun-thirsty lilies. She sat in her favorite rocker in unusual idleness. She sewed not, neither did she spin. Nor did she say a single derogatory word concerning any portion of mankind. In short, Miss Cornelia's conversation was singularly devoid of spice that day, and Gilbert, who had stayed home to listen to her, instead of going a-fishing, as he had intended, felt himself aggrieved. What had come over Miss Cornelia? She did not look cast down or worried. On the contrary, there was a certain air of nervous exultation about her.

"Where is Leslie?" she asked — not as if it mattered much either.

"Owen and she went raspberrying in the woods back of her farm," answered Anne. "They won't be back before supper time — if then."

"They don't seem to have any idea that there is such a thing as a clock," said Gilbert. "I can't get to the bottom of that affair. I'm certain you women pulled strings. But Anne, undutiful wife, won't tell me. Will you, Miss Cornelia?"

"No, I shall not. But," said Miss Cornelia, with the air of one determined to take the plunge and have it over, "I will tell you something else. I came today on purpose to tell it. I am going to be married."

Anne and Gilbert were silent. If Miss Cornelia had announced her intention of going out to the channel and drowning herself the thing might

have been believable. This was not. So they waited. Of course Miss Cornelia had made a mistake.

“Well, you both look sort of kerflummexed,” said Miss Cornelia, with a twinkle in her eyes. Now that the awkward moment of revelation was over, Miss Cornelia was her own woman again. “Do you think I’m too young and inexperienced for matrimony?”

“You know — it IS rather staggering,” said Gilbert, trying to gather his wits together. “I’ve heard you say a score of times that you wouldn’t marry the best man in the world.”

“I’m not going to marry the best man in the world,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Marshall Elliott is a long way from being the best.”

“Are you going to marry Marshall Elliott?” exclaimed Anne, recovering her power of speech under this second shock.

“Yes. I could have had him any time these twenty years if I’d lifted my finger. But do you suppose I was going to walk into church beside a perambulating haystack like that?”

“I am sure we are very glad — and we wish you all possible happiness,” said Anne, very flatly and inadequately, as she felt. She was not prepared for such an occasion. She had never imagined herself offering betrothal felicitations to Miss Cornelia.

“Thanks, I knew you would,” said Miss Cornelia. “You are the first of my friends to know it.”

“We shall be so sorry to lose you, though, dear Miss Cornelia,” said Anne, beginning to be a little sad and sentimental.

“Oh, you won’t lose me,” said Miss Cornelia unsentimentally. “You don’t suppose I would live over harbor with all those MacAllisters and Elliotts and Crawfords, do you? ‘From the conceit of the Elliotts, the pride of the MacAllisters and the vainglory of the Crawfords, good Lord deliver us.’ Marshall is coming to live at my place. I’m sick and tired of hired men.

That Jim Hastings I've got this summer is positively the worst of the species. He would drive anyone to getting married. What do you think? He upset the churn yesterday and spilled a big churning of cream over the yard. And not one whit concerned about it was he! Just gave a foolish laugh and said cream was good for the land. Wasn't that like a man? I told him I wasn't in the habit of fertilising my back yard with cream."

"Well, I wish you all manner of happiness too, Miss Cornelia," said Gilbert, solemnly; "but," he added, unable to resist the temptation to tease Miss Cornelia, despite Anne's imploring eyes, "I fear your day of independence is done. As you know, Marshall Elliott is a very determined man."

"I like a man who can stick to a thing," retorted Miss Cornelia. "Amos Grant, who used to be after me long ago, couldn't. You never saw such a weather-vane. He jumped into the pond to drown himself once and then changed his mind and swum out again. Wasn't that like a man? Marshall would have stuck to it and drowned."

"And he has a bit of a temper, they tell me," persisted Gilbert.

"He wouldn't be an Elliott if he hadn't. I'm thankful he has. It will be real fun to make him mad. And you can generally do something with a tempery man when it comes to repenting time. But you can't do anything with a man who just keeps placid and aggravating."

"You know he's a Grit, Miss Cornelia."

"Yes, he IS," admitted Miss Cornelia rather sadly. "And of course there is no hope of making a Conservative of him. But at least he is a Presbyterian. So I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with that."

"Would you marry him if he were a Methodist, Miss Cornelia?"

"No, I would not. Politics is for this world, but religion is for both."

"And you may be a 'relict' after all, Miss Cornelia."

“Not I. Marshall will live me out. The Elliotts are long-lived, and the Bryants are not.”

“When are you to be married?” asked Anne.

“In about a month’s time. My wedding dress is to be navy blue silk. And I want to ask you, Anne, dearie, if you think it would be all right to wear a veil with a navy blue dress. I’ve always thought I’d like to wear a veil if I ever got married. Marshall says to have it if I want to. Isn’t that like a man?”

“Why shouldn’t you wear it if you want to?” asked Anne.

“Well, one doesn’t want to be different from other people,” said Miss Cornelia, who was not noticeably like anyone else on the face of the earth. “As I say, I do fancy a veil. But maybe it shouldn’t be worn with any dress but a white one. Please tell me, Anne, dearie, what you really think. I’ll go by your advice.”

“I don’t think veils are usually worn with any but white dresses,” admitted Anne, “but that is merely a convention; and I am like Mr. Elliott, Miss Cornelia. I don’t see any good reason why you shouldn’t have a veil if you want one.”

But Miss Cornelia, who made her calls in calico wrappers, shook her head.

“If it isn’t the proper thing I won’t wear it,” she said, with a sigh of regret for a lost dream.

“Since you are determined to be married, Miss Cornelia,” said Gilbert solemnly, “I shall give you the excellent rules for the management of a husband which my grandmother gave my mother when she married my father.”

“Well, I reckon I can manage Marshall Elliott,” said Miss Cornelia placidly. “But let us hear your rules.”

“The first one is, catch him.”

“He’s caught. Go on.”

“The second one is, feed him well.”

“With enough pie. What next?”

“The third and fourth are — keep your eye on him.”

“I believe you,” said Miss Cornelia emphatically.

CHAPTER 3 8

RED ROSES

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The garden of the little house was a haunt beloved of bees and reddened by late roses that August. The little house folk lived much in it, and were given to taking picnic suppers in the grassy corner beyond the brook and sitting about in it through the twilights when great night moths sailed athwart the velvet gloom. One evening Owen Ford found Leslie alone in it. Anne and Gilbert were away, and Susan, who was expected back that night, had not yet returned.

The northern sky was amber and pale green over the fir tops. The air was cool, for August was nearing September, and Leslie wore a crimson scarf over her white dress. Together they wandered through the little, friendly, flower-crowded paths in silence. Owen must go soon. His holiday was nearly over. Leslie found her heart beating wildly. She knew that this beloved garden was to be the scene of the binding words that must seal their as yet unworded understanding.

“Some evenings a strange odor blows down the air of this garden, like a phantom perfume,” said Owen. “I have never been able to discover from just what flower it comes. It is elusive and haunting and wonderfully sweet. I like to fancy it is the soul of Grandmother Selwyn passing on a little visit to the old spot she loved so well. There should be a lot of friendly ghosts about this little old house.”

“I have lived under its roof only a month,” said Leslie, “but I love it as I never loved the house over there where I have lived all my life.”

“This house was builded and consecrated by love,” said Owen. “Such houses, MUST exert an influence over those who live in them. And this garden — it is over sixty years old and the history of a thousand hopes and

joys is written in its blossoms. Some of those flowers were actually set out by the schoolmaster's bride, and she has been dead for thirty years. Yet they bloom on every summer. Look at those red roses, Leslie — how they queen it over everything else!"

"I love the red roses," said Leslie. "Anne likes the pink ones best, and Gilbert likes the white. But I want the crimson ones. They satisfy some craving in me as no other flower does."

"These roses are very late — they bloom after all the others have gone — and they hold all the warmth and soul of the summer come to fruition," said Owen, plucking some of the glowing, half-opened buds.

"The rose is the flower of love — the world has acclaimed it so for centuries. The pink roses are love hopeful and expectant — the white roses are love dead or forsaken — but the red roses — ah, Leslie, what are the red roses?"

"Love triumphant," said Leslie in a low voice.

"Yes — love triumphant and perfect. Leslie, you know — you understand. I have loved you from the first. And I KNOW you love me — I don't need to ask you. But I want to hear you say it — my darling — my darling!"

Leslie said something in a very low and tremulous voice. Their hands and lips met; it was life's supreme moment for them and as they stood there in the old garden, with its many years of love and delight and sorrow and glory, he crowned her shining hair with the red, red rose of a love triumphant.

Anne and Gilbert returned presently, accompanied by Captain Jim. Anne lighted a few sticks of driftwood in the fireplace, for love of the pixy flames, and they sat around it for an hour of good fellowship.

"When I sit looking at a driftwood fire it's easy to believe I'm young again," said Captain Jim.

"Can you read futures in the fire, Captain Jim?" asked Owen.

Captain Jim looked at them all affectionately and then back again at Leslie's vivid face and glowing eyes.

"I don't need the fire to read your futures," he said. "I see happiness for all of you — all of you — for Leslie and Mr. Ford — and the doctor here and Mistress Blythe — and Little Jem — and children that ain't born yet but will be. Happiness for you all — though, mind you, I reckon you'll have your troubles and worries and sorrows, too. They're bound to come — and no house, whether it's a palace or a little house of dreams, can bar 'em out. But they won't get the better of you if you face 'em TOGETHER with love and trust. You can weather any storm with them two for compass and pilot."

The old man rose suddenly and placed one hand on Leslie's head and one on Anne's.

"Two good, sweet women," he said. "True and faithful and to be depended on. Your husbands will have honor in the gates because of you — your children will rise up and call you blessed in the years to come."

There was a strange solemnity about the little scene. Anne and Leslie bowed as those receiving a benediction. Gilbert suddenly brushed his hand over his eyes; Owen Ford was rapt as one who can see visions. All were silent for a space. The little house of dreams added another poignant and unforgettable moment to its store of memories.

"I must be going now," said Captain Jim slowly at last. He took up his hat and looked lingeringly about the room.

"Good night, all of you," he said, as he went out.

Anne, pierced by the unusual wistfulness of his farewell, ran to the door after him.

"Come back soon, Captain Jim," she called, as he passed through the little gate hung between the firs.

“Ay, ay,” he called cheerily back to her. But Captain Jim had sat by the old fireside of the house of dreams for the last time.

Anne went slowly back to the others.

“It’s so — so pitiful to think of him going all alone down to that lonely Point,” she said. “And there is no one to welcome him there.”

“Captain Jim is such good company for others that one can’t imagine him being anything but good company for himself,” said Owen. “But he must often be lonely. There was a touch of the seer about him tonight — he spoke as one to whom it had been given to speak. Well, I must be going, too.”

Anne and Gilbert discreetly melted away; but when Owen had gone Anne returned, to find Leslie standing by the hearth.

“Oh, Leslie — I know — and I’m so glad, dear,” she said, putting her arms about her.

“Anne, my happiness frightens me,” whispered Leslie. “It seems too great to be real — I’m afraid to speak of it — to think of it. It seems to me that it must just be another dream of this house of dreams and it will vanish when I leave here.”

“Well, you are not going to leave here — until Owen takes you. You are going to stay with me until that time comes. Do you think I’d let you go over to that lonely, sad place again?”

“Thank you, dear. I meant to ask you if I might stay with you. I didn’t want to go back there — it would seem like going back into the chill and dreariness of the old life again. Anne, Anne, what a friend you’ve been to me — a good, sweet woman — true and faithful and to be depended on — Captain Jim summed you up.”

“He said ‘women,’ not ‘woman,’” smiled Anne. “Perhaps Captain Jim sees us both through the rose-colored spectacles of his love for us. But we can try to live up to his belief in us, at least.”

“Do you remember, Anne,” said Leslie slowly, “that I once said — that night we met on the shore — that I hated my good looks? I did — then. It always seemed to me that if I had been homely Dick would never have thought of me. I hated my beauty because it had attracted him, but now — oh, I’m glad that I have it. It’s all I have to offer Owen, — his artist soul delights in it. I feel as if I do not come to him quite empty-handed.”

“Owen loves your beauty, Leslie. Who would not? But it’s foolish of you to say or think that that is all you bring him. HE will tell you that — I needn’t. And now I must lock up. I expected Susan back tonight, but she has not come.”

“Oh, yes, here I am, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, entering unexpectedly from the kitchen, “and puffing like a hen drawing rails at that! It’s quite a walk from the Glen down here.”

“I’m glad to see you back, Susan. How is your sister?”

“She is able to sit up, but of course she cannot walk yet. However, she is very well able to get on without me now, for her daughter has come home for her vacation. And I am thankful to be back, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Matilda’s leg was broken and no mistake, but her tongue was not. She would talk the legs off an iron pot, that she would, Mrs. Doctor, dear, though I grieve to say it of my own sister. She was always a great talker and yet she was the first of our family to get married. She really did not care much about marrying James Clow, but she could not bear to disoblige him. Not but what James is a good man — the only fault I have to find with him is that he always starts in to say grace with such an unearthly groan, Mrs. Doctor, dear. It always frightens my appetite clear away. And speaking of getting married, Mrs. Doctor, dear, is it true that Cornelia Bryant is going to be married to Marshall Elliott?”

“Yes, quite true, Susan.”

“Well, Mrs. Doctor, dear, it does NOT seem to me fair. Here is me, who never said a word against the men, and I cannot get married nohow. And there is Cornelia Bryant, who is never done abusing them, and all she has

to do is to reach out her hand and pick one up, as it were. It is a very strange world, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

“There’s another world, you know, Susan.”

“Yes,” said Susan with a heavy sigh, “but, Mrs. Doctor, dear, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage there.”

CHAPTER 3 9

CAPTAIN JIM CROSSES THE BAR

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One day in late September Owen Ford's book came at last. Captain Jim had gone faithfully to the Glen post office every day for a month, expecting it. This day he had not gone, and Leslie brought his copy home with hers and Anne's.

"We'll take it down to him this evening," said Anne, excited as a schoolgirl.

The long walk to the Point on that clear, beguiling evening along the red harbor road was very pleasant. Then the sun dropped down behind the western hills into some valley that must have been full of lost sunsets, and at the same instant the big light flashed out on the white tower of the point.

"Captain Jim is never late by the fraction of a second," said Leslie.

Neither Anne nor Leslie ever forgot Captain Jim's face when they gave him the book — HIS book, transfigured and glorified. The cheeks that had been blanched of late suddenly flamed with the color of boyhood; his eyes glowed with all the fire of youth; but his hands trembled as he opened it.

It was called simply The Life-Book of Captain Jim, and on the title page the names of Owen Ford and James Boyd were printed as collaborators. The frontispiece was a photograph of Captain Jim himself, standing at the door of the lighthouse, looking across the gulf. Owen Ford had "snapped" him one day while the book was being written. Captain Jim had known this, but he had not known that the picture was to be in the book.

“Just think of it,” he said, “the old sailor right there in a real printed book. This is the proudest day of my life. I’m like to bust, girls. There’ll be no sleep for me tonight. I’ll read my book clean through before sun-up.”

“We’ll go right away and leave you free to begin it,” said Anne.

Captain Jim had been handling the book in a kind of reverent rapture. Now he decidedly closed it and laid it aside.

“No, no, you’re not going away before you take a cup of tea with the old man,” he protested. “I couldn’t hear to that — could you, Matey? The life-book will keep, I reckon. I’ve waited for it this many a year. I can wait a little longer while I’m enjoying my friends.”

Captain Jim moved about getting his kettle on to boil, and setting out his bread and butter. Despite his excitement he did not move with his old briskness. His movements were slow and halting. But the girls did not offer to help him. They knew it would hurt his feelings.

“You just picked the right evening to visit me,” he said, producing a cake from his cupboard. “Leetle Joe’s mother sent me down a big basket full of cakes and pies today. A blessing on all good cooks, says I. Look at this purty cake, all frosting and nuts. ‘Tain’t often I can entertain in such style. Set in, girls, set in! We’ll ‘tak a cup o’ kindness yet for auld lang syne.’”

The girls “set in” right merrily. The tea was up to Captain Jim’s best brewing. Little Joe’s mother’s cake was the last word in cakes; Captain Jim was the prince of gracious hosts, never even permitting his eyes to wander to the corner where the life-book lay, in all its bravery of green and gold. But when his door finally closed behind Anne and Leslie they knew that he went straight to it, and as they walked home they pictured the delight of the old man poring over the printed pages wherein his own life was portrayed with all the charm and color of reality itself.

“I wonder how he will like the ending — the ending I suggested,” said Leslie.

She was never to know. Early the next morning Anne awakened to find Gilbert bending over her, fully dressed, and with an expression of anxiety on his face.

“Are you called out?” she asked drowsily.

“No. Anne, I’m afraid there’s something wrong at the Point. It’s an hour after sunrise now, and the light is still burning. You know it has always been a matter of pride with Captain Jim to start the light the moment the sun sets, and put it out the moment it rises.”

Anne sat up in dismay. Through her window she saw the light blinking palely against the blue skies of dawn.

“Perhaps he has fallen asleep over his life-book,” she said anxiously, “or become so absorbed in it that he has forgotten the light.”

Gilbert shook his head.

“That wouldn’t be like Captain Jim. Anyway, I’m going down to see.”

“Wait a minute and I’ll go with you,” exclaimed Anne. “Oh, yes, I must — Little Jem will sleep for an hour yet, and I’ll call Susan. You may need a woman’s help if Captain Jim is ill.”

It was an exquisite morning, full of tints and sounds at once ripe and delicate. The harbor was sparkling and dimpling like a girl; white gulls were soaring over the dunes; beyond the bar was a shining, wonderful sea. The long fields by the shore were dewy and fresh in that first fine, purely-tinted light. The wind came dancing and whistling up the channel to replace the beautiful silence with a music more beautiful still. Had it not been for the baleful star on the white tower that early walk would have been a delight to Anne and Gilbert. But they went softly with fear.

Their knock was not responded to. Gilbert opened the door and they went in.

The old room was very quiet. On the table were the remnants of the little evening feast. The lamp still burned on the corner stand. The First Mate was asleep in a square of sunshine by the sofa.

Captain Jim lay on the sofa, with his hands clasped over the life-book, open at the last page, lying on his breast. His eyes were closed and on his face was a look of the most perfect peace and happiness — the look of one who has long sought and found at last.

“He is asleep?” whispered Anne tremulously.

Gilbert went to the sofa and bent over him for a few moments. Then he straightened up.

“Yes, he sleeps — well,” he added quietly. “Anne, Captain Jim has crossed the bar.”

They could not know precisely at what hour he had died, but Anne always believed that he had had his wish, and went out when the morning came across the gulf. Out on that shining tide his spirit drifted, over the sunrise sea of pearl and silver, to the haven where lost Margaret waited, beyond the storms and calms.

CHAPTER 40

FAREWELL TO THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

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Captain Jim was buried in the little over-harbor graveyard, very near to the spot where the wee white lady slept. His relatives put up a very expensive, very ugly “monument” — a monument at which he would have poked sly fun had he seen it in life. But his real monument was in the hearts of those who knew him, and in the book that was to live for generations.

Leslie mourned that Captain Jim had not lived to see the amazing success of it.

“How he would have delighted in the reviews — they are almost all so kindly. And to have seen his life-book heading the lists of the best sellers — oh, if he could just have lived to see it, Anne!”

But Anne, despite her grief, was wiser.

“It was the book itself he cared for, Leslie — not what might be said of it — and he had it. He had read it all through. That last night must have been one of the greatest happiness for him — with the quick, painless ending he had hoped for in the morning. I am glad for Owen’s sake and yours that the book is such a success — but Captain Jim was satisfied — I KNOW.”

The lighthouse star still kept a nightly vigil; a substitute keeper had been sent to the Point, until such time as an all-wise government could decide which of many applicants was best fitted for the place — or had the strongest pull. The First Mate was at home in the little house, beloved by Anne and Gilbert and Leslie, and tolerated by a Susan who had small liking for cats.

“I can put up with him for the sake of Captain Jim, Mrs. Doctor, dear, for I liked the old man. And I will see that he gets bite and sup, and every mouse the traps account for. But do not ask me to do more than that, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Cats is cats, and take my word for it, they will never be anything else. And at least, Mrs. Doctor, dear, do keep him away from the blessed wee man. Picture to yourself how awful it would be if he was to suck the darling’s breath.”

“That might be fitly called a CATastrophe,” said Gilbert.

“Oh, you may laugh, doctor, dear, but it would be no laughing matter.”

“Cats never suck babies’ breaths,” said Gilbert. “That is only an old superstition, Susan.”

“Oh, well, it may be a superstition or it may not, doctor, dear. All that I know is, it has happened. My sister’s husband’s nephew’s wife’s cat sucked their baby’s breath, and the poor innocent was all but gone when they found it. And superstition or not, if I find that yellow beast lurking near our baby I will whack him with the poker, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Elliott were living comfortably and harmoniously in the green house. Leslie was busy with sewing, for she and Owen were to be married at Christmas. Anne wondered what she would do when Leslie was gone.

“Changes come all the time. Just as soon as things get really nice they change,” she said with a sigh.

“The old Morgan place up at the Glen is for sale,” said Gilbert, apropos of nothing in especial.

“Is it?” asked Anne indifferently.

“Yes. Now that Mr. Morgan has gone, Mrs. Morgan wants to go to live with her children in Vancouver. She will sell cheaply, for a big place like that in a small village like the Glen will not be very easy to dispose of.”

“Well, it’s certainly a beautiful place, so it is likely she will find a purchaser,” said Anne, absently, wondering whether she should hemstitch or feather-stitch little Jem’s “short” dresses. He was to be shortened the next week, and Anne felt ready to cry at the thought of it.

“Suppose we buy it, Anne?” remarked Gilbert quietly.

Anne dropped her sewing and stared at him.

“You’re not in earnest, Gilbert?”

“Indeed I am, dear.”

“And leave this darling spot — our house of dreams?” said Anne incredulously. “Oh, Gilbert, it’s — it’s unthinkable!”

“Listen patiently to me, dear. I know just how you feel about it. I feel the same. But we’ve always known we would have to move some day.”

“Oh, but not so soon, Gilbert — not just yet.”

“We may never get such a chance again. If we don’t buy the Morgan place someone else will — and there is no other house in the Glen we would care to have, and no other really good site on which to build. This little house is — well, it is and has been what no other house can ever be to us, I admit, but you know it is out-of-the-way down here for a doctor. We have felt the inconvenience, though we’ve made the best of it. And it’s a tight fit for us now. Perhaps, in a few years, when Jem wants a room of his own, it will be entirely too small.”

“Oh, I know — I know,” said Anne, tears filling her eyes. “I know all that can be said against it, but I love it so — and it’s so beautiful here.”

“You would find it very lonely here after Leslie goes — and Captain Jim has gone too. The Morgan place is beautiful, and in time we would love it. You know you have always admired it, Anne.”

“Oh, yes, but — but — this has all seemed to come up so suddenly, Gilbert. I’m dizzy. Ten minutes ago I had no thought of leaving this dear

spot. I was planning what I meant to do for it in the spring — what I meant to do in the garden. And if we leave this place who will get it? It IS out-of-the-way, so it's likely some poor, shiftless, wandering family will rent it — and overrun it — and oh, that would be desecration. It would hurt me horribly.”

“I know. But we cannot sacrifice our own interests to such considerations, Anne-girl. The Morgan place will suit us in every essential particular — we really can't afford to miss such a chance. Think of that big lawn with those magnificent old trees; and of that splendid hardwood grove behind it — twelve acres of it. What a play place for our children! There's a fine orchard, too, and you've always admired that high brick wall around the garden with the door in it — you've thought it was so like a storybook garden. And there is almost as fine a view of the harbor and the dunes from the Morgan place as from here.”

“You can't see the lighthouse star from it.”

“Yes, You can see it from the attic window. THERE'S another advantage, Anne-girl — you love big garrets.”

“There's no brook in the garden.”

“Well, no, but there is one running through the maple grove into the Glen pond. And the pond itself isn't far away. You'll be able to fancy you have your own Lake of Shining Waters again.”

“Well, don't say anything more about it just now, Gilbert. Give me time to think — to get used to the idea.”

“All right. There is no great hurry, of course. Only — if we decide to buy, it would be well to be moved in and settled before winter.”

Gilbert went out, and Anne put away Little Jem's short dresses with trembling hands. She could not sew any more that day. With tear-wet eyes she wandered over the little domain where she had reigned so happy a queen. The Morgan place was all that Gilbert claimed. The grounds were beautiful, the house old enough to have dignity and repose and traditions,

and new enough to be comfortable and up-to-date. Anne had always admired it; but admiring is not loving; and she loved this house of dreams so much. She loved EVERYTHING about it — the garden she had tended, and which so many women had tended before her — the gleam and sparkle of the little brook that crept so roguishly across the corner — the gate between the creaking fir trees — the old red sandstone step — the stately Lombardies — the two tiny quaint glass cupboards over the chimney-piece in the livingroom — the crooked pantry door in the kitchen — the two funny dormer windows upstairs — the little jog in the staircase — why, these things were a part of her! How could she leave them?

And how this little house, consecrated aforetime by love and joy, had been re-consecrated for her by her happiness and sorrow! Here she had spent her bridal moon; here wee Joyce had lived her one brief day; here the sweetness of motherhood had come again with Little Jem; here she had heard the exquisite music of her baby's cooing laughter; here beloved friends had sat by her fireside. Joy and grief, birth and death, had made sacred forever this little house of dreams.

And now she must leave it. She knew that, even while she had contended against the idea to Gilbert. The little house was outgrown. Gilbert's interests made the change necessary; his work, successful though it had been, was hampered by his location. Anne realised that the end of their life in this dear place drew nigh, and that she must face the fact bravely. But how her heart ached!

"It will be just like tearing something out of my life," she sobbed. "And oh, if I could hope that some nice folk would come here in our place — or even that it would be left vacant. That itself would be better than having it overrun with some horde who know nothing of the geography of dreamland, and nothing of the history that has given this house its soul and its identity. And if such a tribe come here the place will go to rack and ruin in no time — an old place goes down so quickly if it is not carefully attended to. They'll tear up my garden — and let the Lombardies get ragged — and the paling will come to look like a mouth with half the teeth missing — and the roof will leak — and the plaster fall — and they'll stuff

pillows and rags in broken window panes — and everything will be out-at-elbows.”

Anne’s imagination pictured forth so vividly the coming degeneration of her dear little house that it hurt her as severely as if it had already been an accomplished fact. She sat down on the stairs and had a long, bitter cry. Susan found her there and enquired with much concern what the trouble was.

“You have not quarrelled with the doctor, have you now, Mrs. Doctor, dear? But if you have, do not worry. It is a thing quite likely to happen to married couples, I am told, although I have had no experience that way myself. He will be sorry, and you can soon make it up.”

“No, no, Susan, we haven’t quarrelled. It’s only — Gilbert is going to buy the Morgan place, and we’ll have to go and live at the Glen. And it will break my heart.”

Susan did not enter into Anne’s feelings at all. She was, indeed, quite rejoiced over the prospect of living at the Glen. Her one grievance against her place in the little house was its lonesome location.

“Why, Mrs. Doctor, dear, it will be splendid. The Morgan house is such a fine, big one.”

“I hate big houses,” sobbed Anne.

“Oh, well, you will not hate them by the time you have half a dozen children,” remarked Susan calmly. “And this house is too small already for us. We have no spare room, since Mrs. Moore is here, and that pantry is the most aggravating place I ever tried to work in. There is a corner every way you turn. Besides, it is out-of-the-world down here. There is really nothing at all but scenery.”

“Out of your world perhaps, Susan — but not out of mine,” said Anne with a faint smile.

“I do not quite understand you, Mrs. Doctor, dear, but of course I am not well educated. But if Dr. Blythe buys the Morgan place he will make no mistake, and that you may tie to. They have water in it, and the pantries and closets are beautiful, and there is not another such cellar in P. E. Island, so I have been told. Why, the cellar here, Mrs. Doctor, dear, has been a heartbreak to me, as well you know.”

“Oh, go away, Susan, go away,” said Anne forlornly. “Cellars and pantries and closets don’t make a HOME. Why don’t you weep with those who weep?”

“Well, I never was much hand for weeping, Mrs. Doctor, dear. I would rather fall to and cheer people up than weep with them. Now, do not you cry and spoil your pretty eyes. This house is very well and has served your turn, but it is high time you had a better.”

Susan’s point of view seemed to be that of most people. Leslie was the only one who sympathised understandingly with Anne. She had a good cry, too, when she heard the news. Then they both dried their tears and went to work at the preparations for moving.

“Since we must go let us go as soon as we can and have it over,” said poor Anne with bitter resignation.

“You know you will like that lovely old place at the Glen after you have lived in it long enough to have dear memories woven about it,” said Leslie. “Friends will come there, as they have come here — happiness will glorify it for you. Now, it’s just a house to you — but the years will make it a home.”

Anne and Leslie had another cry the next week when they shortened Little Jem. Anne felt the tragedy of it until evening when in his long nightie she found her own dear baby again.

“But it will be rompers next — and then trousers — and in no time he will be grownup,” she sighed.

“Well, you would not want him to stay a baby always, Mrs. Doctor, dear, would you?” said Susan. “Bless his innocent heart, he looks too sweet for anything in his little short dresses, with his dear feet sticking out. And think of the save in the ironing, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

“Anne, I have just had a letter from Owen,” said Leslie, entering with a bright face. “And, oh! I have such good news. He writes me that he is going to buy this place from the church trustees and keep it to spend our summer vacations in. Anne, are you not glad?”

“Oh, Leslie, ‘glad’ isn’t the word for it! It seems almost too good to be true. I sha’n’t feel half so badly now that I know this dear spot will never be desecrated by a vandal tribe, or left to tumble down in decay. Why, it’s lovely! It’s lovely!”

One October morning Anne awakened to the realisation that she had slept for the last time under the roof of her little house. The day was too busy to indulge regret and when evening came the house was stripped and bare. Anne and Gilbert were alone in it to say farewell. Leslie and Susan and Little Jem had gone to the Glen with the last load of furniture. The sunset light streamed in through the curtainless windows.

“It has all such a heartbroken, reproachful look, hasn’t it?” said Anne.

“Oh, I shall be so homesick at the Glen tonight!”

“We have been very happy here, haven’t we, Anne-girl?” said Gilbert, his voice full of feeling.

Anne choked, unable to answer. Gilbert waited for her at the fir-tree gate, while she went over the house and said farewell to every room. She was going away; but the old house would still be there, looking seaward through its quaint windows. The autumn winds would blow around it mournfully, and the gray rain would beat upon it and the white mists would come in from the sea to enfold it; and the moonlight would fall over it and light up the old paths where the schoolmaster and his bride had walked. There on that old harbor shore the charm of story would linger; the wind would still whistle alluringly over the silver sand-dunes; the waves would still call from the red rock-coves.

“But we will be gone,” said Anne through her tears.

She went out, closing and locking the door behind her. Gilbert was waiting for her with a smile. The lighthouse star was gleaming northward. The little garden, where only marigolds still bloomed, was already hooding itself in shadows.

Anne knelt down and kissed the worn old step which she had crossed as a bride.

“Goodbye, dear little house of dreams,” she said.

ANNE OF INGLESIDE (1939)

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Chapter 1

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“How white the moonlight is tonight!” said Anne Blythe to herself, as she went up the walk of the Wright garden to Diana Wright’s front door, where little cherry-blossom petals were coming down on the salty, breeze-stirred air.

She paused for a moment to look about her on hills and woods she had loved in olden days and still loved. Dear Avonlea! Glen St. Mary was home to her now and had been home for many years but Avonlea had something that Glen St. Mary could never have. Ghosts of herself met her at every turn ... the fields she had roamed in welcomed her ... unfading echoes of the old sweet life were all about her ... every spot she looked upon had some lovely memory. There were haunted gardens here and there where bloomed all the roses of yesteryear. Anne always loved to come home to Avonlea even when, as now, the reason for her visit had been a sad one. She and Gilbert had come up for the funeral of his father and Anne had stayed for a week. Marilla and Mrs. Lynde could not bear to have her go away too soon.

Her old porch gable room was always kept for her and when Anne had gone to it the night of her arrival she found that Mrs. Lynde had put a big, homey bouquet of spring flowers in it for her ... a bouquet that, when Anne buried her face in it, seemed to hold all the fragrance of unforgotten years. The Anne-who-used-to-be was waiting there for her. Deep, dear old gladnesses stirred in her heart. The gable room was putting its arms around her ... enclosing her ... enveloping her. She looked lovingly at her old bed with the apple-leaf spread Mrs. Lynde had knitted and the spotless pillows trimmed with deep lace Mrs. Lynde had crocheted ... at Marilla’s braided rugs on the floor ... at the mirror that had reflected the face of the little orphan, with her unwritten child’s forehead, who had cried herself to sleep there that first night so long ago. Anne forgot that she was the joyful

mother of five children ... with Susan Baker again knitting mysterious bootees at Ingleside. She was Anne of Green Gables once more.

Mrs. Lynde found her still staring dreamily in the mirror when she came in, bringing clean towels.

“It’s real good to have you home again, Anne, that’s what. It’s nine years since you went away, but Marilla and I can’t seem to get over missing you. It’s not so lonesome now since Davy got married ... Millie is a real nice little thing ... such pies! ... though she’s curious as a chipmunk about everything. But I’ve always said and always will say that there’s nobody like you.”

“Ah, but this mirror can’t be tricked, Mrs. Lynde. It’s telling me plainly, ‘You’re not as young as you once were,’” said Anne whimsically.

“You’ve kept your complexion very well,” said Mrs. Lynde consolingly. “Of course you never had much colour to lose.”

“At any rate, I’ve never a hint of a second chin yet,” said Anne gaily. “And my old room remembers me, Mrs. Lynde. I’m glad ... it would hurt me so if I ever came back and found it had forgotten me. And it’s wonderful to see the moon rising over the Haunted Wood again.”

“It looks like a great big piece of gold in the sky, doesn’t it?” said Mrs. Lynde, feeling that she was taking a wild, poetical flight and thankful that Marilla wasn’t there to hear.

“Look at those pointed firs coming out against it ... and the birches in the hollow still holding their arms up to the silver sky. They’re big trees now ... they were just baby things when I came here ... that does make me feel a bit old.”

“Trees are like children,” said Mrs. Lynde. “It’s dreadful the way they grow up the minute you turn your back on them. Look at Fred Wright ... he’s only thirteen but he’s nearly as tall as his father. There’s a hot chicken pie for supper and I made some of my lemon biscuits for you. You needn’t be a mite afraid to sleep in that bed. I aired the sheets today ... and Marilla

didn't know I did it and gave them another airing ... and Millie didn't know either of us did and gave them a third. I hope Mary Maria Blythe will get out tomorrow ... she always enjoys a funeral so."

"Aunt Mary Maria ... Gilbert always calls her that although she is only his father's cousin ... always calls me 'Annie,'" shuddered Anne. "And the first time she saw me after I was married she said, 'It's so strange Gilbert picked you. He could have had so many nice girls.' Perhaps that's why I've never liked her ... and I know Gilbert doesn't either, though he's too clannish to admit it."

"Will Gilbert be staying up long?"

"No. He has to go back tomorrow night. He left a patient in a very critical condition."

"Oh, well, I suppose there isn't much to keep him in Avonlea now, since his mother went last year. Old Mr. Blythe never held up his head after her death ... just hadn't anything left to live for. The Blythes were always like that ... always set their affections too much on earthly things. It's real sad to think there are none of them left in Avonlea. They were a fine old stock. But then ... there's any amount of Sloanes. The Sloanes are still Sloanes, Anne, and will be for ever and ever, world without end, amen."

"Let there be as many Sloanes as there will, I'm going out after supper to walk all over the old orchard by moonlight. I suppose I'll have to go to bed finally ... though I've always thought sleeping on moonlight nights a waste of time ... but I'm going to wake early to see the first faint morning light steal over the Haunted Wood. The sky will turn to coral and the robins will be strutting around ... perhaps a little grey sparrow will light on the windowsill ... and there'll be gold and purple pansies to look at ..."

"But the rabbits has et up all the June lily bed," said Mrs. Lynde sadly, as she waddled downstairs, feeling secretly relieved that there need be no more talk about the moon. Anne had always been a bit queer that way. And there did not any longer seem to be much use in hoping she would outgrow it.

Diana came down the walk to meet Anne. Even in the moonlight you saw that her hair was still black and her cheeks rosy and her eyes bright. But the moonlight could not hide that she was something stouter than in years ago ... and Diana had never been what Avonlea folks called “skinny.”

“Don’t worry, darling ... I haven’t come to stay... .”

“As if I’d worry over that,” said Diana reproachfully. “You know I’d far rather spend the evening with you than go to the reception. I feel I haven’t seen half enough of you and now you’re going back day after tomorrow. But Fred’s brother, you know ... we’ve just got to go.”

“Of course you have. And I just ran up for a moment. I came the old way, Di ... past the Dryad’s Bubble ... through the Haunted Wood ... past your bowery old garden ... and along by Willowmere. I even stopped to watch the willows upside down in the water as we always used to do. They’ve grown so.”

“Everything has,” said Diana with a sigh. “When I look at young Fred! We’ve all changed so ... except you. You never change, Anne. How do you keep so slim? Look at me!”

“A bit matronish of course,” laughed Anne. “But you’ve escaped the middle-aged spread so far, Di. As for my not changing ... well, Mrs. H. B. Donnell agrees with you. She told me at the funeral that I didn’t look a day older. But Mrs. Harmon Andrews doesn’t. She said, ‘Dear me, Anne, how you’ve failed!’ It’s all in the beholder’s eye ... or conscience. The only time I feel I’m getting along a bit is when I look at the pictures in the magazines. The heroes and heroines in them are beginning to look too young to me. But never mind, Di ... we’re going to be girls again tomorrow. That’s what I’ve come up to tell you. We’re going to take an afternoon and evening off and visit all our old haunts ... every one of them. We’ll walk over the spring fields and through those ferny old woods. We’ll see all the old familiar things we loved and hills where we’ll find our youth again. Nothing ever seems impossible in spring, you know. We’ll stop feeling parental and responsible and be as giddy as Mrs. Lynde really thinks me still in her heart of hearts. There’s really no fun in being sensible all the time, Diana.”

“My, how like you that sounds! And I’d love to. But ...”

“There aren’t any buts. I know you’re thinking, ‘Who’ll get the men’s supper?’”

“Not exactly. Anne Cordelia can get the men’s supper as well as I can, if she is only eleven,” said Diana proudly. “She was going to, anyway. I was going to the Ladies’ Aid. But I won’t. I’ll go with you. It will be like having a dream come true. You know, Anne, lots of evenings I sit down and just pretend we’re little girls again. I’ll take our supper with us ...”

“And we’ll eat it back in Hester Gray’s garden ... I suppose Hester Gray’s garden is still there?”

“I suppose so,” said Diana doubtfully. “I’ve never been there since I was married. Anne Cordelia explores a lot ... but I always tell her she mustn’t go too far from home. She loves prowling about the woods ... and one day when I scolded her for talking to herself in the garden she said she wasn’t talking to herself ... she was talking to the spirit of the flowers. You know that dolls’ tea-set with the tiny pink rosebuds you sent her for her ninth birthday. There isn’t a piece broken ... she’s so careful. She only uses it when the Three Green People come to tea with her. I can’t get out of her who she thinks they are. I declare in some ways, Anne, she’s far more like you than she is like me.”

“Perhaps there’s more in a name than Shakespeare allowed. Don’t grudge Anne Cordelia her fancies, Diana. I’m always sorry for children who don’t spend a few years in fairyland.”

“Olivia Sloane is our teacher now,” said Diana doubtfully. “She’s a B.A., you know, and just took the school for a year to be near her mother. She says children should be made to face realities.”

“Have I lived to hear you taking up with Sloanishness, Diana Wright?”

“No ... no ... NO! I don’t like her a bit ... She has such round staring blue eyes like all that clan. And I don’t mind Anne Cordelia’s fancies. They’re

pretty ... just like yours used to be. I guess she'll get enough 'reality' as life goes on."

"Well, it's settled then. Come down to Green Gables about two and we'll have a drink of Marilla's red currant wine ... she makes it now and then in spite of the minister and Mrs. Lynde ... just to make us feel real devilish."

"Do you remember the day you set me drunk on it?" giggled Diana, who did not mind "devilish" as she would if anybody but Anne used it. Everybody knew Anne didn't really mean things like that. It was just her way.

"We'll have a real do-you-remember day tomorrow, Diana. I won't keep you any longer ... there's Fred coming with the buggy. Your dress is lovely."

"Fred made me get a new one for the wedding. I didn't feel we could afford it since we built the new barn, but he said he wasn't going to have his wife looking like someone that was sent for and couldn't go when everybody else would be dressed within an inch of her life. Wasn't that just like a man?"

"Oh, you sound just like Mrs. Elliott at the Glen," said Anne severely. "You want to watch that tendency. Would you like to live in a world where there were no men?"

"It would be horrible," admitted Diana. "Yes, yes, Fred, I'm coming. Oh, all right! Till tomorrow then, Anne."

Anne paused by the Dryad's Bubble on her way back. She loved that old brook so. Every trill of her childhood's laughter that it had ever caught, it had held and now seemed to give out again to her listening ears. Her old dreams ... she could see them reflected in the clear Bubble ... old vows ... old whispers ... the brook kept them all and murmured of them ... but there was no one to listen save the wise old spruces in the Haunted Wood that had been listening so long.

Chapter 2

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“Such a lovely day ... made for us,” said Diana. “I’m afraid it’s a pet day, though ... there’ll be rain tomorrow.”

“Never mind. We’ll drink its beauty today, even if its sunshine is gone tomorrow. We’ll enjoy each other’s friendship today even if we are to be parted tomorrow. Look at those long, golden-green hills ... those mist-blue valleys. They’re ours, Diana ... I don’t care if that furthest hill is registered in Abner Sloan’s name ... it’s ours today. There’s a west wind blowing ... I always feel adventurous when a west wind blows ... and we’re going to have a perfect ramble.”

They had. All the old dear spots were revisited: Lover’s Lane, the Haunted Wood, Idlewild, Violet Vale, the Birch Path, Crystal Lake. There were some changes. The little ring of birch saplings in Idlewild, where they had had a playhouse long ago, had grown into big trees; the Birch Path, long untrodden, was matted with bracken; the Crystal Lake had entirely disappeared, leaving only a damp mossy hollow. But Violet Vale was purple with violets and the seedling apple tree Gilbert had once found far back in the woods was a huge tree peppered over with tiny, crimson-tipped blossom-buds.

They walked bareheaded. Annie’s hair still gleamed like polished mahogany in the sunlight and Diana’s was still glossy black. They exchanged gay and understanding, warm and friendly, glances. Sometimes they walked in silence ... Anne always maintained that two people as sympathetic as she and Diana could feel each other’s thoughts. Sometimes they peppered their conversation with do-you-remembers. “Do you remember the day you fell through the Cobb duckhouse on the Tory Road?” ... “Do you remember when we jumped on Aunt Josephine?” ... “Do you remember our Story Club?” ... “Do you remember Mrs. Morgan’s visit when you stained your nose red?” ... “Do you remember how we

signalled to each other from our windows with candles?" ... "Do you remember the fun we had at Miss Lavender's wedding and Charlotta's blue bows?" ... "Do you remember the Improvement Society?" It almost seemed to them they could hear their old peals of laughter echoing down the years.

The A. V. I. S. was, it seemed, dead. It had petered out soon after Anne's marriage.

"They just couldn't keep it up, Anne. The young people in Avonlea now are not what they were in our day."

"Don't talk as if 'our day' were ended, Diana. We're only fifteen years old and kindred spirits. The air isn't just full of light ... it is light. I'm not sure that I haven't sprouted wings."

"I feel just that way, too," said Diana, forgetting that she had tipped the scale at one hundred and fifty-five that morning. "I often feel that I'd love to be turned into a bird for a little while. It must be wonderful to fly."

Beauty was all around them. Unsuspected tintings glimmered in the dark demesnes of the woods and glowed in their alluring by-ways. The spring sunshine sifted through the young green leaves. Gay trills of song were everywhere. There were little hollows where you felt as if you were bathing in a pool of liquid gold. At every turn some fresh spring scent struck their faces ... spice ferns ... fir balsam ... the wholesome odour of newly ploughed fields. There was a lane curtained with wild-cherry blossoms ... a grassy old field full of tiny spruce trees just starting in life and looking like elvish things that had squatted down among the grasses ... brooks not yet "too broad for leaping" ... starflowers under the firs ... sheets of curly young ferns ... and a birch tree whence some vandal had torn away the white-skin wrapper in several places, exposing the tints of the bark below. Anne looked at it so long that Diana wondered. She did not see what Anne did ... tints ranging from purest creamy white, through exquisite golden tones, growing deeper and deeper until the inmost layer revealed the deepest richest brown as if to tell that all birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, had yet warm-hued feelings.

“The primeval fire of earth at their hearts,” murmured Anne.

And finally, after traversing a little wood glen full of toadstools, they found Hester Gray’s garden. Not so much changed. It was still very sweet with dear flowers. There were still plenty of June lilies, as Diana called the narcissi. The row of cherry trees had grown older but was a drift of snowy bloom. You could still find the central rose walk, and the old dyke was white with strawberry blossoms and blue with violets and green with baby fern. They ate their picnic supper in a corner of it, sitting on some old mossy stones, with a lilac tree behind them flinging purple banners against a low-hanging sun. Both were hungry and both did justice to their own good cooking.

“How nice things taste out of doors!” sighed Diana comfortably. “That chocolate cake of yours, Anne ... well, words fail me, but I must get the recipe. Fred would adore it. He can eat anything and stay thin. I’m always saying I’m not going to eat any more cake ... because I’m getting fatter every year. I’ve such a horror of getting like great-aunt Sarah ... she was so fat she always had to be pulled up when she had sat down. But when I see a cake like that ... and last night at the reception ... well, they would all have been so offended if I didn’t eat.”

“Did you have a nice time?”

“Oh, yes, in a way. But I fell into Fred’s Cousin Henrietta’s clutches ... and it’s such a delight to her to tell all about her operations and her sensations while going through them and how soon her appendix would have burst if she hadn’t had it out. ‘I had fifteen stitches put in it. Oh, Diana, the agony I suffered!’ Well, she enjoyed it if I didn’t. And she has suffered, so why shouldn’t she have the fun of talking about it now? Jim was so funny ... I don’t know if Mary Alice liked it altogether... . Well, just one teeny piece ... may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, I suppose ... a mere sliver can’t make much difference... . One thing he said ... that the very night before the wedding he was so scared he felt he’d have to take the boat-train. He said all grooms felt just the same if they’d be honest about it. You don’t suppose Gilbert and Fred felt like that, do you, Anne?”

“I’m sure they didn’t.”

“That’s what Fred said when I asked him. He said all he was scared of was that I’d change my mind at the last moment like Rose Spencer. But you can never really tell what a man may be thinking. Well, there’s no use worrying over it now. What a lovely time we’ve had this afternoon! We seem to have lived so many old happinesses over. I wish you didn’t have to go tomorrow, Anne.”

“Can’t you come down for a visit to Ingleside sometime this summer, Diana? Before ... well, before I’ll not be wanting visitors for a while.”

“I’d love to. But it seems impossible to get away from home in the summer. There’s always so much to do.”

“Rebecca Dew is coming at long last, of which I’m glad ... and I’m afraid Aunt Mary Maria is, too. She hinted as much to Gilbert. He doesn’t want her any more than I do ... but she is ‘a relation’ and so his latchstring must be always out for her.”

“Perhaps I’ll get down in the winter. I’d love to see Ingleside again. You have a lovely home, Anne ... and a lovely family.”

“Ingleside is nice ... and I do love it now. I once thought I would never love it. I hated it when we went there first ... hated it for its very virtues. They were an insult to my dear House of Dreams. I remember saying piteously to Gilbert when we left it, ‘We’ve been so happy here. We’ll never be so happy anywhere else.’ I revelled in a luxury of homesickness for a while. Then ... I found little rootlets of affection for Ingleside beginning to sprout out. I fought against it ... I really did ... but at last I had to give in and admit I loved it. And I’ve loved it better every year since. It isn’t too old a house ... too old houses are sad. And it isn’t too young ... too young houses are crude. It’s just mellow. I love every room in it. Every one has some fault but also some virtue ... something that distinguishes it from all the others ... gives it a personality. I love all those magnificent trees on the lawn. I don’t know who planted them but every time I go upstairs I stop on the landing ... you know that quaint window on the landing with the broad deep seat ... and sit there looking out for a

moment and say, ‘God bless the man who planted those trees whoever he was.’ We’ve really too many trees about the house but we wouldn’t give up one.”

“That’s just like Fred. He worships that big willow south of the house. It spoils the view from the parlour windows, as I’ve told him again and again, but he only says, ‘Would you cut a lovely thing like that down even if it does shut out the view?’ So the willow stays ... and it is lovely. That’s why we’ve called our place Lone Willow Farm. I love the name Ingleside. It’s such a nice, homey name.”

“That’s what Gilbert said. We had quite a time deciding on a name. We tried out several but they didn’t seem to belong. But when we thought of Ingleside we knew it was the right one. I’m glad we have a nice big roomy house ... we need it with our family. The children love it, too, small as they are.”

“They’re such darlings.” Diana slyly cut herself another “sliver” of the chocolate cake. “I think my own are pretty nice ... but there’s really something about yours ... and your twins! That I do envy you. I’ve always wanted twins.”

“Oh, I couldn’t get away from twins ... they’re my destiny. But I’m disappointed mine don’t look alike ... not one bit alike. Nan’s pretty, though, with her brown hair and eyes and her lovely complexion. Di is her father’s favourite, because she has green eyes and red hair ... red hair with a swirl to it. Shirley is the apple of Susan’s eye ... I was ill so long after he was born and she looked after him till I really believe she thinks he is her own. She calls him her ‘little brown boy’ and spoils him shamefully.”

“And he’s still so small you can creep in to find if he has kicked off the clothes and tuck him in again,” said Diana enviously. “Jack’s nine, you know, and he doesn’t want me to do that now. He says he’s too big. And I loved so to do it! Oh, I wish children didn’t grow up so soon.”

“None of mine have got to that stage yet ... though I’ve noticed that since Jem began to go to school he doesn’t want to hold my hand any more when we walk through the village,” said Anne with a sigh. “But he and Walter

and Shirley all want me to tuck them in yet. Walter sometimes makes quite a ritual of it.”

“And you don’t have to worry yet over what they’re going to be. Now, Jack is crazy to be a soldier when he grows up ... a soldier! Just fancy!”

“I wouldn’t worry over that. He’ll forget about it when another fancy seizes him. War is a thing of the past. Jem imagines he is going to be a sailor ... like Captain Jim ... and Walter is by way of being a poet. He isn’t like any of the others. But they all love trees and they all love playing in ‘the Hollow,’ as it’s called — a little valley just below Ingleside with fairy paths and a brook. A very ordinary place ... just ‘the Hollow’ to others but to them fairyland. They’ve all got their faults ... but they’re not such a bad little gang ... and luckily there’s always enough love to go round. Oh, I’m glad to think that this time tomorrow night I’ll be back at Ingleside, telling my babies stories at bedtime and giving Susan’s calceolarias and ferns their meed of praise. Susan has ‘luck’ with ferns. No one can grow them like her. I can praise her ferns honestly ... but the calceolarias, Diana! They don’t look like flowers to me at all. But I never hurt Susan’s feeling by telling her so. I always get around it somehow. Providence has never failed yet. Susan is such a duck ... I can’t imagine what I’d do without her. And I remember once calling her ‘an outsider.’ Yes, it’s lovely to think of going home and yet I’m sad to leave Green Gables, too. It’s so beautiful here ... with Marilla ... and you. Our friendship has always been a very lovely thing, Diana.”

“Yes ... and we’ve always ... I mean ... I never could say things like you, Anne ... but we have kept our old ‘solemn vow and promise,’ haven’t we?”

“Always ... and always will.”

Anne’s hand found its way into Diana’s. They sat for a long time in a silence too sweet for words. Long, still evening shadows fell over the grasses and the flowers and the green reaches of the meadows beyond. The sun went down ... grey-pink shades of sky deepened and paled behind the pensive trees ... the spring twilight took possession of Hester Gray’s garden where nobody ever walked now. Robins were sprinkling the

evening air with flute-like whistles. A great star came out over the white cherry trees.

“The first star is always a miracle,” said Anne dreamily.

“I could sit here forever,” said Diana. “I hate the thought of leaving it.”

“So do I ... but after all we’ve only been pretending to be fifteen. We’ve got to remember our family cares. How those lilacs smell! Has it ever occurred to you, Diana, that there is something not quite ... chaste ... in the scent of lilac blossoms? Gilbert laughs at such a notion ... he loves them ... but to me they always seem to be remembering some secret, too - sweet thing.”

“They’re too heavy for the house, I always think,” said Diana. She picked up the plate which held the remainder of the chocolate cake ... looked at it longingly ... shook her head and packed it in the basket with an expression of great nobility and self-denial on her face.

“Wouldn’t it be fun, Diana, if now, as we went home, we were to meet our old selves running along Lover’s Lane?”

Diana gave a little shiver.

“No-o-o, I don’t think that would be funny, Anne. I hadn’t noticed it was getting so dark. It’s all right to fancy things in daylight, but ...”

They went quietly, silently, lovingly home together, with the sunset glory burning on the old hills behind them and their old unforgotten love burning in their hearts.

Chapter 3

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Anne ended a week that had been full of pleasant days by taking flowers to Matthew's grave the next morning and in the afternoon she took the train from Carmody home. For a time she thought of all the old loved things behind her and then her thoughts ran ahead of her to the loved things before her. Her heart sang all the way because she was going home to a joyous house ... a house where every one who crossed its threshold knew it was a home ... a house that was filled all the time with laughter and silver mugs and snapshots and babies ... precious things with curls and chubby knees ... and rooms that would welcome her ... where the chairs waited patiently and the dresses in her closet were expecting her ... where little anniversaries were always being celebrated and little secrets were always being whispered.

"It's lovely to feel you like going home," thought Anne, fishing out of her purse a certain letter from a small son over which she had laughed gaily the night before, reading it proudly to the Green Gables folks ... the first letter she had ever received from any of her children. It was quite a nice little letter for a seven-year-old who had been going to school only a year to write, even though Jem's spelling was a bit uncertain and there was a big blob of ink in one corner.

"Di cryed and cryed all night because Tommy Drew told her he was going to burn her doll at the stake. Susan tells us nice tales at night but she isn't you, mummy. She let me help her sew the beads last night."

"How could I have been happy for a whole week away from them all?" thought the chatelaine of Ingleside self-reproachfully.

"How nice to have someone meet you at the end of a journey!" she cried, as she stepped off the train at Glen St. Mary into Gilbert's waiting arms. She could never be sure Gilbert would meet her ... somebody was always

dying or being born ... but no homecoming ever seemed just right to Anne unless he did. And he had on such a nice new light-grey suit! (How glad I am I put on this frilly eggshell blouse with my brown suit, even if Mrs. Lynde thought I was crazy to wear it travelling. If I hadn't I wouldn't have looked so nice for Gilbert.)

Ingleside was all lighted up, with gay Japanese lanterns hanging on the veranda. Anne ran gaily along the walk bordered by daffodils.

"Ingleside, I'm here!" she called.

They were all around her ... laughing, exclaiming, jesting ... with Susan Baker smiling properly in the background. Everyone of the children had a bouquet picked specially for her, even the two-year-old Shirley.

"Oh, this is a nice welcome home! Everything about Ingleside looks so happy. It's splendid to think my family are so glad to see me."

"If you ever go away from home again, Mummy," said Jem solemnly, "I'll go and take appendicitis."

"How do you go about taking it?" asked Walter.

"S-s-sh!" Jem nudged Walter secretly and whispered, "There's a pain somewhere, I know ... but I just want to scare Mummy so she won't go away."

Anne wanted to do a hundred things first ... hug everybody ... run out in the twilight and gather some of her pansies ... you found pansies everywhere at Ingleside ... pick up the little well-worn doll lying on the rug ... hear all the juicy tidbits of gossip and news, everyone contributing something. How Nan had got the top off a tube of vaseline up her nose when the doctor was out on a case and Susan had all but gone distracted ... "I assure you it was an anxious time, Mrs. Dr. dear" ... how Mrs. Jud Palmer's cow had eaten fifty-seven wire nails and had to have a vet from Charlottetown ... how absentminded Mrs. Fenner Douglas had gone to church bareheaded ... how Dad had dug all the dandelions out of the lawn ... "between babies, Mrs. Dr. dear ... he's had eight while you were away"

... how Mr. Tom Flagg had dyed his moustache ... “and his wife only dead two years” ... how Rose Maxwell of the Harbour Head had jilted Jim Hudson of the Upper Glen and he had sent her a bill for all he had spent on her ... what a splendid turn-out there had been at Mrs. Amasa Warren’s funeral ... how Carter Flagg’s cat had had a piece bitten right out of the root of its tail ... how Shirley had been found in a stable standing right under one of the horses ... “Mrs. Dr. dear, never shall I be the same woman again” ... how there was sadly too much reason to fear that the blue plum trees were developing black knot ... how Di had gone about the whole day singing, “Mummy’s coming home today, home today, home today” to the tune of “Merrily We Roll Along” ... how the Joe Reeses had a kitten that was cross-eyed because it had been born with its eyes open ... how Jem had inadvertently sat on some fly-paper before he had put his little trousers on ... and how the Shrimp had fallen into the soft-water puncheon.

“He was nearly drowned, Mrs. Dr. dear, but luckily the doctor heard his howls in the nick of time and pulled him out by his hind-legs.” (What is the nick of time, Mummy?)

“He seems to have recovered nicely from it,” said Anne, stroking the glossy black-and-white curves of a contented pussy with huge jowls, purring on a chair in the firelight. It was never quite safe to sit down on a chair at Ingleside without first making sure there wasn’t a cat in it. Susan, who had not cared much for cats to begin with, vowed she had to learn to like them in self-defense. As for the Shrimp, Gilbert had called him that a year ago when Nan had brought the miserable, scrawny kitten home from the village where some boys had been torturing it, and the name clung, though it was very inappropriate now.

“But ... Susan! What has become of Gog and Magog? Oh ... they haven’t been broken, have they?”

“No, no, Mrs. Dr. dear,” exclaimed Susan, turning a deep brick-red from shame and dashing out of the room. She returned shortly with the two china dogs which always presided at the hearth of Ingleside. “I do not see how I could have forgotten to put them back before you came. You see, Mrs. Dr. dear, Mrs. Charles Day from Charlottetown called here the day

after you left ... and you know how very precise and proper she is. Walter thought he ought to entertain her and he started in by pointing out the dogs to her. 'This one is God and this is My God,' he said, poor innocent child. I was horrified ... though I thought that die I would to see Mrs. Day's face. I explained as best I could, for I did not want her to think us a profane family, but I decided I would just put the dogs away in the china closet, out of sight, till you got back."

"Mummy, can't we have supper soon?" said Jem pathetically. "I've got a gnawful feeling in the pit of my stomach. And oh, Mummy, we've made everybody's favourite dish!"

"We, as the flea said to the elephant, have done that very thing," said Susan with a grin. "We thought that your return should be suitably celebrated, Mrs. Dr. dear. And now where is Walter? It is his week to ring the gong for meals, bless his heart."

Supper was a gala meal ... and putting all the babies to bed afterwards was a delight. Susan even allowed her to put Shirley to bed, seeing what a very special occasion it was.

"This is no common day, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said solemnly.

"Oh, Susan, there is no such thing as a common day. Every day has something about it no other day has. Haven't you noticed?"

"How true that is, Mrs. Dr. dear. Even last Friday now, when it rained all day, and was so dull, my big pink geranium showed buds at last after refusing to bloom for three long years. And have you noticed the calceolarias, Mrs. Dr. dear?"

"Noticed them! I never saw such calceolarias in my life, Susan. How do you manage it?" (There, I've made Susan happy and haven't told a fib. I never did see such calceolarias ... thank heaven!)

"It is the result of constant care and attention, Mrs. Dr. dear. But there is something I think I ought to speak of. I think Walter suspects something. No doubt some of the Glen children have said things to him. So many

children nowadays know so much more than is fitting. Walter said to me the other day, very thoughtful-like, ‘Susan,’ he said, ‘are babies very expensive?’ I was a bit dumfounded, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I kept my head. ‘Some folks think they are luxuries,’ I said, ‘but at Ingleside we think they are necessities.’ And I reproached myself with having complained aloud about the shameful price of things in all the Glen stores. I am afraid it worried the child. But if he says anything to you, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will be prepared.”

“I’m sure you handled the situation beautifully, Susan,” said Anne gravely. “And I think it is time they all knew what we are hoping for.”

But the best of all was when Gilbert came to her, as she stood at her window, watching a fog creeping in from the sea, over the moonlit dunes and the harbour, right into the long narrow valley upon which Ingleside looked down and in which nestled the village of Glen St. Mary.

“To come back at the end of a hard day and find you! Are you happy, Ancest of Ancest?”

“Happy!” Anne bent to sniff a vaseful of apple blossoms Jem had set on her dressing-table. She felt surrounded and encompassed by love. “Gilbert dear, it’s been lovely to be Anne of Green Gables again for a week, but it’s a hundred times lovelier to come back and be Anne of Ingleside.”

Chapter 4

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“Absolutely not,” said Dr. Blythe, in a tone Jem understood.

Jem knew there was no hope of Dad’s changing his mind or that Mother would try to change it for him. It was plain to be seen that on this point Mother and Dad were as one. Jem’s hazel eyes darkened with anger and disappointment as he looked at his cruel parents ... glared at them ... all the more glaringly that they were so maddeningly indifferent to his glares and went on eating their supper as if nothing at all were wrong and out of joint. Of course Aunt Mary Maria noticed his glares ... nothing ever escaped Aunt Mary Maria’s mournful, pale-blue eyes ... but she only seemed amused at them.

Bertie Shakespeare Drew had been up playing with Jem all the afternoon ... Walter having gone down to the old House of Dreams to play with Kenneth and Persis Ford ... and Bertie Shakespeare had told Jem that all the Glen boys were going down to the Harbour Mouth that evening to see Captain Bill Taylor tattoo a snake on his cousin Joe Drew’s arm. He, Bertie Shakespeare, was going and wouldn’t Jem come too? It would be such fun. Jem was at once crazy to go; and now he had been told that it was utterly out of the question.

“For one reason among many,” said Dad, “it’s much too far for you to go down to the Harbour Mouth with those boys. They won’t get back till late and your bedtime is supposed to be at eight, son.”

“I was sent to bed at seven every night of my life when I was a child,” said Aunt Mary Maria.

“You must wait till you are older, Jem, before you go so far away in the evenings,” said Mother.

“You said that last week,” cried Jem indignantly, “and I am older now. You’d think I was a baby! Bertie’s going and I’m just as old as him.”

“There’s measles around,” said Aunt Mary Maria darkly. “You might catch measles, James.”

Jem hated to be called James. And she always did it.

“I want to catch measles,” he muttered rebelliously. Then, catching Dad’s eye instead, subsided. Dad would never let anyone “talk back” to Aunt Mary Maria. Jem hated Aunt Mary Maria. Aunt Diana and Aunt Marilla were such ducks of aunts but an aunt like Aunt Mary Maria was something wholly new in Jem’s experience.

“All right,” he said defiantly, looking at Mother so that nobody could suppose he was talking to Aunt Mary Maria, “if you don’t want to love me you don’t have to. But will you like it if I just go away ‘n’ shoot tigers in Africa?”

“There are no tigers in Africa, dear,” said Mother gently.

“Lions, then!” shouted Jem. They were determined to put him in the wrong, were they? They were bound to laugh at him, were they? He’d show them! “You can’t say there’s no lions in Africa. There’s millions of lions in Africa. Africa’s just full of lions!”

Mother and Father only smiled again, much to Aunt Mary Maria’s disapproval. Impatience in children should never be condoned.

“Meanwhile,” said Susan, torn between her love for and sympathy with Little Jem and her conviction that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were perfectly right in refusing to let him go away down to the Harbour Mouth with that village gang to that disreputable, drunken old Captain Bill Taylor’s place, “here is your gingerbread and whipped cream, Jem dear.”

Gingerbread and whipped cream was Jem’s favourite dessert. But tonight it had no charm to soothe his stormy soul.

“I don’t want any!” he said sulkily. He got up and marched away from the table, turning at the door to hurl a final defiance.

“I ain’t going to bed till nine o’clock, anyhow. And when I’m grown up I’m never going to bed. I’m going to stay up all night ... every night ... and get tattooed all over. I’m just going to be as bad as bad can be. You’ll see.”

“‘I’m not’ would be so much better than ‘ain’t,’ dear,” said Mother.

Could nothing make them feel?

“I suppose nobody wants my opinion, Annie, but if I had talked to my parents like that when I was a child I would have been whipped within an inch of my life,” said Aunt Mary Maria. “I think it is a great pity the birch rod is so neglected now in some homes.”

“Little Jem is not to blame,” snapped Susan, seeing that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were not going to say anything. But if Mary Maria Blythe was going to get away with that, she, Susan would know the reason why. “Bertie Shakespeare Drew put him up to it, filling him up with what fun it would be to see Joe Drew tatooed. He was here all the afternoon and sneaked into the kitchen and took the best aluminum saucepan to use as a helmet. Said they were playing soldiers. Then they made boats out of shingles and got soaked to the bone sailing them in the Hollow brook. And after that they went hopping about the yard for a solid hour, making the weirdest noises, pretending they were frogs. Frogs! No wonder Little Jem is tired out and not himself. He is the best-behaved child that ever lived when he is not worn to a frazzle, and that you may tie to.”

Aunt Mary Maria said nothing aggravatingly. She never talked to Susan Baker at meal-times, thus expressing her disapproval over Susan being allowed to “sit with the family” at all.

Anne and Susan had thrashed that out before Aunt Mary Maria had come. Susan, who “knew her place,” never sat or expected to sit with the family when there was company at Ingleside.

“But Aunt Mary Maria isn’t company,” said Anne. “She’s just one of the family ... and so are you, Susan.”

In the end Susan gave in, not without a secret satisfaction that Mary Maria Blythe would see that she was no common hired girl. Susan had never met Aunt Mary Maria, but a niece of Susan’s, the daughter of her sister Matilda, had worked for her in Charlottetown and had told Susan all about her.

“I am not going to pretend to you, Susan, that I’m overjoyed at the prospect of a visit from Aunt Mary Maria, especially just now,” said Anne frankly. “But she has written Gilbert asking if she may come for a few weeks ... and you know how the doctor is about such things... .”

“As he has a perfect right to be,” said Susan staunchly. “What is a man to do but stand by his own flesh and blood? But as for a few weeks ... well, Mrs. Dr. dear, I do not want to look on the dark side of things ... but my sister Matilda’s sister-in-law came to visit her for a few weeks and stayed for twenty years.”

“I don’t think we need dread anything like that, Susan,” smiled Anne. “Aunt Mary Maria has a very nice home of her own in Charlottetown. But she is finding it very big and lonely. Her mother died two years ago, you know ... she was eighty-five and Aunt Mary Maria was very good to her and misses her very much. Let’s make her visit as pleasant as we can, Susan.”

“I will do what in me lies, Mrs. Dr. dear. Of course we must put another board in the table, but after all is said and done it is better to be lengthening the table than shortening it down.”

“We mustn’t have flowers on the table, Susan, because I understand they give her asthma. And pepper makes her sneeze, so we’d better not have it. She is subject to frequent bad headaches, too, so we must really try not to be noisy.”

“Good grief! Well, I have never noticed you and the doctor making much noise. And if I want to yell I can go to the middle of the maple bush; but if

our poor children have to keep quiet all the time because of Mary Maria Blythe's headaches ... you will excuse me for saying I think it is going a little too far, Mrs. Dr. dear."

"It's just for a few weeks, Susan."

"Let us hope so. Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, we just have to take the lean streaks with the fat in this world," was Susan's final word.

So Aunt Mary Maria came, demanding immediately upon her arrival if they had had the chimneys cleaned recently. She had, it appeared, a great dread of fire. "And I've always said that the chimneys of this house aren't nearly tall enough. I hope my bed has been well aired, Annie. Damp bed linen is terrible."

She took possession of the Ingleside guestroom ... and incidentally of all the other rooms in the house except Susan's. Nobody hailed her arrival with frantic delight. Jem, after one look at her, slipped out to the kitchen and whispered to Susan, "Can we laugh while she's here, Susan?" Walter's eyes brimmed with tears at sight of her and he had to be hustled ignominiously out of the room. The twins did not wait to be hustled but ran of their own accord. Even the Shrimp, Susan averred went and had a fit in the back yard. Only Shirley stood his ground, gazing fearlessly at her out of his round brown eyes from the safe anchorage of Susan's lap and arm. Aunt Mary Maria thought the Ingleside children had very bad manners. But what could you expect when they had a mother who "wrote for the papers" and a father who thought they were perfection just because they were his children, and a hired girl like Susan Baker who never knew her place? But she, Mary Maria Blythe, would do her best for poor Cousin John's grandchildren as long as she was at Ingleside.

"Your grace is much too short, Gilbert," she said disapprovingly at her first meal. "Would you like me to say grace for you while I am here? It will be a better example to your family."

Much to Susan's horror Gilbert said he would and Aunt Mary Maria said grace at supper. "More like a prayer than a grace," Susan sniffed over her dishes. Susan privately agreed with her niece's description of Mary Maria

Blythe. “She always seems to be smelling a bad smell, Aunt Susan. Not an unpleasant odour ... just a bad smell.” Gladys had a way of putting things, Susan reflected. And yet, to anyone less prejudiced than Susan Miss Mary Maria Blythe was not ill-looking for a lady of fifty-five. She had what she believed were “aristocratic features,” framed by always sleek grey crimps which seemed to insult daily Susan’s spiky little knob of grey hair. She dressed very nicely, wore long jet earrings in her ears and fashionably high-boned net collars on her lean throat.

“At least, we do not need to be ashamed of her appearance,” reflected Susan. But what Aunt Mary Maria would have thought if she had known Susan was consoling herself on such grounds must be left to the imagination.

Chapter 5

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Anne was cutting a vaseful of June lilies for her room and another of Susan's peonies for Gilbert's desk in the library ... the milky-white peonies with the blood-red flecks at their hearts, like a god's kiss. The air was coming alive after the unusually hot June day and one could hardly tell whether the harbour were silver or gold.

"There's going to be a wonderful sunset tonight, Susan," she said, looking in at the kitchen window as she passed it.

"I cannot admire the sunset until I have got my dishes washed, Mrs. Dr. dear," protested Susan.

"It will be gone by that time, Susan. Look at that enormous white cloud towering up over the Hollow, with its rosy-pink top. Wouldn't you like to fly up and light on it?"

Susan had a vision of herself flying up over the glen, dishcloth in hand, to that cloud. It did not appeal to her. But allowances must be made for Mrs. Dr. just now.

"There's a new, vicious kind of bug eating the rosebushes," went on Anne. "I must spray them tomorrow. I'd like to do it tonight ... this is just the kind of evening I love to work in the garden. Things are growing tonight. I hope there'll be gardens in heaven, Susan ... gardens we can work in, I mean, and help things to grow."

"But not bugs surely," protested Susan.

"No-o-o, I suppose not. But a completed garden wouldn't really be any fun, Susan. You have to work in a garden yourself or you miss its meaning. I want to weed and dig and transplant and change and plan and prune. And

I want the flowers I love in heaven ... I'd rather my own pansies than the asphodel, Susan."

"Why cannot you put in the evening as you want to?" broke in Susan, who thought Mrs. Dr. was really going a little wild.

"Because the doctor wants me to go for a drive with him. He is going to see poor old Mrs. John Paxton. She is dying ... he can't do her any good ... he has done everything he can ... but she does like to have him drop in."

"Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, we all know that nobody can die or be born without him hereabouts and it is a nice evening for a drive. I think I will take a walk down to the village myself and replenish our pantry after I put the twins and Shirley to bed and manure Mrs. Aaron Ward. She isn't blooming as she ought to. Miss Blythe has just gone upstairs, sighing at every step, saying one of her headaches is coming on, so there will be a little peace and quiet for the evening at least."

"See that Jem goes to bed in good time, will you, Susan?" said Anne as she went away through the evening that was like a cup of fragrance that has spilled over. "He's really much tireder than he thinks he is. And he never wants to go to bed. Walter is not coming home tonight, Leslie asked if he might stay there."

Jem was sitting on the steps of the side door, one bare foot hooked over his knee, scowling viciously at things in general and at an enormous moon behind the Glen church spire in particular. Jem didn't like such big moons.

"Take care your face doesn't freeze like that," Aunt Mary Maria had said as she passed him on her way into the house.

Jem scowled more blackly than ever. He didn't care if his face did freeze like that. He hoped it would. "Go 'way and don't come tagging after me all the time," he told Nan, who had crept out to him after Father and Mother had driven away.

"Crosspatch!" said Nan. But before she trotted off she laid down on the step beside him the red candy lion she had brought out to him.

Jem ignored it. He felt more abused than ever. He wasn't being used right. Everybody picked on him. Hadn't Nan that very morning said, "You weren't born at Ingleside like the rest of us." Di had et his chocolate rabbit that forenoon though she knew it was his rabbit. Even Walter had deserted him, going away to dig wells in the sand with Ken and Persis Ford. Great fun that! And he wanted so much to go with Bertie to see the tattooing. Jem was sure he had never wanted anything so much in his life before. He wanted to see the wonderful, full-rigged ship that Bertie said was always on Captain Bill's mantelpiece. It was a mean shame, that's what it was.

Susan brought him out a big slice of cake covered with maple frosting and nuts, but, "No, thank you," said Jem stonily. Why hadn't she saved some of the gingerbread and cream for him? S'pose the rest of them had et it all. Pigs! He plunged into a deeper gulf of gloom. The gang would be on their way to the Harbour Mouth by now. He just couldn't bear the thought. He'd got to do something to get square with folks. S'posin' he sliced Di's sawdust giraffe open on the livingroom rug? That would make old Susan mad ... Susan with her nuts, when she knew he hated nuts in frosting. S'posin' he went and drew a moustache on that picture of the cherub on the calendar in her room? He had always hated that fat, pink, smiling cherub because it looked just like Sissy Flagg who had told round school that Jem Blythe was her beau. Hers! Sissy Flagg! But Susan thought that cherub lovely.

S'posin' he scalped Nan's doll? S'posin' he whacked the nose off Gog or Magog ... or both of them? Maybe that would make Mother see he wasn't a baby any longer. Just wait till next spring! He had brought her mayflowers for years and years and years ... ever since he was four ... but he wouldn't do it next spring. No, sir!

S'posin' he et a lot of the little green apples on the early tree and got nice and sick? Maybe that would scare them. S'posin' he never washed behind his ears again? S'posin' he made faces at everybody in church next Sunday? S'posin' he put a caterpillar on Aunt Mary Maria ... a big, striped, woolly caterpillar? S'posin' he ran away to the harbour and hid in Captain David Reese's ship and sailed out of the harbour in the morning on his way to South America? Would they be sorry then? S'posin' he never

came back? S'posin' he went hunting jagers in Brazil? Would they be sorry then? No, he bet they wouldn't. Nobody loved him. There was a hole in his pants pocket. Nobody had mended it. Well, he didn't care. He'd just show that hole to everybody in the Glen and let people see how neglected he was. His wrongs surged up and overwhelmed him.

Tick-tack ... tick-tack ... tick-tack ... went the old grandfather clock in the hall that had been brought to Ingleside after Grandfather Blythe's death ... a deliberate old clock dating from the days when there was such a thing as time. Generally Jem loved it ... now he hated it. It seemed to be laughing at him. "Ha, ha, bedtime is coming. The other fellows can go to the Harbour Mouth but you go to bed. Ha, ha ... ha, ha ... ha, ha!"

Why did he have to go to bed every night? Yes, why?

Susan came out on her way to the Glen and looked tenderly at the small, rebellious figure.

"You needn't go to bed till I get back, Little Jem," she said indulgently.

"I ain't going to bed tonight!" said Jem fiercely. "I'm going to run away, that's what I'm going to do, old Susan Baker. I'm going to go and jump into the pond, old Susan Baker."

Susan did not enjoy being called old, even by Little Jem. She stalked away in a grim silence. He did need a bit of disciplining. The Shrimp, who had followed her out, feeling a yearning for companionship, squatted down on his black haunches before Jem, but got only a glare for his pains. "Clear out! Sitting there on your bottom, staring like Aunt Mary Maria! Scat! Oh, you won't, won't you! Then take that!"

Jem shied Shirley's little tin wheelbarrow that was lying handily near, and the Shrimp fled with a plaintive yowl to the sanctuary of the sweetbriar hedge. Look at that! Even the family cat hated him! What was the use of going on living?

He picked up the candy lion. Nan had eaten the tail and most of the hindquarters but it was still quite a lion. Might as well eat it. It might be

the last lion he'd ever eat. By the time Jem had finished the lion and licked his fingers he had made up his mind what he was going to do. It was the only thing a fellow could do when a fellow wasn't allowed to do anything.

Chapter 6

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“Why in the world is the house lighted up like that?” exclaimed Anne, when she and Gilbert turned in at the gate at eleven o’clock. “Company must have come.”

But there was no company visible when Anne hurried into the house. Nor was anyone else visible. There was a light in the kitchen ... in the livingroom ... in the library ... in the dining-room ... in Susan’s room and the upstairs hall ... but no sign of an occupant.

“What do you suppose,” began Anne ... but she was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. Gilbert answered ... listened for a moment, ... uttered an ejaculation of horror ... and tore out without even a glance at Anne. Evidently something dreadful had happened and there was no time to be wasted in explanations.

Anne was used to this ... as the wife of a man who waits on life and death must be. With a philosophical shrug she removed her hat and coat. She felt a trifle annoyed with Susan, who really shouldn’t have gone out and left all the lights blazing and all the doors wide open.

“Mrs... . Dr... . dear,” said a voice that could not possibly be Susan’s ... but was.

Anne stared at Susan. Such as Susan ... hatless ... her grey hair full of bits of hay ... her print dress shockingly stained and discoloured. And her face!

“Susan! What has happened? Susan!”

“Little Jem has disappeared.”

“Disappeared!” Anne stared stupidly. “What do you mean? He can’t have disappeared!”

“He has,” gasped Susan, wringing her hands. “He was on the side steps when I went to the Glen. I was back before dark ... and he was not there. At first ... I was not scared ... but I could not find him anywhere. I have searched every room in the house ... he said he was going to run away ...”

“Nonsense! He wouldn’t do that, Susan. You have worked yourself up unnecessarily. He must be somewhere about ... he has fallen asleep ... he must be somewhere around.”

“I have looked everywhere ... everywhere. I have combed the grounds and the outhouses. Look at my dress ... I remembered he always said it would be such fun to sleep in the hayloft. So I went there ... and fell through that hole in the corner into one of the mangers in the stable ... and lit on a nest of eggs. It is a mercy I did not break a leg ... if anything can be a mercy when Little Jem is lost.”

Annie still refused to feel perturbed.

“Do you think he could have gone to the Harbour Mouth with the boys, after all, Susan? He has never disobeyed a command before, but ...”

“No, he did not, Mrs. Dr. dear ... the blessed lamb did not disobey. I rushed down to Drews’ after I had searched everywhere and Bertie Shakespeare had just got home. He said Jem had not gone with them. The pit seemed to drop out of my stomach. You had trusted him to me and ... I phoned Paxtons’ and they said you had been there and gone they did not know where.”

“We drove to Lowbridge to call on the Parkers... .”

“I phoned everywhere I thought you could be. Then I went back to the village ... the men have started out to search ...”

“Oh, Susan, was that necessary?”

“Mrs. Dr. dear, I had looked everywhere ... everywhere that child could be. Oh, what I have gone through this night! And he said he was going to jump into the pond... .”

In spite of herself a queer little shiver ran over Anne. Of course Jem wouldn't jump into the pond ... that was nonsense ... but there was an old dory on it which Carter Flagg used for trouting and Jem might, in his defiant mood of the earlier evening, have tried to row about the pond in it ... he had often wanted to ... he might even have fallen into the pond trying to untie the dory. All at once her fear took terrible shape.

"And I haven't the slightest idea where Gilbert has gone," she thought wildly.

"What's all this fuss about?" demanded Aunt Mary Maria, suddenly appearing on the stairs, her head surrounded by a halo of crimpers and her body encased in a dragon-embroidered dressing-gown. "Can't a body ever get a quiet night's sleep in this house?"

"Little Jem has disappeared," said Susan again, too much in the grip of terror to resent Miss Blythe's tone. "His mother trusted me ..."

Anne had gone to search the house for herself. Jem must be somewhere! He was not in his room ... the bed was undisturbed... . He was not in the twins' room ... in hers... . He was ... he was nowhere in the house. Anne, after a pilgrimage from garret to cellar, returned to the livingroom in a condition that was suddenly akin to panic.

"I don't want to make you nervous, Annie," said Aunt Mary Marie, lowering her voice creepily, "but have you looked in the rainwater hogshead? Little Jack MacGregor was drowned in a rainwater hogshead in town last year."

"I ... I looked there," said Susan, with another wring of her hands. "I ... I took a stick ... and poked ..."

Anne's heart, which had stood still at Aunt Mary Maria's question, resumed operations. Susan gathered herself together and stopped wringing her hands. She had remembered too late that Mrs. Dr. dear should not be upset.

“Let us calm down and pull together,” she said in a trembling voice. “As you say, Mrs. Dr. dear, he must be somewhere about. He cannot have dissolved into thin air.”

“Have you looked in the coal-bin? And the clock?” asked Aunt Mary Maria.

Susan had looked in the coal-bin but nobody had thought of the clock. It was quite big enough for a small boy to hide in. Anne, not considering the absurdity of supposing that Jem would crouch there for four hours, rushed to it. But Jem was not in the clock.

“I had a feeling something was going to happen when I went to bed tonight,” said Aunt Mary Maria, pressing both hands to her temples. “When I read my nightly chapter in the Bible the words, ‘Ye know not what a day may bring forth,’ seemed to stand out from the page as it were. It was a sign. You’d better nerve yourself to bear the worst, Annie. He may have wandered into the marsh. It’s a pity we haven’t a few bloodhounds.”

With a dreadful effort Anne managed a laugh.

“I’m afraid there aren’t any on the Island, Aunty. If we had Gilbert’s old setter Rex, who got poisoned, he would soon find Jem. I feel sure we are all alarming ourselves for nothing ...”

“Tommy Spencer in Carmody disappeared mysteriously forty years ago and was never found ... or was he? Well, if he was, it was only his skeleton. This is no laughing matter, Annie. I don’t know how you can take it so calmly.”

The telephone rang. Anne and Susan looked at each other.

“I can’t ... I can’t go to the phone, Susan,” said Anne in a whisper.

“I cannot either,” said Susan flatly. She was to hate herself all her days for showing such weakness before Mary Maria Blythe, but she could not help it. Two hours of terrified searching and distorted imaginations had made Susan a wreck.

Aunt Mary Maria stalked to the telephone and took down the receiver, her crimpers making a horned silhouette on the wall which, Susan reflected, in spite of her anguish, looked like the old Nick himself.

“Carter Flagg says they have searched everywhere but found no sign of him yet,” reported Aunt Mary Maria coolly. “But he says the dory is out in the middle of the pond with no one in it as far as they can ascertain. They are going to drag the pond.”

Susan caught Anne just in time.

“No ... no ... I’m not going to faint, Susan,” said Anne through white lips. “Help me to a chair ... thanks. We must find Gilbert ...”

“If James is drowned, Annie, you must remind yourself that he has been spared a lot of trouble in this wretched world,” said Aunt Mary Marie by way of administering further consolation.

“I’m going to get the lantern and search the grounds again,” said Anne, as soon as she could stand up. “Yes, I know you did, Susan ... but let me ... let me. I cannot sit still and wait.”

“You must put on a sweater then, Mrs. Dr. dear. There is a heavy dew and the air is damp. I will get your red one ... it is hanging on a chair in the boys’ room. Wait you here till I bring it.”

Susan hurried upstairs. A few moments later something that could only be described as a shriek echoed through Ingleside. Anne and Aunt Mary Maria rushed upstairs, where they found Susan laughing and crying in the hall, nearer to hysterics than Susan Baker had ever been in her life or ever would be again.

“Mrs. Dr. dear ... he’s there! Little Jem is there ... asleep on the window-seat behind the door. I never looked there ... the door hid it ... and when he wasn’t in his bed ...”

Anne, weak with relief and joy, got herself into the room and dropped on her knees by the window-seat. In a little while she and Susan would be

laughing over their own foolishness, but now there could be only tears of thankfulness. Little Jem was sound asleep on the window-seat, with an afghan pulled over him, his battered Teddy Bear in his little sunburned hands, and a forgiving Shrimp stretched across his legs. His red curls fell over the cushion. He seemed to be having a pleasant dream and Anne did not mean to waken him. But suddenly he opened his eyes that were like hazel stars and looked at her.

“Jem, darling, why aren’t you in your bed? We’ve ... we’ve been a little alarmed ... we couldn’t find you ... and we never thought of looking here ...”

“I wanted to lie here ‘cause I could see you and Daddy drive in at the gate when you got home. It was so lonesome I just had to go to bed.”

Mother was lifting him in her arms ... carrying him to his own bed. It was so nice to be kissed ... to feel her tucking the sheets about him with those caressing little pats that gave him such a sense of being loved. Who cared about seeing an old snake tattooed, anyhow? Mother was so nice ... the nicest mother anybody ever had. Everybody in the Glen called Bertie Shakespeare’s mother “Mrs. Second Skimmings” because she was so mean, and he knew ... for he’d seen it ... that she slapped Bertie’s face for every little thing.

“Mummy,” he said sleepily, “of course I’ll bring you mayflowers next spring ... every spring. You can depend on me.”

“Of course I can, darling,” said Mother.

“Well, since everyone is over their fit of the fidgets, I suppose we can draw a peaceful breath and go back to our beds,” said Aunt Mary Maria. But there was some shrewish relief in her tone.

“It was very silly of me not to remember the window-seat,” said Anne. “The joke is on us and the doctor will not let us forget it, you may be certain. Susan, please phone Mr. Flagg that we’ve found Jem.”

“And a nice laugh he will have on me,” said Susan happily. “Not that I care ... he can laugh all he likes since Little Jem is safe.”

“I could do with a cup of tea,” sighed Aunt Mary Maria plaintively, gathering her dragons about her spare form.

“I will get it in a jiffy,” said Susan briskly. “We will all feel the sprightlier for one. Mrs. Dr. dear, when Carter Flagg heard Little Jem was safe he said, ‘Thank God.’ I shall never say a word against that man again, no matter what his prices are. And don’t you think we might have a chicken dinner tomorrow, Mrs. Dr. dear? Just by way of a little celebration, so to speak. And Little Jem shall have his favourite muffins for breakfast.”

There was another telephone call ... this time from Gilbert to say that he was taking a badly burned baby from the Harbour Head to the hospital in town and not to look for him till morning.

Anne bent from her window for a thankful goodnight look at the world before going to bed. A cool wind was blowing in from the sea. A sort of moonlit rapture was running through the trees in the Hollow. Anne could even laugh ... with a quiver behind the laughter ... over their panic of an hour ago and Aunt Mary Maria’s absurd suggestions and ghoulish memories. Her child was safe ... Gilbert was somewhere battling to save another child’s life... . Dear God, help him and help the mother ... help all mothers everywhere. We need so much help, with the little sensitive, loving hearts and minds that look to us for guidance and love and understanding.

The friendly enfolding night took possession of Ingleside, and everybody, even Susan ... who rather felt that she would like to crawl into some nice quiet hole and pull it in after her ... fell on sleep under its sheltering roof.

Chapter 7

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“He’ll have plenty of company ... he won’t be lonesome ... our four ... and my niece and nephew from Montreal are visiting us. What one doesn’t think of the others do.”

Big, sonsy, jolly Mrs. Dr. Parker smiled expansively at Walter ... who returned the smile somewhat aloofly. He wasn’t altogether sure he liked Mrs. Parker in spite of her smiles and jollity. There was too much of her, somehow. Dr. Parker he did like. As for “our four” and the niece and nephew from Montreal, Walter had never seen any of them. Lowbridge, where the Parkers lived, was six miles from the Glen and Walter had never been there, though Dr. and Mrs. Parker and Dr. and Mrs. Blythe visited back and forth frequently. Dr. Parker and Dad were great friends, though Walter had a feeling now and again that Mother could have got along very well without Mrs. Parker. Even at six, Walter, as Anne realized, could see things that other children could not.

Walter was not sure, either, that he really wanted to go to Lowbridge. Some visits were splendid. A trip to Avonlea now ... ah, there was fun for you! And a night spent with Kenneth Ford at the old House of Dreams was more fun still ... though that couldn’t really be called visiting, for the House of Dreams always seemed like a second home to the small fry of Ingleside. But to go to Lowbridge for two whole weeks, among strangers, was a very different matter. However, it seemed to be a settled thing. For some reason, which Walter felt but could not understand, Dad and Mummy were pleased over the arrangement. Did they want to get rid of all their children, Walter wondered, rather sadly and uneasily. Jem was away, having been taken to Avonlea two days ago, and he had heard Susan making mysterious remarks about “sending the twins to Mrs. Marshall Elliott when the time came.” What time? Aunt Mary Maria seemed very gloomy over something and had been known to say that she “wished it was

all well over.” What was it she wished over? Walter had no idea. But there was something strange in the air at Ingleside.

“I’ll take him over tomorrow,” said Gilbert.

“The youngsters will be looking forward to it,” said Mrs. Parker.

“It’s very kind of you, I’m sure,” said Anne.

“It’s all for the best, no doubt,” Susan told the Shrimp darkly in the kitchen.

“It is very obliging of Mrs. Parker to take Walter off our hands, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria, when the Parkers had gone. “She told me she had taken quite a fancy to him. People do take such odd fancies, don’t they? Well, perhaps now for at least two weeks I’ll be able to go into the bathroom without tramping on a dead fish.”

“A dead fish, Aunty! You don’t mean ...”

“I mean exactly what I say, Annie. I always do. A dead fish! Did you ever step on a dead fish with your bare feet?”

“No-o ... but how ...”

“Walter caught a trout last night and put it in the bathtub to keep it alive, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan airily. “If it had stayed there it would have been all right, but somehow it got out and died in the night. Of course, if people will go about on bare feet ...”

“I make it a rule never to quarrel with anyone,” said Aunt Mary Maria, getting up and leaving the room.

“I am determined she shall not vex me, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan.

“Oh, Susan, she is getting on my nerves a bit ... but of course I won’t mind so much when all this is over ... and it must be nasty to tramp on a dead fish ...”

“Isn’t a dead fish better than a live one, Mummy? A dead fish wouldn’t squirm,” said Di.

Since the truth must be told at all costs it must be admitted that the mistress and maid of Ingleside both giggled.

So that was that. But Anne wondered to Gilbert that night if Walter would be quite happy at Lowbridge.

“He’s so very sensitive and imaginative,” she said wistfully.

“Too much so,” said Gilbert, who was tired after having had, to quote Susan, three babies that day. “Why, Anne, I believe that child is afraid to go upstairs in the dark. It will do him worlds of good to give and take with the Parker fry for a few days. He’ll come home a different child.”

Anne said nothing more. No doubt Gilbert was quite right. Walter was lonesome without Jem; and in view of what had happened when Shirley was born it would be just as well for Susan to have as little on her hands as possible beyond running the house and enduring Aunt Mary Maria ... whose two weeks had already stretched to four.

Walter was lying awake in his bed trying to escape from the haunting thought that he was to go away next day by giving free rein to fancy. Walter had a very vivid imagination. It was to him a great white charger, like the one in the picture on the wall, on which he could gallop backward or forward in time and space. The Night was coming down ... Night, like a tall, dark, bat-winged angel who lived in Mr. Andrew Taylor’s woods on the south hill. Sometimes Walter welcomed her ... sometimes he pictured her so vividly that he grew afraid of her. Walter dramatized and personified everything in his small world ... the Wind who told him stories at night ... the Frost that nipped the flowers in the garden ... the Dew that fell so silverly and silently ... the Moon which he felt sure he could catch if he could only go to the top of that faraway purple hill ... the Mist that came in from the sea ... the great Sea itself that was always changing and never changed ... the dark, mysterious Tide. They were all entities to Walter. Ingleside and the Hollow and the maple grove and the Marsh and the harbour shore were full of elves and kelpies and dryads and

mermaids and goblins. The black plaster-of-Paris cat on the library mantelpiece was a fairy witch. It came alive at night and prowled about the house, grown to enormous size. Walter ducked his head under the bedclothes and shivered. He was always scaring himself with his own fancies.

Perhaps Aunt Mary Maria was right when she said he was “far too nervous and highstrung,” though Susan would never forgive her for it. Perhaps Aunt Kitty MacGregor of the Upper Glen, who was reported to have “the second sight,” was right when, having once taken a deep look into Walter’s long-lashed, smoky grey eyes, she said he “did be having an old soul in a young body.” It might be that the old soul knew too much for the young brain to understand always.

Walter was told in the morning that Dad would take him to Lowbridge after dinner. He said nothing, but during dinner a choky sensation came over him and he dropped his eyes quickly to hide a sudden mist of tears. Not quickly enough, however.

“You’re not going to cry, Walter?” said Aunt Mary Maria, as if a six-year-old mite would be disgraced forever if he cried. “If there’s anything I do despise it’s a crybaby. And you haven’t eaten your meat.”

“All but the fat,” said Walter, blinking valiantly but not yet daring to look up. “I don’t like fat.”

“When I was a child,” said Aunt Mary Maria, “I was not allowed to have likes and dislikes. Well, Mrs. Dr. Parker will probably cure you of some of your notions. She was a Winter, I think ... or was she a Clark? ... no, she must have been a Campbell. But the Winters and the Campbells are all tarred with the same brush and they don’t put up with any nonsense.”

“Oh, please, Aunt Mary Maria, don’t frighten Walter about his visit to Lowbridge,” said Anne, a little spark kindling far down in her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria with great humility. “I should of course have remembered that I have no right to try to teach your children anything.”

“Drat her hide,” muttered Susan as she went out for the dessert ... Walter’s favourite Queen pudding.

Anne felt miserably guilty. Gilbert had shot her a slightly reproachful glance as if to imply she might have been more patient with a poor lonely old lady.

Gilbert himself was feeling a bit seedy. The truth, as everyone knew, was that he had been terribly overworked all summer; and perhaps Aunt Mary Maria was more of a strain than he would admit. Anne made up her mind that in the fall, if all was well, she would pack him off willy-nilly for a month’s snipe-shooting in Nova Scotia.

“How is your tea?” she asked Aunt Mary Maria repentantly.

Aunt Mary Maria pursed her lips.

“Too weak. But it doesn’t matter. Who cares whether a poor old woman gets her tea to her liking or not? Some folks, however, think I’m real good company.”

Whatever the connexion between Aunt Mary Maria’s two sentences was, Anne felt she was beyond ferreting it out just then. She had turned very pale.

“I think I’ll go upstairs and lie down,” she said, a trifle faintly, as she rose from the table. “And I think, Gilbert ... perhaps you’d better not stay long in Lowbridge ... and suppose you give Miss Carson a ring.”

She kissed Walter goodbye rather casually and hurriedly ... very much as if she were not thinking about him at all. Walter would not cry. Aunt Mary Maria kissed him on the forehead ... Walter hated to be moistly kissed on the forehead ... and said:

“Mind your table manners at Lowbridge, Walter. Mind you ain’t greedy. If you are, a Big Black Man will come along with a big black bag to pop naughty children into.”

It was perhaps as well that Gilbert had gone out to harness Grey Tom and did not hear this. He and Anne had always made a point of never frightening their children with such ideas or allowing anyone else to do it. Susan did hear it as she cleared the table and Aunt Mary Maria never knew what a narrow escape she had of having the gravy boat and its contents flung at her head.

Chapter 8

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Generally Walter enjoyed a drive with Dad. He loved beauty, and the roads around Glen St. Mary were beautiful. The road to Lowbridge was a double ribbon of dancing buttercups, with here and there the ferny green rim of an inviting grove. But today Dad didn't seem to want to talk much and he drove Grey Tom as Walter never remembered seeing him driven before. When they reached Lowbridge he said a few hurried words aside to Mrs. Parker and rushed out without bidding Walter goodbye. Walter had again hard work to keep from crying. It was only too plain that nobody loved him. Mother and Father used to, but they didn't any longer.

The big, untidy Parker house at Lowbridge did not seem friendly to Walter. But perhaps no house would have seemed that just then. Mrs. Parker took him out to the back yard, where shrieks of noisy mirth were resounding, and introduced him to the children who seemed to fill it. Then she promptly went back to her sewing, leaving them to "get acquainted by themselves" ... a proceeding that worked very well in nine cases out of ten. Perhaps she could not be blamed for failing to see that little Walter Blythe was the tenth. She liked him ... her own children were jolly little tads ... Fred and Opal were inclined to put on Montreal airs, but she felt quite sure they wouldn't be unkind to anyone. Everything would go swimmingly. She was so glad she could help "poor Anne Blythe" out, even if it was only by taking one of her children off her hands. Mrs. Parker hoped "all would go well." Anne's friends were a good deal more worried over her than she was over herself, reminding each other of Shirley's birth.

A sudden hush had fallen over the back yard ... a yard which ran off into a big, bowery apple orchard. Walter stood looking gravely and shyly at the Parker children and their Johnson cousins from Montreal. Bill Parker was ten ... a ruddy, round-faced urchin who "took after" his mother and seemed very old and big in Walter's eyes. Andy Parker was nine and Lowbridge children could have told you that he was "the nasty Parker one"

and was nicknamed “Pig” for reasons good. Walter did not like his looks from the first ... his short-cropped fair bristles, his impish freckled face, his bulging blue eyes. Fred Johnson was Bill’s age and Walter didn’t like him either, though he was a goodlooking chap with tawny curls and black eyes. His nine-year-old sister, Opal, had curls and black eyes, too ... snapping black eyes. She stood with her arm about tow-headed, eight-year-old Cora Parker and they both looked Walter over condescendingly. If it had not been for Alice Parker Walter might very conceivably have turned and fled.

Alice was seven; Alice had the loveliest little ripples of golden curls all over her head; Alice had eyes as blue and soft as the violets in the Hollow; Alice had pink, dimpled cheeks; Alice wore a little frilled yellow dress in which she looked like a dancing buttercup; Alice smiled at him as if she had known him all her life; Alice was a friend.

Fred opened the conversation.

“Hello, sonny,” he said condescendingly.

Walter felt the condescension at once and retreated into himself.

“My name is Walter,” he said distinctly.

Fred turned to the others with a well-done air of amazement. He’d show this country lad!

“He says his name is Walter,” he told Bill with a comical twist of his mouth.

“He says his name is Walter,” Bill told Opal in turn.

“He says his name is Walter,” Opal told the delighted Andy.

“He says his name is Walter,” Andy told Cora.

“He says his name is Walter,” Cora giggled to Alice.

Alice said nothing. She just looked admiringly at Walter and her look enabled him to bear up when all the rest chanted together, "He says his name is Walter," and then burst into shrieks of derisive laughter.

"What fun the dear little folks are having!" thought Mrs. Parker complacently over her shining.

"I heard Mom say you believed in fairies," Andy said, leering impudently.

Walter gazed levelly at him. He was not going to be downed before Alice.

"There are fairies," he said stoutly.

"There ain't," said Andy.

"There are," said Walter.

"He says there are fairies," Andy told Fred.

"He says there are fairies," Fred told Bill ... and they went through the whole performance again.

It was torture to Walter, who had never been made fun of before and couldn't take it. He bit his lips to keep the tears back. He must not cry before Alice.

"How would you like to be pinched black and blue?" demanded Andy, who had made up his mind that Walter was a sissy and that it would be good fun to tease him.

"Pig, hush!" ordered Alice terribly ... very terribly, although very quietly and sweetly and gently. There was something in her tone that even Andy dared not flout.

"Course I didn't mean it," he muttered shamefacedly.

The wind veered a bit in Walter's favour and they had a fairly amiable game of tag in the orchard. But when they trouped noisily in to supper Walter was again overwhelmed with homesickness. It was so terrible that

for one awful moment he was afraid he was going to cry before them all ... even Alice, who, however, gave his arm such a friendly little nudge as they sat down that it helped him. But he could not eat anything ... he simply could not. Mrs. Parker, for whose methods there was certainly something to be said, did not worry him about it, comfortably concluding that his appetite would be better in the morning, and the others were too much occupied in eating and talking to take much notice of him.

Walter wondered why the whole family shouted so at each other, ignorant of the fact that they had not yet had time to get out of the habit since the recent death of a very deaf and sensitive old grandmother. The noise made his head ache. Oh, at home now they would be eating supper, too. Mother would be smiling from the head of the table, Father would be joking with the twins, Susan would be pouring cream into Shirley's mug of milk, Nan would be sneaking tidbits to the Shrimp. Even Aunt Mary Maria, as part of the home circle, seemed suddenly invested with a soft, tender radiance. Who would have rung the Chinese gong for supper? It was his week to do it and Jem was away. If he could only find a place to cry in! But there seemed to be no place where you could indulge in tears at Lowbridge. Besides ... there was Alice. Walter gulped down a whole glassful of ice-water and found that it helped.

"Our cat takes fits," Andy said suddenly, kicking him under the table.

"So does ours," said Walter. The Shrimp had had two fits. And he wasn't going to have the Lowbridge cats rated higher than the Ingleside cats.

"I'll bet our cat takes fittier fits than yours," taunted Andy.

"I'll bet she doesn't," retorted Walter.

"Now, now, don't let's have any arguments over your cats," said Mrs. Parker, who wanted a quiet evening to write her Institute paper on "Misunderstood Children." "Run out and play. It won't be long before your bedtime."

Bedtime! Walter suddenly realized that he had to stay here all night ... many nights ... two weeks of nights. It was dreadful. He went out to the

orchard with clenched fists, to find Bill and Andy in a furious clinch on the grass, kicking, clawing, yelling.

“You give me the wormy apple, Bill Parker!” Andy was howling. “I’ll teach you to give me wormy apples! I’ll bite off your ears!”

Fights of this sort were an everyday occurrence with the Parkers. Mrs. Parker held that it didn’t hurt boys to fight. She said they got a lot of devilment out of their systems that way and were as good friends as ever afterwards. But Walter had never seen anyone fighting before and was aghast.

Fred was cheering them on, Opal and Cora were laughing, but there were tears in Alice’s eyes. Walter could not endure that. He hurled himself between the combatants, who had drawn apart for a moment to snatch breath before joining battle again.

“You stop fighting,” said Walter. “You’re scaring Alice.”

Bill and Andy stared at him in amazement for a moment, until the funny side of this baby interfering in their fight struck them. Both burst into laughter and Bill slapped him on the back.

“It’s got spunk, kids,” he said. “It’s going to be a real boy sometime if you let it grow. Here’s an apple for it ... and no worms either.”

Alice wiped the tears away from her soft pink cheeks and looked so adoringly at Walter that Fred didn’t like it. Of course Alice was only a baby but even babies had no business to be looking adoringly at other boys when he, Fred Johnson of Montreal, was around. This must be dealt with. Fred had been into the house and had heard Aunt Jen, who had been talking over the telephone, say something to Uncle Dick.

“Your mother’s awful sick,” he told Walter.

“She ... she isn’t!” cried Walter.

“She is, too. I heard Aunt Jen telling Uncle Dick ...” Fred had heard his aunt say, “Anne Blythe is sick,” and it was fun to tack in the “awful.”
“She’ll likely be dead before you get home.”

Walter looked around with tormented eyes. Again Alice ranged herself by him ... and again the rest gathered around the standard of Fred. They felt something alien about this dark, handsome child ... they felt an urge to tease him.

“If she is sick,” said Walter, “Father will cure her.”

He would ... he must!

“I’m afraid that will be impossible,” said Fred, pulling a long face but winking at Andy.

“Nothing is impossible for Father,” insisted Walter loyally.

“Why, Russ Carter went to Charlottetown just for a day last summer and when he came home his mother was dead as a doornail,” said Bill.

“And buried,” said Andy, thinking to add an extra dramatic touch — whether a fact or not didn’t matter. “Russ was awful mad he’d missed the funeral ... funerals are so jolly.”

“And I’ve never seen a single funeral,” said Opal sadly.

“Well, there’ll be lots of chances for you yet,” said Andy. “But you see even Dad couldn’t keep Mrs. Carter alive and he’s a lot better doctor than your father.”

“He isn’t ...”

“Yes, he is, and a lot better-looking, too ...”

“He isn’t ...”

“Something always happens when you go away from home,” said Opal.
“What will you feel like if you find Ingleside burned down when you go

home?”

“If your mother dies, likely you children will all be sep’rated,” said Cora cheerfully. “Maybe you’ll come and live here.”

“Yes ... do,” said Alice sweetly.

“Oh, his father would want to keep them,” said Bill. “He’d soon be marrying again. But maybe his father will die too. I heard Dad say Dr. Blythe was working himself to death. Look at him staring. You’ve got girls’ eyes, sonny ... girls’ eyes ... girls’ eyes.”

“Aw, shut up,” said Opal, suddenly tiring of the sport. “You ain’t fooling him. He knows you’re only teasing. Let’s go down to the Park and watch the baseball game. Walter and Alice can stay here. We can’t have kids tagging after us everywhere.”

Walter was not sorry to see them go. Neither apparently was Alice. They sat down on an apple log and looked shyly and contentedly at each other.

“I’ll show you how to play jackstones,” said Alice, “and lend you my plush kangaroo.”

When bedtime came Walter found himself put into the little hall bedroom alone. Mrs. Parker considerably left a candle with him and a warm puff, for the July night was unreasonably cold as even a summer night in the Maritimes sometimes is. It almost seemed as if there might be a frost.

But Walter could not sleep, not even with Alice’s plush kangaroo cuddled to his cheek. Oh, if he were only home in his own room, where the big window looked out on the Glen and the little window, with a tiny roof all its own, looked out into the Scotch pine! Mother would come in and read poetry to him in her lovely voice ...

“I’m a big boy ... I won’t cry ... I wo-o-o-n’t ...” The tears came in spite of himself. What good were plush kangaroos? It seemed years since he had left home.

Presently the other children came back from the Park and crowded amiably into the room to sit on the bed and eat apples.

“You’ve been crying, baby,” jeered Andy. “You’re nothing but a sweet little girl. Momma’s Pet!”

“Have a bite, kid,” said Bill proffering a half-gnawed apple. “And cheer up. I wouldn’t be surprised if your mother got better ... if she’s got a constitution, that is. Dad says Mrs. Stephen Flagg would-a died years ago if she hadn’t a constitution. Has your mother got one?”

“Of course she has,” said Walter. He had no idea what a constitution was, but if Mrs. Stephen Flagg had one Mother must.

“Mrs. Ab Sawyer died last week and Sam Clark’s mother died the week before,” said Andy.

“They died in the night,” said Cora. “Mother says people mostly die in the night. I hope I won’t. Fancy going to Heaven in your nightdress!”

“Children! Children! Get off to your beds,” called Mrs. Parker.

The boys went, after pretending to smother Walter with a towel. After all, they rather liked the kid. Walter caught Opal’s hand as she turned away.

“Opal, it isn’t true Mother’s sick, is it?” he whispered imploringly. He could not face being left alone with his fear.

Opal was “not a bad-hearted child,” as Mrs. Parker said, but she could not resist the thrill one got out of telling bad news.

“She is sick. Aunt Jen says so ... she said I wasn’t to tell you. But I think you ought to know. Maybe she has a cancer.”

“Does everybody have to die, Opal?” This was a new and dreadful idea to Walter, who had never thought about death before.

“Of course, silly. Only they don’t die really ... they go to Heaven,” said Opal cheerfully.

“Not all of them,” said Andy ... who was listening outside the door ... in a pig’s whisper.

“Is ... is Heaven farther away than Charlottetown?” asked Walter.

Opal shrilled with laughter.

“Well, you are queer! Heaven’s millions of miles away. But I’ll tell you what to do. You pray. Praying’s good. I lost a dime once and I prayed and I found a quarter. That’s how I know.”

“Opal Johnson, did you hear what I said? And put out that candle in Walter’s room. I’m afraid of fire,” called Mrs. Parker from her room. “He should have been asleep long ago.”

Opal blew out the candle and flew. Aunt Jen was easygoing, but when she did get riled! Andy stuck his head in at the door for a goodnight benediction.

“Likely them birds in the wallpaper will come alive and pick your eyes out,” he hissed.

After which everybody did really go to bed, feeling that it was the end of a perfect day and Walt Blythe wasn’t a bad little kid and they’d have some more fun teasing him tomorrow.

“Dear little souls,” thought Mrs. Parker sentimentally.

An unwonted quiet descended upon the Parker house and six miles away at Ingleside little Bertha Marilla Blythe was blinking round hazel eyes at the happy faces around her and the world into which she had been ushered on the coldest July night the Maritimes had experienced in eighty-seven years!

Chapter 9

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Walter, alone in the darkness, still found it impossible to sleep. He had never slept alone before in his short life. Always Jem or Ken near him, warm and comforting. The little room became dimly visible as the pale moonlight crept into it, but it was almost worse than darkness. A picture on the wall at the foot of his bed seemed to leer at him ... pictures always looked so different by moonlight. You saw things in them you never suspected by daylight. The long lace curtains looked like tall thin women, one on each side of the window, weeping. There were noises about the house ... creaks, sighs, whisperings. Suppose the birds in the wallpaper were coming to life and getting ready to pick out his eyes? A creepy fear suddenly possessed Walter ... and then one great fear banished all the others. Mother was sick. He had to believe it since Opal had said it was true. Perhaps Mother was dying! Perhaps mother was dead! There would be no Mother to go home to. Walter saw Ingleside without Mother!

Suddenly Walter knew he could not bear it. He must go home. Right away — at once. He must see Mother before she ... before she ... died. This was what Aunt Mary Maria had meant. She had known Mother was going to die. It was no use to think of waking anyone and asking to be taken home. They wouldn't take him ... they would only laugh at him. It was an awful long road home but he would walk all night.

Very quietly he slipped out of bed and put on his clothes. He took his shoes in his hand. He did not know where Mrs. Parker had put his cap, but that did not matter. He must not make any noise ... he must just escape and get to Mother. He was sorry he could not say goodbye to Alice ... she would have understood. Through the dark hall ... down the stairs ... step by step ... hold your breath ... was there no end to the steps? ... the very furniture was listening ... oh, oh!

Walter had dropped one of his shoes! Down the stairs it clattered, bumping from step to step, shot across the hall and brought up against the front door with what seemed to Walter a deafening crash.

Walter huddled in despair against the rail. Everybody must have heard that noise ... they would come rushing out ... he wouldn't be let go home ... a sob of despair choked in his throat.

It seemed hours before he dared believe that nobody had wakened up ... before he dared resume his careful passage down the stairs. But it was accomplished at last; he found his shoe and cautiously turned the handle of the front door ... doors were never locked at the Parker place. Mrs. Parker said they hadn't anything worth stealing except children and nobody wanted them.

Walter was out ... the door closed behind him. He slipped on his shoes and stole down the street: the house was on the edge of the village and he was soon on the open road. A moment of panic overwhelmed him. The fear of being caught and prevented was past and all his old fears of darkness and solitude returned. He had never been out alone in the night before. He was afraid of the world. It was such a huge world and he was so terribly small in it. Even the cold raw wind that was coming up from the east seemed blowing in his face as if to push him back.

Mother was going to die! Walter took a gulp and set his face towards home. On and on he went, fighting fear gallantly. It was moonlight but the moonlight let you see things ... and nothing looked familiar. Once when he had been out with Dad he had thought he had never seen anything so pretty as a moonlit road crossed by tree shadows. But now the shadows were so black and sharp they might fly up at you. The fields had put on a strangeness. The trees were no longer friendly. They seemed to be watching him ... crowding in before and behind him. Two blazing eyes looked out at him from the ditch and a black cat of unbelievable size ran across the road. Was it a cat? Or ... ? The night was cold: he shivered in his thin blouse, but he would not mind the cold if he could only stop being afraid of everything ... of the shadows and the furtive sounds and the nameless things that might be prowling in the strips of woodland he

passed through. He wondered what it would be like not to be afraid of anything ... like Jem.

“I’ll ... I’ll just pretend I’m not afraid,” he said aloud ... and then shuddered with terror over the lost sound of his own voice in the great night.

But he went on ... one had to go on when Mother was going to die. Once he fell and bruised and skinned his knee badly on a stone. Once he heard a buggy coming along behind him and hid behind a tree till it passed, terrified lest Dr. Parker had discovered he had gone and was coming after him. Once he stopped in sheer terror of something black and furry sitting on the side of the road. He could not pass it ... he could not ... but he did. It was a big black dog ... Was it a dog? ... but he was past it. He dared not run lest it chase him. He stole a desperate glance over his shoulder ... it had got up and was loping away in the opposite direction. Walter put his little brown hand up to his face and found it wet with sweat.

A star fell in the sky before him, scattering sparks of flame. Walter remembered hearing old Aunt Kitty say that when a star fell someone died. Was it mother? He had just been feeling that his legs would not carry him another step, but at the thought he marched on again. He was so cold now that he had almost ceased to feel afraid. Would he never get home? It must be hours and hours since he had left Lowbridge.

It was three hours. He had stolen out of the Parker house at eleven and it was now two. When Walter found himself on the road that dipped down into the Glen he gave a sob of relief. But as he stumbled through the village the sleeping houses seemed remote and far away. They had forgotten him. A cow suddenly bawled at him over a fence and Walter remembered that Mr. Joe Reese kept a savage bull. He broke into a run of sheer panic that carried him up the hill to the gate of Ingleside. He was home ... oh, he was home!

Then he stopped short, trembling, overcome by a dreadful feeling of desolation. He had been expecting to see the warm, friendly lights of home. And there was not a light at Ingleside!

There really was a light, if he could have seen it, in a back bedroom where the nurse slept with the baby's basket beside her bed. But to all intents and purposes Ingleside was as dark as a deserted house and it broke Walter's spirit. He had never seen, never imagined, Ingleside dark at night.

It meant that mother was dead!

Walter stumbled up the drive, across the grim black shadow of the house on the lawn, to the front door. It was locked. He gave a feeble knock ... he could not reach to the knocker ... but there was no response, nor did he expect any. He listened ... there was not a sound of living in the house. He knew Mother was dead and everybody had gone away.

He was by now too chilled and exhausted to cry: but he crept around to the barn and climbed the ladder to the hay-mow. He was past being frightened; he only wanted to get somewhere out of that wind and lie down till morning. Perhaps somebody would come back then after they had buried Mother.

A sleek little tiger kitten someone had given the doctor purred up to him, smelling nicely of clover hay. Walter clutched it gladly ... it was warm and alive. But it heard the little mice scampering over the floor and would not stay. The moon looked at him through the cobwebby window but there was no comfort in that far, cold, unsympathetic moon. A light burning in a house down in the Glen was more like a friend. As long as that light shone he could bear up.

He could not sleep. His knee hurt too much and he was cold ... with such a funny feeling in his stomach. Perhaps he was dying, too. He hoped he was, since everyone else was dead or gone away. Did nights ever end? Other nights had always ended but maybe this one wouldn't. He remembered a dreadful story he had heard to the effect that Captain Jack Flagg at the Harbour Mouth had said he wouldn't let the sun come up some morning when he got real mad. Suppose Captain Jack had got real mad at last.

Then the Glen light went out ... and he couldn't bear it. But as the little cry of despair left his lips he realized that it was day.

Chapter 1 0

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Walter climbed down the ladder and went out. Ingleside lay in the strange, timeless light of first dawn. The sky over the birches in the Hollow was showing a faint, silvery-pink radiance. Perhaps he could get in at the side door. Susan sometimes left it open for Dad.

The side door was unlocked. With a sob of thankfulness Walter slipped into the hall. It was still dark in the house and he began stealing softly upstairs. He would go to bed ... his own bed ... and if nobody ever came back he could die there and go to Heaven and find Mother. Only ... Walter remembered what Opal had said ... Heaven was millions of miles away. In the fresh wave of desolation that swept over him Walter forgot to step carefully and set his foot heavily down on the tail of the Shrimp, who was sleeping at the curve of the stairs. The Shrimp's yowl of anguish resounded through the house.

Susan, just dropping off to sleep, was dragged back from slumber by the horrible sound. Susan had gone to bed at twelve, somewhat exhausted after her strenuous afternoon and evening, to which Mary Maria Blythe had contributed by taking "a stitch in her side" just when the tension was greatest. She had to have a hot-water bottle and a rub with liniment, and finished up with a wet cloth over her eyes because "one of her headaches" had come on.

Susan had wakened at three with a very strange feeling that somebody wanted her very badly. She had risen and tiptoed down the hall to the door of Mrs. Blythe's room. All was silence there ... she could hear Anne's soft regular breathing. Susan made the rounds of the house and returned to her bed, convinced that that strange feeling was only the hangover of a nightmare. But for the rest of her life Susan believed she had had what she had always scoffed at and what Abby Flagg, who "went in" for spiritualism, called "a physic experience."

“Walter was calling me and I heard him,” she averred.

Susan got up and went out again, thinking that Ingleside was really possessed that night. She was attired only in a flannel nightdress, which had shrunk in repeated washing till it was well above her bony ankles: but she seemed the most beautiful thing in the world to the white-faced, trembling little creature whose frantic grey eyes stared up at her from the landing.

“Walter Blythe!”

In two steps Susan had him in her arms ... her strong, tender arms.

“Susan ... is Mother dead?” said Walter.

In a very brief time everything had changed. Walter was in bed, warm, fed, comforted. Susan had whisked on a fire, got him a hot cup of milk, a slice of golden-brown toast and a big plateful of his favourite “monkey face” cookies, and then tucked him away with a hot-water bottle at his feet. She had kissed and anointed his little bruised knee. It was such a nice feeling to know that someone was looking after you ... that someone wanted you ... that you were important to someone.

“And you’re sure, Susan, that Mother isn’t dead?”

“Your mother is sound asleep and well and happy, my lamb.”

“And wasn’t she sick at all? Opal said ...”

“Well, lamb, she did not feel very well for a while yesterday, but that is all over and she was never in any danger of dying this time. You just wait till you have had a sleep and you will see her ... and something else. If I had hold of those young Satans at Lowbridge! I just cannot believe that you walked all the way home from Lowbridge. Six miles! On such a night!”

“I suffered awful agony of mind, Susan,” said Walter gravely. But it was all over; he was safe and happy; he was ... home ... he was ...

He was asleep.

It was nearly midday before he woke, to see sunshine billowing in through his own windows, and limped in to see Mother. He had begun to think he had been very foolish and maybe Mother would not be pleased with him for running away from Lowbridge. But Mother only put an arm around him and drew him close to her. She had heard the whole story from Susan and had thought of a few things she intended to say to Jen Parker.

“Oh, Mummy, you’re not going to die ... and you still love me, don’t you?”

“Darling, I’ve no notion of dying ... and I love you so much it hurts. To think that you walked all the way from Lowbridge in the night!”

“And on an empty stomach,” shuddered Susan. “The wonder is he is alive to tell it. The days of miracles are not yet over and that you may tie to.”

“A spunky little lad,” laughed Dad, who had come in with Shirley on his shoulder. He patted Walter’s head and Walter caught his hand and hugged it. There was no one like Dad in the world. But nobody must ever know how scared he had really been.

“I needn’t ever go away from home again, need I, Mummy?”

“Not till you want to,” promised Mother.

“I’ll never,” began Walter ... and then stopped. After all, he wouldn’t mind seeing Alice again.

“Look you here, lamb,” said Susan, ushering in a rosy young lady in a white apron and cap who carried a basket.

Walter looked. A baby! A plump, roly-poly baby, with silky damp curls all over her head and such tiny cunning hands.

“Is she not a beauty?” said Susan proudly. “Look at her eyelashes ... never did I see such long eyelashes on a baby. And her pretty little ears. I always look at their ears first.”

Walter hesitated.

“She’s sweet, Susan ... oh, look at her darling little curly toes! ... but ... isn’t she rather small?”

Susan laughed.

“Eight pounds is not small, lamb. And she has begun to take notice already. That child was not an hour old when she raised her head and Looked at the doctor. I have never seen the like of it in all my life.”

“She’s going to have red hair,” said the doctor in a tone of satisfaction. “Lovely redgold hair like her mother’s.”

“And hazel eyes like her father’s,” said the doctor’s wife jubilantly.

“I don’t see why one of us can’t have yellow hair,” said Walter dreamily, thinking of Alice.

“Yellow hair! Like the Drews!” said Susan in measureless contempt.

“She looks so cunning when she is asleep,” crooned the nurse. “I never saw a baby that crinkled its eyes like that when it went to sleep.”

“She is a miracle. All our babies were sweet, Gilbert, but she is the sweetest of them all.”

“Lord love you,” said Aunt Mary Maria with a sniff, “there’s been a few babies in the world before, you know, Annie.”

“Our baby has never been in the world before, Aunt Mary Maria,” said Walter proudly. “Susan, may I kiss her ... just once ... please?”

“That you may,” said Susan, glaring after Aunt Mary Maria’s retreating back. “And now I’m going down to make a cherry pie for dinner. Mary Maria Blythe made one yesterday afternoon I wish you could see it, Mrs. Dr. dear. It looks like something the cat dragged in. I shall eat as much of it myself as I can, rather than waste it, but such a pie shall never be set before the doctor as long as I have my health and strength and that you may tie to.”

“It isn’t everybody that has your knack with pastry, you know,” said Anne.

“Mummy,” said Walter, as the door closed behind a gratified Susan, “I think we are a very nice family, don’t you?”

A very nice family, Anne reflected happily as she lay in her bed, with the baby beside her. Soon she would be about with them again, light-footed as of yore, loving them, teaching them, comforting them. They would be coming to her with their little joys and sorrows, their budding hopes, their new fears, their little problems that seemed so big to them and their little heartbreaks that seemed so bitter. She would hold all the threads of the Ingleside life in her hands again to weave into a tapestry of beauty. And Aunt Mary Maria should have no cause to say, as Anne had heard her say two days ago, “You look dreadful tired, Gilbert. Does anybody ever look after you?”

Downstairs Aunt Mary Maria was shaking her head despondently and saying, “All newborn infants’ legs are crooked, I know, but, Susan, that child’s legs are much too crooked. Of course we must not say so to poor Annie. Be sure you don’t mention it to Annie, Susan.”

Susan, for once, was beyond speech.

Chapter 1 1

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By the end of August Anne was herself again, looking forward to a happy autumn. Small Bertha Marilla grew in beauty day by day and was a centre of worship to adoring brothers and sisters.

“I thought a baby would be something that yelled all the time,” said Jem, rapturously letting the tiny fingers cling around his. “Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me so.”

“I am not doubting that the Drew babies yell all the time, Jem dear,” said Susan. “Yell at the thought of having to be Drews, I presume. But Bertha Marilla is an Ingleside baby, Jem dear.”

“I wish I had been born at Ingleside, Susan,” said Jem wistfully. He always felt sorry he hadn’t been. Di cast it up to him at times.

“Don’t you find life here rather dull?” an old Queen’s classmate from Charlottetown had asked Anne rather patronizingly one day.

Dull! Anne almost laughed in her caller’s face. Ingleside dull! With a delicious baby bringing new wonders every day ... with visits from Diana and Little Elizabeth and Rebecca Dew to be planned for ... with Mrs. Sam Ellison of the Upper Glen on Gilbert’s hands with a disease only three people in the world had ever been known to have before ... with Walter starting to school ... with Nan drinking a whole bottle of perfume from Mother’s dressing-table ... they thought it would kill her but she was never a whit the worse ... with a strange black cat having the unheard-of number of ten kittens in the back porch ... with Shirley locking himself in the bathroom and forgetting how to unlock it ... with the Shrimp getting rolled up in a sheet of fly-paper ... with Aunt Mary Maria setting the curtains of her room on fire in the dead of night while prowling with a candle, and rousing the household with appalling screams. Life dull!

For Aunt Mary Maria was still at Ingleside. Occasionally she would say pathetically, "Whenever you are tired of me just let me know ... I'm used to looking after myself." There was only one thing to say to that and of course Gilbert always said it. Though he did not say it quite as heartily as at first. Even Gilbert's "clannishness" was beginning to wear a little thin; he was realizing rather helplessly ... "manlike" as Miss Cornelia sniffed ... that Aunt Mary Maria was by way of becoming a bit of a problem in his household. He had ventured one day to give a slight hint as to how houses suffered if left too long without inhabitants; and Aunt Mary Maria agreed with him, calmly remarking that she was thinking of selling her Charlottetown house.

"Not a bad idea," encouraged Gilbert. "And I know a very nice little cottage in town for sale ... a friend of mine is going to California ... it's very like that one you admired so much where Mrs. Sarah Newman lives ..."

"But lives alone," sighed Aunt Mary Maria.

"She likes it," said Anne hopefully.

"There's something wrong with anyone who likes living alone, Anne," said Aunt Mary Maria.

Susan repressed a groan with difficulty.

Diana came for a week in September. Then Little Elizabeth came ... Little Elizabeth no longer ... tall, slender, beautiful Elizabeth now. But still with the golden hair and wistful smile. Her father was returning to his office in Paris and Elizabeth was going with him to keep his house. She and Anne took long walks around the storied shores of the old harbour, coming home beneath silent, watchful autumn stars. They relived the old Windy Poplars life and retraced their steps in the map of fairyland which Elizabeth still had and meant to keep forever.

"Hanging on the wall of my room wherever I go," she said.

One day a wind blew through the Ingleside garden ... the first wind of autumn. That night the rose of the sunset was a trifle austere. All at once the summer had grown old. The turn of the season had come.

“It’s early for fall,” said Aunt Mary Maria in a tone that implied the fall had insulted her.

But the fall was beautiful, too. There was the joy of winds blowing in from a darkly blue gulf and the splendour of harvest moons. There were lyric asters in the Hollow and children laughing in an apple-laden orchard, clear serene evenings on the high hill pastures of the Upper Glen and silvery mackerel skies with dank birds flying across them; and, as the days shortened, little grey mists stealing over the dunes and up the harbour.

With the falling leaves Rebecca Dew came to Ingleside to make a visit promised for years. She came for a week but was prevailed upon to stay two ... none being so urgent as Susan. Susan and Rebecca Dew seemed to discover at first sight that they were kindred spirits ... perhaps because they both loved Anne ... perhaps because they both hated Aunt Mary Maria.

There came an evening in the kitchen when, as the rain dripped down on the dead leaves outside and the wind cried around the eaves and corners of Ingleside, Susan poured out all her woes to sympathetic Rebecca Dew. The doctor and his wife had gone out to make a call, the small fry were all cosy in their beds, and Aunt Mary Maria fortunately out of the way with a headache ... “just like a band of iron round my brain,” she had moaned.

“Anyone,” remarked Rebecca Dew, opening the oven door and depositing her feet comfortably in the oven, “who eats as much fried mackerel as that woman did for supper deserves to have a headache. I do not deny I ate my share ... for I will say, Miss Baker, I never knew anyone who could fry mackerel like you ... but I did not eat four pieces.”

“Miss Dew dear,” said Susan earnestly, laying down her knitting and gazing imploringly into Rebecca’s little black eyes, “you have seen something of what Mary Maria Blythe is like in the time you have been here. But you do not know the half ... no, nor yet the quarter. Miss Dew

dear, I feel that I can trust you. May I open my heart to you in strict confidence?"

"You may, Miss Baker."

"That woman came here in June and it is my opinion she means to stay here the rest of her life. Everyone in this house detests her ... even the doctor has no use for her now, hide it as he will and does. But he is clannish and says his father's cousin must not be made to feel unwelcome in his house. I have begged," said Susan, in a tone which seemed to imply she had done it on her knees, "I have begged Mrs. Dr. to put her foot down and say Mary Maria Blythe must go. But Mrs. Dr. is too softhearted ... and so we are helpless, Miss Dew ... completely helpless."

"I wish I had the handling of her," said Rebecca Dew, who had smarted considerably herself under some of Aunt Mary Maria's remarks. "I know as well as anyone, Miss Baker, that we must not violate the sacred proprieties of hospitality, but I assure you, Miss Baker, that I would let her have it straight."

"I could handle her if I did not know my place, Miss Dew. I never forget that I am not mistress here. Sometimes, Miss Dew, I say solemnly to myself, 'Susan Baker, are you or are you not a doormat?' But you know how my hands are tied. I cannot desert Mrs. Dr. and I must not add to her troubles by fighting with Mary Maria Blythe. I shall continue to endeavour to do my duty. Because, Miss Dew dear," said Susan solemnly, "I could cheerfully die for either the doctor or his wife. We were such a happy family before she came here, Miss Dew. But she is making our lives miserable and what is to be the outcome I cannot tell, being no prophetess, Miss Dew. Or rather, I can tell. We will all be driven into lunatic asylums. It is not any one thing, Miss Dew ... it is scores of them, Miss Dew ... hundreds of them, Miss Dew. You can endure one mosquito, Miss Dew ... but think of millions of them!"

Rebecca Dew thought of them with a mournful shake of her head.

"She is always telling Mrs. Dr. how to run her house and what clothes she should wear. She is always watching me ... and she says she never saw

such quarrelsome children. Miss Dew dear, you have seen for yourself that our children never quarrel ... well, hardly ever ...”

“They are among the most admirable children I have ever seen, Miss Baker.”

“She snoops and pries ...”

“I have caught her at it myself, Miss Baker.”

“She’s always getting offended and heartbroken over something but never offended enough to up and leave. She just sits around looking lonely and neglected until poor Mrs. Dr. is almost distracted. Nothing suits her. If a window is open she complains of draughts. If they are all shut she says she does like a little fresh air once in a while. She cannot bear onions ... she cannot even bear the smell of them. She says they make her sick. So Mrs. Dr. says we must not use any. Now,” said Susan grandly, “it may be a common taste to like onions, Miss Dew dear, but we all plead guilty to it at Ingleside.”

“I am very partial to onions myself,” admitted Rebecca Dew.

“She cannot bear cats. She says cats give her the creeps. It does not make any difference whether she sees them or not. Just to know there is one about the place is enough for her. So that poor Shrimp hardly dare show his face in the house. I have never altogether liked cats myself, Miss Dew, but I maintain they have a right to wave their own tails. And it is, ‘Susan, never forget that I cannot eat eggs, please,’ or ‘Susan, how often must I tell you I cannot eat cold toast?’ or ‘Susan, some people may be able to drink stewed tea but I am not in that fortunate class.’ Stewed tea, Miss Dew! As if I ever offered anyone stewed tea!”

“Nobody could ever suppose it of you, Miss Baker.”

“If there is a question that should not be asked she will ask it. She is jealous because the doctor tells things to his wife before he tells them to her ... and she is always trying to pick news out of him about his patients. Nothing aggravates him so much, Miss Dew. A doctor must know how to

hold his tongue, as you are well aware. And her tantrums about fire! ‘Susan Baker,’ she says to me, ‘I hope you never light a fire with coal-oil. Or leave oily rags lying around, Susan. They have been known to cause spontaneous combustion in less than an hour. How would you like to stand and watch this house burn down, Susan, knowing it was your fault?’ Well, Miss Dew dear, I had my laugh on her over that. It was that very night she set her curtains on fire and the yells of her are ringing in my ears yet. And just when the poor doctor had got to sleep after having been up for two nights! What infuriates me most, Miss Dew, is that before she goes anywhere she goes into my pantry and counts the eggs. It takes all my philosophy to refrain from saying, ‘Why not count the spoons, too?’ Of course the children hate her. Mrs. Dr. is just about worn out keeping them from showing it. She actually slapped Nan one day when the doctor and Mrs. Dr. were both away ... slapped her ... just because Nan called her ‘Mrs Mefusaleh’ ... having heard that imp of a Ken Ford saying it.”

“I’d have slapped her,” said Rebecca Dew viciously.

“I told her if she ever did the like again I would slap her. ‘An occasional spanking we do have at Ingleside,’ I told her, ‘but slapping never, so put that in pickle.’ She was sulky and offended for a week but at least she has never dared to lay a finger on one of them since. She loves it when their parents punish them, though. ‘If I was your mother,’ she says to Little Jem one evening. ‘Oh ho, you won’t ever be anybody’s mother,’ said the poor child ... driven to it, Miss Dew, absolutely driven to it. The doctor sent him to bed without his supper, but who would you suppose, Miss Dew, saw that some was smuggled up to him later on?”

“Ah, now, who?” chortled Rebecca Dew, entering into the spirit of the tale.

“It would have broken your heart, Miss Dew, to hear the prayer he put up afterwards ... all off his own bat, ‘O God, please forgive me for being impertinent to Aunt Mary Maria. And O God, please help me to be always very polite to Aunt Mary Maria.’ It brought the tears into my eyes, the poor lamb. I do not hold with irreverence or impertinence from youth to age, Miss Dew dear, but I must admit that when Bertie Shakespeare Drew threw a spit-ball at her one day ... it just missed her nose by an inch, Miss Dew ... I waylaid him at the gate on his way home and gave him a bag of

doughnuts. Of course I did not tell him why. He was tickled over it ... for doughnuts do not grow on trees, Miss Dew, and Mrs. Second Skimmings never makes them. Nan and Di ... I would not breathe this to a soul but you, Miss Dew ... the doctor and his wife never dream of it or they would put a stop to it ... Nan and Di have named their old china doll with the split head after Aunt Mary Maria and whenever she scolds them they go out and drown her ... the doll I mean ... in the rainwater hogshead. Many's the jolly drowning we have had, I can assure you. But you could not believe what that woman did the other night, Miss Dew."

"I'd believe anything of her, Miss Baker."

"She would not eat a bite of supper because her feelings had been hurt over something, but she went into the pantry before she went to bed and ate up a lunch I had left for the poor doctor ... every crumb, Miss Dew dear. I hope you will not think me an infidel, Miss Dew, but I cannot understand why the Good Lord does not get tired of some people."

"You must not allow yourself to lose your sense of humour, Miss Baker," said Rebecca Dew firmly.

"Oh, I am very well aware that there is a comical side to a toad under a harrow, Miss Dew. But the question is, does the toad see it? I am sorry to have bothered you with all this, Miss Dew dear, but it has been a great relief. I cannot say these things to Mrs. Dr. and I have been feeling lately that if I did not find an outlet I would burst."

"How well I know that feeling, Miss Baker."

"And now, Miss Dew dear," said Susan, getting up briskly, "what do you say to a cup of tea before bed? And a cold chicken leg, Miss Dew?"

"I have never denied," said Rebecca Dew, taking her well-baked feet out of the oven, "that while we should not forget the Higher Things of Life good food is a pleasant thing in moderation."

Chapter 1 2

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Gilbert had his two weeks' snipe shooting in Nova Scotia ... not even Anne could persuade him to take a month ... and November closed in on Ingleside. The dark hills, with the darker spruces marching over them, looked grim on early falling nights, but Ingleside bloomed with firelight and laughter, though the winds come in from the Atlantic singing of mournful things.

"Why isn't the wind happy, Mummy?" asked Walter one night.

"Because it is remembering all the sorrow of the world since time began," answered Anne.

"It is moaning just because there is so much dampness in the air," sniffed Aunt Mary Maria, "and my back is killing me."

But some days even the wind blew cheerfully through the silvery grey maple wood and some days there was no wind at all, only mellow Indian summer sunshine and the quiet shadows of the bare trees all over the lawn and frosty stillness at sunset.

"Look at that white evening star over the lombardy in the corner," said Anne. "Whenever I see anything like that I am minded to be just glad I am alive."

"You do say such funny things, Annie. Stars are quite common in P. E. Island," said Aunt Mary Maria ... and thought: "Stars indeed! As if no one ever saw a star before! Didn't Annie know of the terrible waste that was going on in the kitchen every day? Didn't she know of the reckless way Susan Baker threw eggs about and used lard where dripping would do quite as well? Or didn't she care? Poor Gilbert! No wonder he had to keep his nose to the grindstone!"

November went out in greys and browns: but by morning the snow had woven its old white spell and Jem shouted with delight as he rushed down to breakfast.

“Oh, Mummy, it will soon be Christmas now and Santa Claus will be coming!”

“You surely don’t believe in Santa Claus still?” said Aunt Mary Maria.

Anne shot a glance of alarm at Gilbert, who said gravely: “We want the children to possess their heritage of fairyland as long as they can, Auntie.”

Luckily Jem had paid no attention to Aunt Mary Maria. He and Walter were too eager to get out into the new wonderful world to which winter had brought its own loveliness. Anne always hated to see the beauty of the untrodden snow marred by footprints; but that couldn’t be helped and there was still beauty and to spare at eventide when the west was aflame over all the whitened hollows in the violet hills and Anne was sitting in the livingroom before a fire of rock maple. Firelight, she thought, was always so lovely. It did such tricksy, unexpected things. Parts of the room flashed into being and then out again. Pictures came and went. Shadows lurked and sprang. Outside, through the big unshaded window, the whole scene was elvishly reflected on the lawn with Aunt Mary Maria apparently sitting stark upright ... Aunt Mary Maria never allowed herself to “loll” ... under the Scotch pine.

Gilbert was “lolling” on the couch, trying to forget that he had lost a patient from pneumonia that day. Small Rilla was trying to eat her pink fists in her basket; even the Shrimp, with his white paws curled in under his breast, was daring to purr on the hearthrug, much to Aunt Mary Maria’s disapproval.

“Speaking of cats,” said Aunt Mary Maria pathetically ... though nobody had been speaking of them ... “do all the cats in the Glen visit us at night? How anyone could have slept through the caterwauling last night I really am at a loss to understand. Of course, my room being at the back I suppose I get the full benefit of the free concert.”

Before anyone had to reply Susan entered, saying that she had seen Mrs. Marshall Elliott in Carter Flagg's store and she was coming up when she had finished her shopping. Susan did not add that Mrs. Elliott had said anxiously, "What is the matter with Mrs. Blythe, Susan? I thought last Sunday in church she looked so tired and worried. I never saw her look like that before."

"I can tell you what is the matter with Mrs. Blythe," Susan had answered grimly. "She had got a bad attack of Aunt Mary Maria. And the doctor cannot seem to see it, even though he does worship the ground she walks on."

"Isn't that like a man?" said Mrs. Elliott.

"I am glad," said Anne, springing up to light a lamp. "I haven't seen Miss Cornelia for so long. Now we'll catch up with the news."

"Won't we!" said Gilbert dryly.

"That woman is an evil-minded gossip," said Aunt Mary Maria severely.

For the first time in her life, perhaps, Susan bristled up in defence of Miss Cornelia.

"That she is not, Miss Blythe, and Susan Baker will never stand by and hear her so miscalled. Evil-minded, indeed! Did you ever hear, Miss Blythe, of the pot calling the kettle black?"

"Susan ... Susan," said Anne imploringly.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Dr. dear. I admit I have forgotten my place. But there are some things not to be endured."

Whereupon a door was banged as doors were seldom banged at Ingleside.

"You see, Annie?" said Aunt Mary Maria significantly. "But I suppose as long as you are willing to overlook that sort of thing in a servant there is nothing anyone can do."

Gilbert got up and went to the library where a tired man might count on some peace. And Aunt Mary Maria, who didn't like Miss Cornelia, betook herself to bed. So that when Miss Cornelia came in she found Anne alone, drooping rather limply over the baby's basket. Miss Cornelia did not, as usual, start in unloading a budget of gossip. Instead, when she had laid aside her wraps, she sat down beside Anne and took her hand.

"Anne dearie, what is the matter? I know there's something. Is that jolly old soul of a Mary Maria just tormenting you to death?"

Anne tried to smile.

"Oh, Miss Cornelia ... I know I'm foolish to mind it so much ... but this has been one of the days when it seems I just cannot go on enduring her. She ... she's simply poisoning our life here ..."

"Why don't you just tell her to go?"

"Oh, we can't do that, Miss Cornelia. At least, I can't and Gilbert won't. He says he could never look himself in the face again if he turned his own flesh and blood out of doors."

"Cat's hindfoot!" said Miss Cornelia eloquently. "She's got plenty of money and a good home of her own. How would it be turning her out of doors to tell her she'd better go and live in it?"

"I know ... but Gilbert ... I don't think he quite realises everything. He's away so much ... and really ... everything is so little in itself ... I'm ashamed ..."

"I know, dearie. Just those little things that are horribly big. Of course a man wouldn't understand. I know a woman in Charlottetown who knows her well. She says Mary Maria Blythe never had a friend in her life. She says her name should be Blight not Blythe. What you need, dearie, is just enough backbone to say you won't put up with it any longer."

"I feel as you do in dreams when you're trying to run and can only drag your feet," said Anne drearily. "If it were only now and then ... but it's

every day. Meal times are perfect horrors now. Gilbert says he can't carve roasts any more."

"He'd notice that," sniffed Miss Cornelia.

"We can never have any real conversations at meals because she is sure to say something disagreeable every time anyone speaks. She corrects the children for their manners continually and always calls attention to their faults before company. We used to have such pleasant meals ... and now! She resents laughter ... and you know what we are for laughing. Somebody is always seeing a joke ... or used to be. She can't let anything pass. Today she said, 'Gilbert, don't sulk. Have you and Annie quarrelled?' Just because we were quiet. You know Gilbert is always a little depressed when he loses a patient he thinks ought to have lived. And then she lectured us on our folly and warned us not to let the sun go down on our wrath. Oh, we laughed at it afterwards ... but just at the time! She and Susan don't get along. And we can't keep Susan from muttering asides that are the reverse of polite. She more than muttered when Aunt Mary Maria told her she had never seen such a liar as Walter ... because she heard him telling Di a long tale about meeting the man in the moon and what they said to each other. She wanted to scour his mouth out with soap and water. She and Susan had a battle royal that time. And she is filling the children's minds with all sorts of gruesome ideas. She told Nan about a child who was naughty and died in its sleep and Nan is afraid to go to sleep now. She told Di that if she were always a good girl her parents would come to love her as well as they loved Nan, even if she did have red hair. Gilbert really was very angry when he heard that and spoke to her sharply. I couldn't help hoping she'd take offence and go ... even though I would hate to have anyone leave my home because she was offended. But she just let those big blue eyes of her fill with tears and said she didn't mean any harm. She'd always heard that twins were never loved equally and she'd been thinking we favoured Nan and that poor Di felt it! She cried all night about it and Gilbert felt that he had been a brute ... and apologized."

"He would!" said Miss Cornelia.

"Oh, I shouldn't be talking like this, Miss Cornelia. When I 'count my mercies' I feel it's very petty of me to mind these things ... even if they do

rub a little bloom off life. And she isn't always hateful ... she is quite nice by spells ..."

"Do you tell me so?" said Miss Cornelia sarcastically.

“Yes ... and kind. She heard me say I wanted an afternoon tea-set and she went to Toronto and got me one ... by mail order! And, oh, Miss Cornelia, it’s so ugly!”

Anne gave a laugh that ended in a sob. Then she laughed again.

“Now we won’t talk of her any more ... it doesn’t seem so bad now that I’ve blurted this all out ... like a baby. Look at wee Rilla, Miss Cornelia. Aren’t her lashes darling when she is asleep? Now let’s have a good gab-fest.”

Anne was herself again by the time Miss Cornelia had gone. Nevertheless she sat thoughtfully before her fire for some time. She had not told Miss Cornelia all of it. She had never told Gilbert any of it. There were so many little things... .

“So little I can’t complain of them,” thought Anne. “And yet ... it’s the little things that fret the holes in life ... like moths ... and ruin it.”

Aunt Mary Maria with her trick of acting the hostess ... Aunt Mary Maria inviting guests and never saying a word about it till they came... . “She makes me feel as if I didn’t belong in my own home.” Aunt Mary Maria moving the furniture around when Anne was out. “I hope you don’t mind, Annie; I thought we need the table so much more here than in the library.” Aunt Mary Maria’s insatiable childish curiosity about everything ... her point-blank questions about intimate matters ... “always coming into my room without knocking ... always smelling smoke ... always plumping up the cushions I’ve crushed ... always implying that I gossip too much with Susan ... always picking at the children . . . We have to be at them all the time to make them behave and then we can’t manage it always.”

“Ugly old Aunt Maywia,” Shirley had said distinctly one dreadful day. Gilbert had been going to spank him for it, but Susan had risen up in outraged majesty and forbade it.

“We’re cowed,” thought Anne. “This household is beginning to revolve around the question, ‘Will Aunt Mary Maria like it?’ We won’t admit it

but it's true. Anything rather than have her wiping tears nobly away. It just can't go on."

Then Anne remembered what Miss Cornelia had said ... that Mary Maria Blythe had never had a friend. How terrible! Out of her own richness of friendships Anne felt a sudden rush of compassion for this woman who had never had a friend ... who had nothing before her but a lonely, restless old age with no one coming to her for shelter or healing, for hope and help, for warmth and love. Surely they could have patience with her. These annoyances were only superficial, after all. They could not poison the deep springs of life.

"I've just had a terrible spasm of being sorry for myself, that's all," said Anne, picking Rilla out of her basket and thrilling to the little round satin cheek against hers. "It's over now and I'm wholesomely ashamed of it."

Chapter 13

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“We never seem to have old-fashioned winters nowadays, do we, Mummy?” said Walter gloomily.

For the November snow had gone long ago and all through December Glen St. Mary had been a black and sombre land, rimmed in by a grey gulf dotted with curling crests of ice-white foam. There had been only a few sunny days, when the harbour sparkled in the golden arms of the hills: the rest had been dour and hard-bitten. In vain had the Ingleside folks hoped for snow for Christmas: but preparations went steadily on and as the last week drew to a close Ingleside was full of mystery and secrets and whispers and delicious smells. Now on the very day before Christmas everything was ready. The fir tree Walter and Jem had brought up from the Hollow was in the corner of the livingroom, the doors and windows were hung with big green wreaths tied with huge bows of red ribbon. The banisters were twined with creeping spruce and Susan’s pantry was crammed to overflowing. Then, late in the afternoon, when they all had resigned themselves to a dingy “green” Christmas somebody looked out of a window and saw white flakes as big as feathers falling thickly.

“Snow! Snow!! Snow!!!” shouted Jem. “A white Christmas after all, Mummy!”

The Ingleside children went to bed happy. It was so nice to snuggle down warm and cosy and listen to the storm howling outside through the grey snowy night. Anne and Susan went to work to deck the Christmas tree ... “acting like two children themselves,” thought Aunt Mary Maria scornfully. She did not approve of candles on a tree ... “suppose the house caught fire from them.” She did not approve of coloured balls ... “suppose the twins ate them.” But nobody paid any attention to her. They had learned that that was the only condition on which life with Aunt Mary Maria was livable.

“Finished!” cried Anne, as she fastened the great silver star to the top of the proud little fir. “And, oh, Susan, doesn’t it look pretty! Isn’t it nice we can all be children again at Christmas without being ashamed of it! I’m so glad the snow came ... but I hope the storm won’t outlast the night.”

“It’s going to storm all day tomorrow,” said Aunt Mary Maria positively. “I can tell by my poor back.”

Anne went through the hall, opened the big front door, and peered out. The world was lost in a white passion of snowstorm. The windowpanes were grey with drifted snow. The Scotch pine was an enormous sheeted ghost.

“It doesn’t look very promising,” Anne admitted ruefully.

“God manages the weather yet, Mrs. Dr. dear, and not Miss Mary Maria Blythe,” said Susan over her shoulder.

“I hope there won’t be a sick call tonight at least,” said Anne as she turned away. Susan took one parting look into the gloom before she locked out the stormy night.

“Don’t you go and have a baby tonight,” she warned darkly in the direction of the Upper Glen where Mrs. George Drew was expecting her fourth.

In spite of Aunt Mary Maria’s back the storm spent itself in the night and morning filled the secret hollow of snow among the hills with the red wine of winter sunrise. All the small fry were up early, looking starry and expectant.

“Did Santa get through the storm, Mummy?”

“No. He was sick and didn’t dare try,” said Aunt Mary Maria, who was in a good humour ... for her ... and felt joky.

“Santa Claus got here all right,” said Susan before their eyes had time to blur, “and after you’ve had your breakfast you’ll see what he did to your tree.”

After breakfast Dad mysteriously disappeared, but nobody missed him because they were so taken up with the tree ... the lively tree, all gold and silver bubbles and lighted candles in the still dark room, with parcels in all colours and tied with the loveliest ribbons piled about it. Then Santa appeared, a gorgeous Santa, all crimson and white fur, with a long white beard and such a jolly big stomach ... Susan had stuffed three cushions into the red velveteen cassock Anne had made for Gilbert. Shirley screamed with terror at first, but refused to be taken out, for all that. Santa distributed all the gifts with a funny little speech for everyone in a voice that sounded oddly familiar even through the mask; and then just at the end his beard caught fire from a candle and Aunt Mary Maria had some slight satisfaction out of the incident though not enough to prevent her from sighing mournfully.

“Ah me, Christmas isn’t what it was when I was a child.” She looked with disapproval at the present Little Elizabeth had sent Anne from Paris ... a beautiful little bronze reproduction of Artemis of the Silver Bow.

“What shameless hussy is that?” she inquired sternly.

“The goddess Diana,” said Anne, exchanging a grin with Gilbert.

“Oh, a heathen! Well, that’s different, I suppose. But if I were you, Annie, I wouldn’t leave it where the children can see it. Sometimes I am beginning to think there is no such thing as modesty left in the world. My grandmother,” concluded Aunt Mary Maria, with the delightful inconsequence that characterized so many of her remarks, “never wore less than three petticoats, winter and summer.”

Aunt Mary Maria had knitted “wristers” for all the children out of a dreadful shade of magenta yarn, also a sweater for Anne; Gilbert received a bilious necktie and Susan got a red flannel petticoat. Even Susan considered red flannel petticoats out of date, but she thanked Aunt Mary Maria gallantly.

“Some poor home missionary may be the better of it,” she thought. “Three petticoats, indeed! I flatter myself I am a decent woman and I like that Silver Bow person. She may not have much in the way of clothes on, but if

I had a figure like that I do not know that I would want to hide it. But now to see about the turkey stuffing ... not that it will amount to much with no onion in it.”

Ingleside was full of happiness that day, just plain, old-fashioned happiness, in spite of Aunt Mary Maria, who certainly did not like to see people too happy.

“White meat only, please. (James, eat your soup quietly.) Ah, you are not the carver your father was, Gilbert. He could give everyone the bit she liked best. (Twins, older people would like a chance now and then to get a word in edgewise. I was brought up by the rule that children should be seen and not heard.) No, thank you, Gilbert, no salad for me. I don’t eat raw food. Yes, Annie, I’ll take a little pudding. Mince pies are entirely too indigestible.”

“Susan’s mince pies are poems, just as her apple pies are lyrics,” said the doctor. “Give me a piece of both, Anne-girl.”

“Do you really like to be called ‘girl’ at your age, Annie? Walter, you haven’t eaten all your bread and butter. Plenty of poor children would be glad to have it. James dear, blow your nose and have it over with, I cannot endure sniffing.”

But it was a gay and lovely Christmas. Even Aunt Mary Maria thawed out a little after dinner, said almost graciously that the presents given her had been quite nice, and even endured the Shrimp with an air of patient martyrdom that made them all feel a little ashamed of loving him.

“I think our little folks have had a nice time,” said Anne happily that night, as she looked at the pattern of trees woven against the white hills and sunset sky, and the children out on the lawn busily scattering crumbs for birds over the snow. The wind was sighing softly in the boughs, sending flurries over the lawn and promising more storm for the morrow, but Ingleside had had its day.

“I suppose they had,” agreed Aunt Mary Maria. “I’m sure they did enough squealing, anyhow. As for what they have eaten ... ah well, you’re only

young once and I suppose you have plenty of castor-oil in the house.”

Chapter 14

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It was what Susan called a streaky winter ... all thaws and freezes that kept Ingleside decorated with fantastic fringes of icicles. The children fed seven bluejays who came regularly to the orchard for their rations and let Jem pick them up, though they flew from everybody else. Anne sat up o' nights to pore over seed catalogues in January and February. Then the winds of March swirled over the dunes and up the harbors and over the hills. Rabbits, said Susan, were laying Easter eggs.

“Isn't March an INCiting month, Mummy?” cried Jem, who was a little brother to all the winds that blew.

They could have spared the “incitement” of Jem scratching his hand on a rusty nail and having a nasty time of it for some days, while Aunt Mary Maria told all the stories of blood-poisoning she had ever heard. But that, Anne reflected when the danger was over, was what you must expect with a small son who was always trying experiments.

And lo, it was April! With the laughter of April rain ... the whisper of April rain ... the trickle, the sweep, the drive, the lash, the dance, the splash of April rain. “Oh, Mummy, hasn't the world got its face washed nice and clean?” cried Di, on the morning sunshine returned.

There were pale spring stars shining over fields of mist, there were pussywillows in the marsh. Even the little twigs on the trees seemed all at once to have lost their clear cold quality and to have become soft and languorous. The first robin was an event; the Hollow was once more a place full of wild free delight; Jem brought his mother the first mayflowers ... rather to Aunt Mary Maria's offence, since she thought they should have been offered to her; Susan began sorting over the attic shelves, and Anne, who had hardly had a minute to herself all winter, put

on spring gladness as a garment and literally lived in her garden, while the Shrimp showed his spring raptures by writhing all over the paths.

“You care more for that garden than you do for your husband, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria.

“My garden is so kind to me,” answered Anne dreamily ... then, realizing the implications that might be taken out of her remark, began to laugh.

“You do say the most extraordinary things, Annie. Of course I know you don’t mean that Gilbert isn’t kind ... but what if a stranger heard you say such a thing?”

“Dear Aunt Mary Maria,” said Anne gaily, “I’m really not responsible for the things I say this time of the year. Everybody around here knows that. I’m always a little mad in spring. But it’s such a divine madness. Do you notice those mists over the dunes like dancing witches? And the daffodils? We’ve never had such a show of daffodils at Ingleside before.”

“I don’t care much for daffodils. They are such flaunting things,” said Aunt Mary Maria, drawing her shawl around her and going indoors to protect her back.

“Do you know, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan ominously, “what has become of those new irises you wanted to plant in that shady corner? She planted them this afternoon when you were out right in the sunniest part of the back yard.”

“Oh, Susan! And we can’t move them because she’d be so hurt!”

“If you will just give me the word, Mrs. Dr. dear ...”

“No, no, Susan, we’ll leave them there for the time being. She cried, you remember, when I hinted that she shouldn’t have pruned the spirea before blooming.”

“But sneering at our daffodils, Mrs. Dr. dear ... and them famous all around the harbour ...”

“And deserve to be. Look at them laughing at you for minding Aunt Mary Maria. Susan, the nasturtiums are coming up in this corner, after all. It’s such fun when you’ve given up hope of a thing to find it has suddenly popped up. I’m going to have a little rose garden made in the southwest corner. The very name of rose garden thrills to my toes. Did you ever see such a blue blueness of sky before, Susan? And if you listen very carefully now at night you can hear all the little brooks of the countryside gossiping. I’ve half a notion to sleep in the Hollow tonight with a pillow of wild violets.”

“You would find it very damp,” said Susan patiently. Mrs. Dr. was always like this in the spring. It would pass.

“Susan,” said Anne coaxingly, “I want to have a birthday party next week.”

“Well, and why should you not?” asked Susan. To be sure, none of the family had a birthday the last week in May, but if Mrs. Dr. wanted a birthday party why boggle over that?

“For Aunt Mary Maria,” went on Anne, as one determined to get the worst over. “Her birthday is next week. Gilbert says she is fifty-five and I’ve been thinking.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear, do you really mean to get up a party for that ...”

“Count a hundred, Susan ... count a hundred, Susan dear. It would please her so. What has she in life, after all?”

“That is her own fault ...”

“Perhaps so. But, Susan, I really want to do this for her.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan ominously, “you have always been kind enough to give me a week’s vacation whenever I felt I needed it. Perhaps I had better take it next week! I will ask my niece Gladys to come and help you out. And then Miss Mary Maria Blythe can have a dozen birthday parties, for all of me.”

“If you feel like that about it, Susan, I’ll give up the idea, of course,” said Anne slowly.

“Mrs. Dr. dear, that woman has foisted herself upon you and means to stay here forever. She has worried you ... and henpecked the doctor ... and made the children’s lives miserable. I say nothing about myself, for who am I? She has scolded and nagged and insinuated and whined ... and now you want to get up a birthday party for her! Well, all I can say is, if you want to do that ... we’ll just have to go ahead and have it!”

“Susan, you old duck!”

Plotting and planning followed. Susan, having yielded, was determined that for the honour of Ingleside the party must be something that even Mary Maria Blythe could not find fault with.

“I think we’ll have a luncheon, Susan. Then they’ll be away early enough for me to go to the concert at Lowbridge with the doctor. We’ll keep it a secret and surprise her. She shan’t know a thing about it till the last minute. I’ll invite all the people in the Glen she likes... .”

“And who may they be, Mrs. Dr. dear?”

“Well, tolerates, then. And her cousin, Adella Carey from Lowbridge, and some people from town. We’ll have a big plummy birthday cake with fifty-five candles on it ...”

“Which I am to make, of course ...”

“Susan, you know you make the best fruitcake in P. E. Island ...”

“I know that I am as wax in your hands, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

A mysterious week followed. An air of hush-hush pervaded Ingleside. Everybody was sworn not to give the secret away to Aunt Mary Maria. But Anne and Susan had reckoned without gossip. The night before the party Aunt Mary Maria came home from a call in the Glen to find them sitting rather wearily in the unlighted sun-room.

“All in the dark, Annie? It beats me how anyone can like sitting in the dark. It gives me the blues.”

“It isn’t dark ... it’s twilight ... there has been a love-match between light and dark and beautiful exceedingly is the offspring thereof,” said Anne, more to herself than anybody else.

“I suppose you know what you mean yourself, Annie. And so you’re having a party tomorrow?”

Anne suddenly sat bolt upright. Susan, already sitting so, could not sit any uprighter.

“Why ... why ... Aunty ...”

“You always leave me to hear things from outsiders,” said Aunt Mary Maria, but seemingly more in sorrow than in anger.

“We ... we meant it for a surprise, Aunty ...”

“I don’t know what you want of a party this time of year when you can’t depend on the weather, Annie.”

Anne drew a breath of relief. Evidently Aunt Mary Maria knew only that there was to be a party, not that it had any connexion with her.

“I ... I wanted to have it before the spring flowers were done, Aunty.”

“I shall wear my garnet taffeta. I suppose, Annie, if I had not heard of this in the village I should have been caught by all your fine friends tomorrow in a cotton dress.”

“Oh, no, Aunty. We meant to tell you in time to dress, of course ...”

“Well, if my advice means anything to you, Annie ... and sometimes I am almost compelled to think it does not ... I would say that in future it would be better for you not to be quite so secretive about things. By the way, are you aware that they are saying in the village that it was Jem who threw the stone through the window of the Methodist church?”

“He did not,” said Anne quietly. “He told me he did not.”

“Are you sure, Annie dear, that he was not fibbing?”

“Annie dear” still spoke quietly.

“Quite sure, Aunt Mary Maria. Jem has never told me an untruth in his life.”

“Well, I thought you ought to know what was being said.”

Aunt Mary Maria stalked off in her usual gracious manner, ostentatiously avoiding the Shrimp, who was lying on his back on the floor entreating someone to tickle his stomach.

Susan and Anne drew a long breath.

“I think I’ll go to bed, Susan. And I do hope it is going to be fine tomorrow. I don’t like the look of that dark cloud over the harbour.”

“It will be fine, Mrs. Dr. dear,” reassured Susan. “The almanack says so.”

Susan had an almanack which foretold the whole year’s weather and was right often enough to keep up its credit.

“Leave the side door unlocked for the doctor, Susan. He may be late getting home from town. He went in for the roses ... fifty-five golden roses, Susan ... I’ve heard Aunt Mary Maria say that yellow roses were the only flowers she liked.”

Half an hour later, Susan, reading her nightly chapter in her Bible, came across the verse, “Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house lest he weary of thee and hate thee.” She put a sprig of southernwood in it to mark the spot. “Even in those days,” she reflected.

Anne and Susan were both up early, desiring to complete certain last preparations before Aunt Mary Maria should be about. Anne always liked to get up early and catch that mystical half-hour before sunrise when the world belongs to the fairies and the old gods. She liked to see the morning

sky of pale rose and gold behind the church spire, the thin, translucent glow of sunrise spreading over the dunes, the first violet spirals of smoke floating up from the village roofs.

“It’s as if we had had a day made to order, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan complacently, as she feathered an orange-frosted cake with cocoanut. “I will try my hand at them new-fangled butterballs after breakfast and I will phone Carter Flagg every half-hour to make sure that he will not forget the ice-cream. And there will be time to scrub the verandah steps.”

“Is that necessary, Susan?”

“Mrs. Dr. dear, you have invited Mrs. Marshall Elliott, have you not? She shall not see our verandah steps otherwise than spotless. But you will see to the decorations, Mrs. Dr. dear? I was not born with the gift of arranging flowers.”

“Four cakes! Gee!” said Jem.

“When we give a party,” said Susan grandly, “we give a party.”

The guests came in due time and were received by Aunt Mary Maria in garnet taffeta and by Anne in biscuit-coloured voile. Anne thought of putting on her white muslin, for the day was summer-warm, but decided otherwise.

“Very sensible of you, Annie,” commented Aunt Mary Maria. “White, I always say, is only for the young.”

Everything went according to schedule. The table looked beautiful with Anne’s prettiest dishes and the exotic beauty of white and purple iris. Susan’s butterballs made a sensation, nothing like them having been seen in the Glen before; her cream soup was the last word in soups; the chicken salad had been made of Ingleside “chickens that are chickens”; the badgered Carter Flagg sent up the ice-cream on the tick of the dot. Finally Susan, bearing the birthday cake with its fifty-five lighted candles as if it were the Baptist’s head on a charger, marched in and set it down before Aunt Mary Maria.

Anne, outwardly the smiling serene hostess, had been feeling very uncomfortable for some time. In spite of all outward smoothness she had an ever-deepening conviction that something had gone terribly wrong. On the guests' arrival she had been too much occupied to notice the change that came over Aunt Mary Maria's face when Mrs. Marshall Elliott cordially wished her many happy returns of the day. But when they were all finally seated around the table Anne wakened up to the fact that Aunt Mary Maria was looking anything but pleased. She was actually white ... it couldn't be with fury! ... and not one word did she say as the meal progressed, save curt replies to remarks addressed to her. She took only two spoonfuls of soup and three mouthfuls of salad; as for the ice-cream, she behaved to it as if it wasn't there.

When Susan set the birthday cake, with its flickering candles, down before her, Aunt Mary Maria gave a fearful gulp which was not quite successful in swallowing a sob and consequently issued as a strangled whoop.

"Aunty, aren't you feeling well?" cried Anne.

Aunt Mary Maria stared at her icily.

"Quite well, Annie. Remarkably well, indeed, for such an aged person as myself."

At this auspicious moment the twins popped in, carrying between them the basketful of fifty-five yellow roses, and, amid a suddenly frozen silence, presented it to Aunt Mary Maria, with lisped congratulations and good wishes. A chorus of admiration went up from the table, but Aunt Mary Maria did not join in it.

"The ... the twins will blow out the candles for you, Aunty," faltered Anne nervously, "and then ... will you cut the birthday cake?"

"Not being quite senile ... yet ... Annie, I can blow the candles out myself."

Aunt Mary Maria proceeded to blow them out, painstakingly and deliberately. With equal painstaking and deliberation she cut the cake.

Then she laid the knife down.

“And now perhaps I may be excused, Annie. Such an old woman as I am needs rest after so much excitement.”

Swish went Aunt Mary Maria’s taffeta skirt. Crash went the basket of roses as she swept past it. Click went Aunt Mary Maria’s high heels up the stairs. Bang went Aunt Mary Maria’s door in the distance.

The dumfounded guests ate their slices of birthday cake with such appetite as they could muster, in a strained silence broken only by a story Mrs. Amos Martin told desperately of a doctor in Nova Scotia who had poisoned several patients by injecting diphtheria germs into them. The others, feeling that this might not be in the best of taste, did not back up her laudable effort to “liven things up” and all went away as soon as they decently could.

A distracted Anne rushed to Aunt Mary Maria’s room.

“Aunty, what is the matter? ...”

“Was it necessary to advertise my age in public, Annie? And to ask Adella Carey here ... to have her find out how old I am ... she’s been dying to know for years!”

“Aunty, we meant ... we meant ...”

“I don’t know what your purpose was, Annie. That there is something back of all this I know very well ... oh, I can read your mind, dear Annie ... but I shall not try to ferret it out ... I shall leave it between you and your conscience.”

“Aunt Mary Maria, my only intention was to give you a happy birthday. I’m dreadfully sorry... .”

Aunt Mary Maria put her handkerchief to her eyes and smiled bravely.

“Of course I forgive you, Annie. But you must realize that after such a deliberate attempt to injure my feelings I cannot stay here any longer.”

“Amity, won’t you believe ...”

Aunt Mary Maria lifted a long, thin, knobby hand.

“Don’t let us discuss it, Annie. I want peace ... just peace. ‘A wounded spirit who can bear?’”

Anne went to the concert with Gilbert that night, but it could not be said she enjoyed it. Gilbert took the whole matter “just like a man,” as Miss Cornelia might have said.

“I remember she was always a little touchy about her age. Dad used to rag her. I should have warned you ... but it had slipped my memory. If she goes, don’t try to stop her” ... and refrained through clannishness from adding “good riddance!”

“She will not go. No such good luck, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan incredulously.

But for once Susan was wrong. Aunt Mary Maria went away the very next day, forgiving everybody with her parting breath.

“Don’t blame Annie, Gilbert,” she said magnanimously. “I acquit her of all intentional insult. I never minded her having secrets from me ... though to a sensitive mind like mine ... but in spite of everything I’ve always liked poor Annie” ... this with the air of one confessing a weakness. “But Susan Baker is a cat of another colour. My last word to you, Gilbert, is ... put Susan Baker in her place and keep her there.”

Nobody could believe in their good luck at first. Then they woke up to the fact that Aunt Mary Maria had really gone ... that it was possible to laugh again without hurting anyone’s feelings ... open all the windows without anyone complaining of draughts ... eat a meal without anyone telling you that something you specially liked was liable to produce cancer of the stomach.

“I’ve never sped a parting guest so willingly,” thought Anne, half guiltily. “It is nice to call your soul your own again.”

The Shrimp groomed himself meticulously, feeling that, after all, there was some fun in being a cat. The first peony burst into bloom in the garden.

“The world is just full of poetry, isn’t it, Mummy?” said Walter.

“It is going to be a real nice June,” foretold Susan. “The almanack says so. There are going to be a few brides and most likely at least two funerals. Does it not seem strange to be able to draw a free breath again? When I think that I did all that in me lay to prevent you giving that party, Mrs. Dr. dear, I realize afresh that there is an overruling Providence. And don’t you think, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the doctor would relish some onions with his fried steak today?”

Chapter 15

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“I felt I had to come up, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia, “and explain about that telephone. It was all a mistake ... I’m so sorry ... Cousin Sarah isn’t dead, after all.” Anne, smothering a smile, offered Miss Cornelia a chair on the verandah, and Susan, looking up from the collar of Irish-crochet lace she was making for her niece Gladys, uttered a scrupulously polite, “Good-evening, Mrs. Marshall Elliott.”

“The word came out from the hospital this morning that she had passed away in the night, and I felt I ought to inform you, since she was the doctor’s patient. But it was another Sarah Chase and Cousin Sarah is living and likely to live, I’m thankful to say. It’s real nice and cool here, Anne. I always say if there’s a breeze to be had anywhere it’s at Ingleside.”

“Susan and I have been enjoying the charm of this starlit evening,” said Anne, laying aside the dress of pink, smocked muslin she was making for Nan and clasping her hands over her knees. An excuse to be idle for a little while was not unwelcome. Neither she nor Susan had many idle moments nowadays.

There was going to be a moonrise and the prophecy of it was even lovelier than the moonrise itself would be. Tiger lilies were “burning bright” along the walk and whiffs of honeysuckle went and came on the wings of the dreaming wind.

“Look at that wave of poppies breaking against the garden wall, Miss Cornelia. Susan and I are very proud of our poppies this year, though we hadn’t a single thing to do with them. Walter spilt a packet of seed there by accident in the spring and this is the result. Every year we have some delightful surprise like that.”

“I’m partial to poppies,” said Miss Cornelia, “though they don’t last long.”

“They have only a day to live,” admitted Anne, “but how imperially, how gorgeous they live it! Isn’t that better than being a stiff horrible zinnia that lasts practically for ever? We have no zinnias at Ingleside. They’re the only flowers we are not friends with. Susan won’t even speak to them.”

“Anybody being murdered in the Hollow?” asked Miss Cornelia. Indeed, the sounds that came drifting up would seem to indicate that someone was being burned at the stake. But Anne and Susan were too accustomed to that to be disturbed.

“Persis and Kenneth have been here all day and they wound up by a banquet in the Hollow. As for Mrs. Chase, Gilbert went to town this morning, so he would know the truth about her. I am glad for everyone’s sake she is doing so well ... the other doctors did not agree with Gilbert’s diagnosis and he was a little worried.”

“Sarah warned us when she went to the hospital that we were not to bury her unless we were sure she was dead,” said Miss Cornelia, fanning herself majestically and wondering how the doctor’s wife always managed to look so cool. “You see, we were always a little afraid her husband was buried alive ... he looked so lifelike. But nobody thought of it until it was too late. He was a brother of this Richard Chase who bought the old Moorside farm and moved there from Lowbridge in the spring. He’s a card. Said he came to the country to get some peace ... he had to spend all his time in Lowbridge dodging widows” ... “and old maids,” Miss Cornelia might have added but did not, out of regard for Susan’s feelings.

“I’ve met his daughter Stella ... she comes to choir practice. We’ve taken quite a fancy to each other.”

“Stella is a sweet girl ... one of the few girls left that can blush. I’ve always loved her. Her mother and I used to be great cronies. Poor Lisette!”

“She died young?”

“Yes, when Stella was only eight. Richard brought Stella up himself. And him an infidel if he’s anything! He says women are only important

biologically ... whatever that may mean. He's always shooting off some big talk like that."

"He doesn't seem to have made such a bad job of bringing her up," said Anne, who thought Stella Chase one of the most charming girls she had ever met.

"Oh, you couldn't spoil Stella. And I'm not denying Richard has got a good deal in his headpiece. But he's a crank about young men ... he has never let poor Stella have a single beau in her life! All the young men who tried to go with her he simply terrified out of their senses with sarcasm. He is the most sarcastic creature you ever heard of. Stella can't manage him ... her mother before her couldn't manage him. They didn't know how. He goes by contraries but neither of them ever seemed to catch on to that."

"I thought Stella seemed very devoted to her father."

"Oh, she is. She adores him. He is a most agreeable man when he gets his own way about everything. But he should have more sense about Stella's marrying. He must know he can't live forever ... though to hear him talk you'd think he meant to. He isn't an old man, of course ... he was very young when he was married. But strokes run in that family. And what is Stella to do after he's gone? Just shrivel up, I suppose."

Susan looked up from the intricate rose of her Irish crochet long enough to say decidedly:

"I do not hold with old folks spoiling young ones lives in that fashion."

"Perhaps if Stella really cared for anyone her father's objections might not weight much with her."

"That's where you're mistaken, Anne dearie. Stella would never marry anyone her father didn't like. And I can tell you another whose life is going to be spoiled, and that's Marshall's nephew, Alden Churchill. Mary is determined he shan't marry as long as she can keep him from it. She's even more contrary than Richard ... if she was a weather-vane she'd point

north when the wind was south. The property is hers till Alden marries and then it goes to him, you know. Every time he's gone about with a girl she has contrived to put a stop to it somehow."

"Indeed, is it all her doings, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?" queried Susan dryly. "Some folks think that Alden is very changeable. I have heard him called a flirt."

"Alden is handsome and the girls chase him," retorted Miss Cornelia. "I don't blame him for stringing them along a bit and dropping them when he's taught them a lesson. But there's been one or two nice girls he really liked and Mary just blocked it every time. She told me so herself ... told me she went to the Bible ... she's always 'going to the Bible' ... and turned up a verse and every time it was a warning against Alden getting married. I've no patience with her and her odd ways. Why can't she go to church and be a decent creature like the rest of us around Four Winds? But no, she must set up a religion for herself, consisting of 'going to the Bible.' Last fall, when that valuable horse took sick ... worth four hundred if a dollar ... instead of sending for the Lowbridge vet she 'went to the Bible' and turned up a verse ... 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' So send for the vet she would not and the horse died. Fancy applying that verse in such a way, Anne dearie. I call it irreverent. I told her so flat but all the answer I got was a dirty look. And she won't have the phone put in. 'Do you think I'm going to talk into a box on the wall?' she says when anyone broaches it."

Miss Cornelia paused, rather out of breath. Her sister-in-law's vagaries always made her impatient.

"Alden isn't at all like his mother," said Anne.

"Alden's like his father ... a finer man never stepped ... as men go. Why he ever married Mary was something the Elliotts could never fathom. Though they were more than glad to get her married off so well ... she always had a screw loose and such a beanpole of a girl. Of course she had lots of money ... her Aunt Mary left her everything ... but that wasn't the reason, George Churchill was really in love with her. I don't know how Alden stands his mother's whims; but he's been a good son."

“Do you know what has just occurred to me, Miss Cornelia?” said Anne with an impish smile. “Wouldn’t it be a nice thing if Alden and Stella should fall in love with each other?”

“There isn’t much chance of that and they wouldn’t get anywhere if they did. Mary would tear up the turf and Richard would show a plain farmer the door in a minute, even if he is a farmer himself now. But Stella isn’t the kind of a girl Alden fancies ... he likes the high-coloured laughing ones. And Stella wouldn’t care for his type. I did hear the new minister at Lowbridge was making sheep’s eyes at her.”

“Isn’t he rather anemic and shortsighted?” asked Anne.

“And his eyes bulge,” said Susan. “They must be dreadful when he tries to look sentimental.”

“At least he’s a Presbyterian,” said Miss Cornelia, as if that atoned for much. “Well, I must be going. I find if I’m out in the dew much my neuralgia troubles me.”

“I’ll walk down to the gate with you.”

“You always looked like a queen in that dress, Anne dearie,” said Miss Cornelia, admiringly and irrelevantly.

Anne met Owen and Leslie Ford at the gate and brought them back to the verandah. Susan had vanished to get lemonade for the doctor, who had just arrived home, and the children came swarming up from the Hollow sleepy and happy.

“You were making dreadful noise as I drove in,” said Gilbert. “The whole countryside must have heard you.”

Persis Ford, shaking back her thick honey-tinted curls, stuck out her tongue at him. Persis was a great favourite with “Uncle Gil.”

“We were just imitating howling dervishes, so of course we had to howl,” explained Kenneth.

“Look at the state your blouse is in,” said Leslie rather severely.

“I fell in Di’s mud-pie,” said Kenneth, with decided satisfaction in his tone. He loathed those starched, spotless blouses Mother made him wear when he came up to the Glen.

“Mother dearwums,” said Jem, “can I have those old ostrich feathers in the garret to sew in the back of my pants for a tail? We’re going to have a circus tomorrow and I’m to be the ostrich. And we’re going to get an elephant.”

“Do you know that it costs six hundred dollars a year to feed an elephant?” said Gilbert solemnly.

“An imaginary elephant doesn’t cost anything,” explained Jem patiently.

Anne laughed. “We never need to be economical in our imaginations, thank heaven.”

Walter said nothing. He was a little tired and quite content to sit down beside Mother on the steps and lean his black head against her shoulder. Leslie Ford, looking at him, thought that he had the face of a genius ... the remote, detached look of a soul from another star. Earth was not his habitat.

Everybody was very happy in this golden hour of a golden day. A bell in a church across the harbour rang faintly and sweetly. The moon was making patterns on the water. The dunes shimmered in hazy silver. There was a tang of mint in the air and some unseen roses were unbearably sweet. And Anne, looking dreamily over the lawn with eyes that, in spite of six children, were still very young, thought there was nothing in the world so slim and elfin as a very young lombardy poplar by moonlight.

Then she began to think about Stella Chase and Alden Churchill, until Gilbert offered her a penny for her thoughts.

“I’m thinking seriously of trying my hand at matchmaking,” retorted Anne.

Gilbert looked at the others in mock despair.

“I was afraid it would break out again some day. I’ve done my best, but you can’t reform a born matchmaker. She has a positive passion for it. The number of matches she has made is incredible. I couldn’t sleep o’ nights if I had such responsibilities on my conscience.”

“But they’re all happy,” protested Anne. “I’m really an adept. Think of all the matches I’ve made ... or been accused of making ... Theodora Dix and Ludovic Speed ... Stephen Clark and Prissie Gardner ... Janet Sweet and John Douglas ... Professor Carter and Esme Taylor ... Nora and Jim ... and Dovie and Jarvis ...”

“Oh, I admit it. This wife of mine, Owen, has never lost her sense of expectation. Thistles may, for her, bear figs at any time. I suppose she’ll keep on trying to marry people off until she grows up.”

“I think she had something to do with another match yet,” said Owen, smiling at his wife.

“Not I,” said Anne promptly. “Blame Gilbert for that. I did my best to persuade him not to have that operation performed on George Moore. Talk about sleeping o’ nights ... there are nights when I wake up in a cold perspiration dreaming that I succeeded.”

“Well, they say it is only happy women who matchmake, so that is one up for me,” said Gilbert complacently. “What new victims have you in mind now, Anne?”

Anne only grinned at him. Matchmaking is something requiring subtlety and discretion and there are things you do not tell even to your husband.

Chapter 16

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Anne lay awake for hours that night and several nights thereafter, thinking about Alden and Stella. She had a feeling that Stella thought longingly about marriage ... a home ... babies. She had begged one night to be allowed to give Rilla her bath ... “It’s so delightful to bathe her plump, dimpled little body” ... and again, shyly, “It’s so lovely, Mrs. Blythe, to have little darling velvet arms stretched out to you. Babies are so right, aren’t they?” It would be a shame if a grouchy father should prevent the blossoming of those secret hopes.

It would be an ideal marriage. But how could it be brought about, with everybody concerned a bit stubborn and contrary? For the stubbornness and contrariness were not all on the old folks’ side. Anne suspected that both Alden and Stella had a streak of it. This required an entirely different technique from any previous affair. In the nick of time Anne remembered Dovie’s father.

Anne tilted her chin and went at it. Alden and Stella, she considered, were as good as married from that hour.

There was no time to be lost. Alden, who lived at the Harbour Head and went to the Anglican church over the harbour, had not even met Stella Chase as yet ... perhaps had not even seen her. He had not been dangling after any girl for some months, but he might begin at any moment. Mrs. Janet Swift, of the Upper Glen, had a very handsome niece visiting her and Alden was always after the new girls. The first thing to do, then, was to have Alden and Stella meet. How was this to be managed? It must be brought about in some way absolutely innocent in appearance. Anne racked her brains but could think of nothing more original than giving a party and inviting them both. She did not altogether like the idea. It was hot weather for a party ... and the Four Winds young people were such romps. Anne knew Susan would never consent to a party without

practically housecleaning Ingleside from attic to cellar ... and Susan was feeling the heat this summer. But a good cause demands sacrifices. Jen Pringle, B.A., had written that she was coming for a long-promised visit to Ingleside and that would be the very excuse for a party. Luck seemed to be on her side. Jen came ... the invitations were sent out ... Susan gave Ingleside its overhauling ... she and Anne did all the cooking for the party themselves in the heart of a heat-wave.

Anne was woefully tired the night before the party. The heat had been terrible ... Jem was sick in bed with an attack of what Anne secretly feared was appendicitis though Gilbert lightly dismissed it as only green apples ... and the Shrimp had been nearly scalded to death when Jen Pringle, trying to help Susan, knocked a pan of hot water off the stove on him. Every bone in Anne's body ached, her head ached, her feet ached, her eyes ached. Jen had gone with a group of young fry to see the lighthouse, telling Anne to go right to bed; but instead of going to bed she sat out on the verandah in the dampness that followed the afternoon's thunderstorm and talked to Alden Churchill, who had called to get some medicine for his mother's bronchitis but would not go into the house. Anne thought it was a heavensent opportunity, for she wanted very much to have a talk with him. They were quite good friends, since Alden often called on a similar errand.

Alden sat on the verandah step with his bare head thrown back against the post. He was, as Anne always thought, a very handsome fellow ... tall and broad-shouldered, with a marble-white face that never tanned, vivid blue eyes, and a stiff, upstanding brush of inky black hair. He had a laughing voice and a nice, deferential way which women of all ages liked. He had gone to Queen's for three years and had thought of going to Redmond, but his mother refused to let him go, alleging Biblical reasons, and Alden had settled down contentedly enough on the farm. He liked farming, he had told Anne; it was free, out-of-doors, independent work: he had his mother's knack of making money and his father's attractive personality. It was no wonder he was considered something of a matrimonial prize.

"Alden, I want to ask a favour of you," said Anne winningly. "Will you do it for me?"

“Sure, Mrs. Blythe,” he answered heartily. “Just name it. You know I’d do anything for you.”

Alden was really very fond of Mrs. Blythe and would really have done a good deal for her.

“I’m afraid it will bore you,” said Anne anxiously. “But it’s just this ... I want you to see that Stella Chase has a good time at my party tomorrow night. I’m so afraid she won’t. She doesn’t know many young people around here yet ... most of them are younger than she is ... at least the boys are. Ask her to dance and see that she isn’t left alone and out of things. She’s so shy with strangers. I do want her to have a good time.”

“Oh, I’ll do my best,” said Alden readily.

“But you mustn’t fall in love with her, you know,” warned Anne, laughing carefully.

“Have a heart, Mrs. Blythe. Why not?”

“Well,” confidentially, “I think Mr. Paxton of Lowbridge has taken quite a fancy to her.”

“That conceited young coxcomb?” exploded Alden, with unexpected warmth.

Anne looked mild rebuke.

“Why, Alden, I’m told he is a very nice young man. It’s only that kind of a man who would have any chance with Stella’s father, you know.”

“That so?” said Alden, relapsing into his indifference.

“Yes ... and I don’t know if even he would. I understand Mr. Chase thinks there is nobody good enough for Stella. I’m afraid a plain farmer wouldn’t have a look-in. So I don’t want you to make trouble for yourself falling in love with a girl you could never get. I’m just dropping a friendly warning. I’m sure your mother would think as I do.”

“Oh, thanks ... What sort of a girl is she, anyhow. Looks good?”

“Well, I admit she isn’t a beauty. I like Stella very much ... but she’s a little pale and retiring. Not overly strong ... but I’m told Mr. Paxton has money of his own. To my thinking it should be an ideal match and I don’t want anyone to spoil it.”

“Why didn’t you invite Mr. Paxton to your spree and tell him to give your Stella a good time?” demanded Alden rather truculently.

“You know a minister wouldn’t come to a dance, Alden. Now, don’t be cranky ... and do see that Stella has a nice time.”

“Oh, I’ll see that she has a rip-roaring time. Goodnight, Mrs. Blythe.”

Alden swung off abruptly. Left alone, Anne laughed. “Now, if I know anything of human nature that boy will sail right in to show the world he can get Stella if he wants her in spite of anybody. He rose right to my bait about the minister. But I suppose I’m in for a bad night with this headache.”

She had a bad night, complicated by what Susan called “a crick in the neck,” and felt about as brilliant as grey flannel in the morning; but in the evening she was a gay and gallant hostess. The party was a success. Everybody seemed to have a good time. Stella certainly had. Alden saw to that almost too zealously for good form, Anne thought. It was going a bit strong for a first meeting that Alden should whisk Stella off to a dim corner of the verandah after supper and keep her there for an hour. But on the whole Anne was satisfied when she thought things over the next morning. To be sure, the dining-room carpet has been practically ruined by two spilled saucerfuls of ice-cream and a plateful of cake being ground into it; Gilbert’s grandmother’s Bristol glass candlesticks had been smashed to smithereens; somebody had upset a pitcherful of rainwater in the spare room which had soaked down and discoloured the library ceiling in a tragic fashion; the tassels were half torn off the chesterfield; Susan’s big Boston fern, the pride of her heart, had apparently been sat upon by some large and heavy person. But on the credit side of the ledger was the

fact that, unless all signs failed, Alden had fallen for Stella. Anne thought the balance was in her favour.

Local gossip within the next few weeks confirmed this view. It became increasingly evident that Alden was hooked. But what about Stella? Anne did not think Stella was the sort of girl to fall too ripely into any man's outstretched hand. She had a spice of her father's "contrariness," which in her worked out as a charming independence.

Again luck befriended a worried matchmaker. Stella came to see the Ingleside delphiniums one evening and afterwards they sat on the verandah and talked. Stella Chase was a pale, slender thing, rather shy but intensely sweet. She had a soft cloud of pale gold hair and woodbrown eyes. Anne thought it was her eyelashes did the trick, for she was not really pretty. They were unbelievably long and when she lifted them and dropped them it did things to masculine hearts. She had a certain distinction of manner which made her seem a little older than her twenty-four years and a nose that might be decidedly aquiline in later life.

"I've been hearing things about you, Stella," said Anne, shaking a finger at her. "And ... I ... don't ... know ... if ... I ... liked ... them. Will you forgive me for saying that I wonder if Alden Churchill is just the right beau for you?"

Stella turned a startled face.

"Why ... I thought you liked Alden, Mrs. Blythe."

"I do like him. But ... well, you see ... he has the reputation of being very fickle. I'm told no girl can hold him long. A good many have tried ... and failed. I'd hate to see you left like that if his fancy veered."

"I think you are mistaken about Alden, Mrs. Blythe," said Stella slowly.

"I hope so, Stella. If you were a different type now ... bouncing and jolly, like Eileen Swift ..."

“Oh, well ... I must be going home,” said Stella vaguely. “Father will be lonely.”

When she had gone Anne laughed again.

“I rather think Stella has gone away secretly vowing that she will show meddlesome friends that she can hold Alden and that no Eileen Swift shall ever get her claws on him. That little toss of her head and that sudden flush on her cheeks told me that. So much for the young folks. I’m afraid the older ones will be tougher nuts to crack.”

Chapter 17

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Anne's luck held. The Women's Missionary Auxiliary asked her if she would call on Mrs. George Churchill for her yearly contribution to the society. Mrs. Churchill seldom went to church and was not a member of the Auxiliary, but she "believed in missions" and always gave a generous sum if anyone called and asked her for it. People enjoyed doing this so little that the members had to take their turn at it and this year the turn was Anne's.

She walked down one evening, taking a daisied trail across lots which led over the sweet, cool loveliness of a hilltop to the road where the Churchill farm lay, a mile from the Glen. It was rather a dull road, with grey snake fences running up steep little slopes ... yet it had homelights ... a brook ... the smell of hayfields that run down to the sea ... gardens. Anne stopped to look at every garden she passed. Her interest in gardens was perennial. Gilbert was wont to say that Anne had to buy a book if the word "garden" were in the title.

A lazy boat idled down the harbour and far out a vessel was becalmed. Anne always watched an outward bound ship with a little quickening of her pulses. She understood Captain Franklin Drew when she heard him say once, as he went on board his vessel at the wharf, "God, how sorry I am for the folks we leave on shore!"

The big Churchill house, with the grim iron lacework around its flat mansard roof, looked down on the harbour and the dunes. Mrs. Churchill greeted her politely, if none too effusively, and ushered her into a gloomy and splendid parlour, the dark, brown-papered walls of which were hung with innumerable crayons of departed Churchills and Elliotts. Mrs. Churchill sat down on a green plush sofa, folded her long thin hands, and gazed steadily at her caller.

Mary Churchill was tall and gaunt and austere. She had a prominent chin, deep-set blue eyes like Alden's, and a wide, compressed mouth. She never wasted words and she never gossiped. So Anne found it rather difficult to work up to her objective naturally, but she managed it through the medium of the new minister across the harbour whom Mrs. Churchill did not like.

"He is not a spiritual man," said Mrs. Churchill coldly.

"I have heard that his sermons are remarkable," said Anne.

"I heard one and do not wish to hear more. My soul sought food and was given a lecture. He believes the Kingdom of Heaven can be taken by brains. It cannot."

"Speaking of ministers ... they have a very clever one at Lowbridge now. I think he is interested in my young friend, Stella Chase. Gossip says it will be a match."

"Do you mean a marriage?" said Mrs. Churchill.

Anne felt snubbed but reflected that you had to swallow things like that when you were interfering in what didn't concern you.

"I think it would be a very suitable one, Mrs. Churchill. Stella is especially fitted for a minister's wife. I've been telling Alden he mustn't try to spoil it."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Churchill, without the flicker of an eyelid.

"Well ... really ... you know ... I'm afraid Alden would stand no chance whatever. Mr. Chase doesn't think anyone good enough for Stella. All Alden's friends would hate to see him dropped suddenly like an old glove. He's too nice a boy for that."

"No girl ever dropped my son," said Mrs. Churchill, compressing her thin lips. "It was always the other way about. He found them out, for all their curls and giggles, their wriggings and mincings. My son can marry any woman he chooses, Mrs. Blythe ... any woman."

“Oh?” said Anne’s tongue. Her tone said, “Of course I am too polite to contradict you but you have not changed my opinion.” Mary Churchill understood and her white, shrivelled face warmed a little as she went out of the room to get her missionary contribution.

“You have the most wonderful view here,” said Anne, when Mrs. Churchill ushered her to the door.

Mrs. Churchill gave the gulf a glance of disapproval.

“If you felt the bite of the east wind in winter, Mrs. Blythe, you might not think so much of the view. It’s cool enough tonight. I should think you’d be afraid of catching cold in that thin dress. Not but what it’s a pretty one. You are young enough still to care for gauds and vanities. I have ceased to feel any interest in such transitory things.”

Anne felt fairly well satisfied with the interview as she went home through the dim green twilight.

“Of course one can’t count on Mrs. Churchill,” she told a flock of starlings who were holding a parliament in a little field scooped out of the woods, “but I think I worried her a little. I could see she didn’t like having people think Alden could be jilted. Well, I’ve done what in me lies with all concerned except Mr. Chase and I don’t see what I can do with him when I don’t even know him. I wonder if he has the slightest notion that Alden and Stella are sweethearting. Not likely. Stella would never dare take Alden to the house, of course. Now, what am I to do about Mr. Chase?”

It was really uncanny ... the way things helped her out. One evening Miss Cornelia came along and asked Anne to accompany her to the Chase home.

“I’m going down to ask Richard Chase for a contribution to the new church kitchen stove. Will you come with me, dearie, just as a moral support? I hate to tackle him alone.”

They found Mr. Chase standing on his front steps, looking, with his long legs and his long nose, rather like a meditative crane. He had a few shining strands of hair brushed over the top of his bald head and his little grey

eyes twinkled at them. He happened to be thinking that if that was the doctor's wife with old Cornelia she had a mighty good figure. As for Cousin Cornelia, twice removed, she was a bit too solidly built and had about as much intellect as a grasshopper, but she wasn't a bad old cat at all if you always rubbed her the right way.

He invited them courteously into his small library, where Miss Cornelia settled into a chair with a little grunt.

"It's dreadful hot tonight. I'm afraid we'll have a thunderstorm. Mercy on us, Richard, that cat is bigger than ever!"

Richard Chase had a familiar in the shape of a yellow cat of abnormal size which now climbed up on his knee. He stroked it tenderly.

"Thomas the Rhymer gives the world assurance of a cat," he said. "Don't you, Thomas? Look at your Aunt Cornelia, Rhymer. Observe the baleful glances she is casting at you out of orbs created to express only kindness and affection."

"Don't you call me that beast's Aunt Cornelia!" protested Mrs. Elliott sharply. "A joke is a joke but that is carrying things too far."

"Wouldn't you rather be the Rhymer's aunt than Neddy Churchill's aunt?" queried Richard Chase plaintively. "Neddy is a glutton and a wine-bibber, isn't he? I've heard you giving a catalogue of his sins. Wouldn't you rather be aunt to a fine upstanding cat like Thomas with a blameless record where whiskey and tabbies are concerned?"

"Poor Ned is a human being," retorted Miss Cornelia. "I don't like cats. That is the only fault I have to find with Alden Churchill. He has got the strangest liking for cats, too. Lord knows where he got it ... both his father and mother loathed them."

"What a sensible young man he must be!"

"Sensible! Well, he's sensible enough ... except in the matter of cats and his hankering after evolution ... another thing he didn't inherit from his

mother.”

“Do you know, Mrs. Elliott,” said Richard Chase solemnly, “I have a secret leaning towards evolution myself.”

“So you’ve told me before. Well, believe what you want to, Dick Chase ... just like a man. Thank God, nobody could ever make me believe that I descended from a monkey.”

“You don’t look it, I confess, you comely woman. I see no simian resemblances in your rosy, comfortable, eminently gracious physiognomy. Still, your great-grandmother a million times removed swung herself from branch to branch by her tail. Science proves that, Cornelia ... take it or leave it.”

“I’ll leave it, then. I’m not going to argue with you on that or any point. I’ve got my own religion and no ape-ancestors figure in it. By the way, Richard, Stella doesn’t look so well this summer as I’d like to see her.”

“She always feels the hot weather a good deal. She’ll pick up when it’s cooler.”

“I hope so. Lisette picked up every summer but the last, Richard ... don’t forget that. Stella has her mother’s constitution. It’s just as well she isn’t likely to marry.”

“Why isn’t she likely to marry? I ask from curiosity, Cornelia ... rank curiosity. The processes of feminine thought are intensely interesting to me. From what premises or data do you draw the conclusion, in your own delightful offhand way, that Stella is not likely to marry?”

“Well, Richard, to put it plainly, she isn’t the kind of girl that is very popular with men. She’s a good, sweet girl, but she doesn’t take with men.”

“She has had admirers. I have spent much of my substance in the purchase and maintenance of shotguns and bulldogs.”

“They admired your moneybags, I fancy. They were easily discouraged, weren’t they? Just one broadside of sarcasm from you and off they went. If they had really wanted Stella they wouldn’t have wilted for that any more than for your imaginary bulldog. No, Richard, you might as well admit the fact that Stella isn’t the girl to win desirable beaus. Lisette wasn’t, you know. She never had a beau till you came along.”

“But wasn’t I worth waiting for? Surely Lisette was a wise young woman. You would not have me give my daughter to any Tom, Dick or Harry, would you? My star, who, in spite of your disparaging remarks, is fit to shine in the palaces of kings?”

“We have no kings in Canada,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “I’m not saying Stella isn’t a lovely girl. I’m only saying the men don’t seem to see it and, considering her constitution, I think it is just as well. A good thing for you, too. You could never get on without her ... you’d be as helpless as a baby. Well, promise us a contribution to the church stove range and we’ll be off. I know you’re dying to pick up that book of yours.”

“Admirable, clear-sighted woman! What a treasure you are for a cousin-in-law! I admit it... . I am dying. But no other than yourself would have been perspicacious enough to see it or amiable enough to save my life by acting upon it. How much are you holding me up for?”

“You can afford five dollars.”

“I never argue with a lady. Five dollars it is. Ah, going? She never loses time, this unique woman! Once her object is attained she straightway leaves you in peace. They don’t hatch her breed of cats nowadays. Good-evening pearl of in-laws.”

During the whole call Anne had not uttered one word. Why should she when Mrs. Elliott was doing her work for her so cleverly and unconsciously? But as Richard Chase bowed them out he suddenly bent forward confidentially.

“You’ve got the finest pair of ankles I’ve ever seen, Mrs. Blythe, and I’ve been about a bit in my time.”

“Isn’t he dreadful?” gasped Miss Cornelia as they went down the lane. “He’s always saying outrageous things like that to women. You mustn’t mind him, Anne dearie.”

Anne didn’t. She rather liked Richard Chase.

“I don’t think,” she reflected, “that he quite liked the idea of Stella not being popular with the men, in spite of the fact that their grandfathers were monkeys. I think he’d like to ‘show folks,’ too. Well I have done all I can do. I have interested Alden and Stella in each other; and, between us, Miss Cornelia and I have, I think, made Mrs. Churchill and Mr. Chase rather for the match than against it. Now I must just sit tight and see how it turns out.”

A month later Stella Chase came to Ingleside and again sat down by Anne on the verandah steps ... thinking, as she did so, that she hoped she would look like Mrs. Blythe some day ... with that ripened look ... the look of a woman who has lived fully and graciously.

The cool smoky evening had followed a cool, yellowish-grey day in early September. It was threaded with the gentle moan of the sea.

“The sea is unhappy tonight,” Walter would say when he heard that sound.

Stella seemed absentminded and quiet. Presently she said abruptly, looking up at a sorcery of stars that was being woven in the purple night, “Mrs. Blythe, I want to tell you something.”

“Yes, dear?”

“I’m engaged to Alden Churchill,” said Stella desperately. “We’ve been engaged ever since last Christmas. We told Father and Mrs. Churchill right away but we’ve kept it a secret from everyone else just because it was so sweet to have such a secret. We hated to share it with the world. But we are going to be married next month.”

Anne gave an excellent imitation of a woman who had been turned to stone. Stella was still staring at the stars, so she did not see the expression

on Mrs. Blythe's face. She went on, a little more easily:

"Alden and I met at a party in Lowbridge last November. We ... loved each other from the very first moment. He said he had always dreamed of me ... had always been looking for me. He said to himself, 'There is my wife,' when he saw me come in at the door. And I ... felt just the same. Oh, we are so happy, Mrs. Blythe!"

Still Anne said nothing, several times over.

"The only cloud on my happiness is your attitude about the matter, Mrs. Blythe. Won't you try to approve? You've been such a dear friend to me since I came to Glen St. Mary ... I've felt as if you were an older sister. And I'll feel so badly if I think my marriage is against your wish."

There was a sound of tears in Stella's voice. Anne recovered her powers of speech.

"Dearest, your happiness is all I've wanted. I like Alden ... he's a splendid fellow ... only he had the reputation of being a flirt ..."

"But he isn't. He was just looking for the right one, don't you see, Mrs. Blythe? And he couldn't find her."

"How does your father regard it?"

"Oh, Father is greatly pleased. He took to Alden from the start. They used to argue for hours about evolution. Father said he always meant to let me marry when the right man came along. I feel dreadfully about leaving him, but he says young birds have a right to their own nest. Cousin Delia Chase is coming to keep house for him and Father likes her very much."

"And Alden's mother?"

"She is quite willing, too. When Alden told her last Christmas that we were engaged she went to the Bible and the very first verse she turned up was, 'A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife.' She

said it was perfectly clear then what she ought to do and she consented at once. She is going to go to that little house of hers in Lowbridge.”

“I am glad you won’t have to live with that green plush sofa,” said Anne.

“The sofa? Oh, yes, the furniture is very old-fashioned, isn’t it? But she is taking it with her and Alden is going to refurnish completely. So you see everyone is pleased, Mrs. Blythe, and won’t you give us your good wishes, too?”

Anne leaned forward and kissed Stella’s cool satin cheek.

“I am very glad for you. God bless the days that are coming for you, my dear.”

When Stella had gone Anne flew up to her own room to avoid seeing anyone for a few moments. A cynical, lopsided old moon was coming out from behind some shaggy clouds in the east and the fields beyond seemed to wink slyly and impishly at her.

She took stock of all the preceding weeks. She had ruined her dining-room carpet, destroyed two treasured heirlooms and spoiled her library ceiling; she had been trying to use Mrs. Churchill as a cat’s-paw and Mrs. Churchill must have been laughing in her sleeve all the time.

“Who,” asked Anne of the moon, “has been made the biggest fool of in this affair? I know what Gilbert’s opinion will be. All the trouble I’ve gone to, to bring about a marriage between two people who were already engaged? I’m cured of matchmaking then ... absolutely cured. Never will I lift a finger to promote a marriage if nobody in the world ever gets married again. Well, there is one consolation ... Jen Pringle’s letter today saying she is going to marry Lewis Stedman whom she met at my party. The Bristol candlesticks were not sacrificed entirely in vain. Boys ... boys! Must you make such unearthly noises down there?”

“We’re owls ... we have to hoot,” Jem’s injured voice proclaimed from the dark shrubbery. He knew he was making a very good job of hooting. Jem could mimic the voice of any little wild thing out in the woods. Walter was

not so good at it and he presently ceased being an owl and became a rather disillusioned little boy, creeping to Mother for comfort.

“Mummy, I thought crickets sang ... and Mr. Carter Flagg said today they don’t ... they just make that noise scraping their hind-legs. Do they, Mummy?”

“Something like that ... I’m not quite sure of the process. But that is their way of singing, you know.”

“I don’t like it. I’ll never like to hear them singing again.”

“Oh, yes, you will. You’ll forget about the hind-legs in time and just think of their fairy chorus all over the harvest meadows and the autumn hills. Isn’t it bedtime, small son?”

“Mummy, will you tell me a bedtime story that will send a cold chill down my spine? And sit beside me afterwards till I go to sleep?”

“What else are mothers for, darling?”

Chapter 18

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“‘The time has come the Walrus said to talk of’ ... having a dog,” said Gilbert.

They had not had a dog at Ingleside since old Rex had been poisoned; but boys should have a dog and the doctor decided he would get them one. But he was so busy that fall that he kept putting it off; and finally one November day Jem arrived home from an afternoon spent with a school pal carrying a dog ... a little “yaller” dog with two black ears sticking cockily up.

“Joe Reese gave it to me, Mother. His name is Gyp. Hasn’t he got the cutest tail? I can keep him, can’t I, Mother?”

“What kind of a dog is he, darling?” asked Anne dubiously.

“I ... I think he’s a lot of kinds,” said Jem. “That makes him more int’resting, don’t you think, Mother? More exciting than if he was just one kind. Please, Mother.”

“Oh, if your father says yes ...”

Gilbert said “yes” and Jem entered into his heritage. Everybody at Ingleside welcomed Gyp into the family, except the Shrimp, who expressed his opinion without circumlocution. Even Susan took a liking to him and when she spun in the garret on rainy days Gyp, in his master’s absence at school, stayed with her, gloriously hunting imaginary rats in dark corners and uttering a yelp of terror whenever his eagerness brought him too close to the little spinning-wheel. It was never used ... the Morgans had left it there when they moved out ... and sat in its dark corner like a little bent old woman. Nobody could understand Gyp’s fear of it. He did not mind the big wheel at all but sat quite close to it while

Susan sent it whirling around with her wheel-pin, and raced back and forward beside her as she paced the length of the garret, twirling the long thread of wool. Susan admitted that a dog could be real company and thought his trick of lying on his back, waving his forepaws in the air, when he wanted a bone, the cleverest ever. She was as angry as Jem when Bertie Shakespeare sneeringly remarked, "Call that a dog?"

"We do call it a dog," said Susan with ominous calm. "Perhaps you would call it a hippopotamus." And Bertie had to go home that day without getting a piece of a wonderful concoction Susan called "apple crunch pie" and made regularly for the two boys and their pals. She was not around when Mac Reese asked, "Did the tide bring that in?" but Jem was able to stand up for his own dog and when Nat Flagg said that Gypsy's legs were too long for his size Jem retorted that a dog's legs had to be long enough to reach the ground. Natty was not overbright and that floored him.

November was stingy of its sunshine that year: raw winds blew through the bare, silver-branched maple grove and the Hollow was almost constantly filled with mist ... not a gracious, eerie thing like a fog but what Dad called "dank, dark, depressing, dripping, drizzly mist." The Ingleside fry had to spend most of their playtime in the garret, but they made delightful friends of two partridges that came every evening to a certain huge old apple tree, and five of their gorgeous jays were still faithful, clucking impishly as they ate the food the children put out for them. Only they were greedy and selfish and kept all the other birds away.

Winter set in with December and it snowed ceaselessly for three weeks. The fields beyond Ingleside were unbroken silver pastures, fence and gateposts wore tall white caps, windows whitened with fairy patterns and Ingleside lights bloomed out through the dim, snowy twilights, welcoming all wanderers home. It seemed to Susan that there had never been so many winter babies as there were that year; and when she left "the doctor's bite" in the pantry for him night after night she darkly opined that it would be a miracle if he toughed it out till spring.

"The ninth Drew baby! As if there weren't enough Drews in the world already!"

“I suppose Mrs. Drew will think it just the wonder we think Rilla, Susan.”

“You will have your joke, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

But in the library or the big kitchen the children planned out their summer playhouse in the Hollow while storms howled outside, or fluffy white clouds were blown over frosty stars. For blow it high or blow it low there was always at Ingleside glowing fires, comfort, shelter from storm, odours of good cheer, beds for tired little creatures.

Christmas came and went undarkened this year by any shadow of Aunt Mary Maria. There were rabbit trails in the snow to follow and great crusted fields over which you raced with your shadows and glistening hills for coasting and new skates to be tried out on the pond in the chill, rosy world of winter sunset. And always a yellow dog with black ears to run with you or meet you with ecstatic yelps of welcome when you came home, to sleep at the foot of your bed when you slept and lie at your feet while you learned your spellings, to sit close to you at meals and give you occasional reminding nudges with his little paw.

“Mother dearwums, I don’t know how I lived before Gyp came. He can talk, Mother ... he can really ... with his eyes, you know.”

Then ... tragedy! One day Gyp seemed a little dull. He would not eat though Susan tempted him with the spare-rib bone he loved; the next day the Lowbridge vet was sent for and shook his head. It was hard to say ... the dog might have found something poisonous in the woods ... he might recover and he might not. The little dog lay very quietly, taking no notice of anyone except Jem; almost to the last he tried to wag his tail when Jem touched him.

“Mother dearwums, would it be wrong to pray for Gyp?”

“Of course not, dear. We can pray always for anything we love. But I am afraid ... Gyppy is a very sick little dog.”

“Mother, you don’t think Gyppy is going to die!”

Gyp died the next morning. It was the first time death had entered into Jem's world. No one of us ever forgets the experience of watching something we love die, even if it is "only a little dog." Nobody at weeping Ingleside used that expression, not even Susan, who wiped a very red nose and muttered:

"I never took up with a dog before ... and I never will again. It hurts too much."

Susan was not acquainted with Kipling's poem on the folly of giving your heart to a dog to tear; but if she had been she would, in spite of her contempt for poetry, have thought that for once a poet had uttered sense.

Night was hard for poor Jem. Mother and Father had to be away. Walter had cried himself to sleep and he was alone ... with not even a dog to talk to. The dear brown eyes that had always been lifted to him so trustingly were glazed in death.

"Dear God," prayed Jem, "please look after my little dog who died today. You'll know him by the two black ears. Don't let him be lonesome for me ..."

Jem buried his face in the bedspread to smother a sob. When he put out the light the dark night would be looking through the window at him and there would be no Gyp. The cold winter morning would come and there would be no Gyp. Day would follow day for years and years and there would be no Gyp. He just couldn't bear it.

Then a tender arm was slipped around him and he was held close in a warm embrace. Oh, there was love left yet in the world, even if Gyppy had gone.

"Mother, will it always be like this?"

"Not always." Anne did not tell him he would soon forget ... that before long Gyppy would only be a dear memory. "Not always, little Jem. This will heal sometime ... as your burned hand healed though it hurt so much at first."

“Dad said he would get me another dog. I don’t have to have it, do I? I don’t want another dog, Mother ... not ever.”

“I know, darling.”

Mother knew everything. Nobody had a mother like his. He wanted to do something for her ... and all at once it came to him what he would do. He would get her one of those pearl necklaces in Mr. Flagg’s store. He had heard her say once that she really would like to have a pearl necklace and Dad had said, “When our ship comes in I’ll get you one, Anne-girl.”

Ways and means must be considered: He had an allowance but it was all needed for necessary things and pearl necklaces were not among the items budgeted for. Besides, he wanted to earn the money for it himself. It would be really his gift then. Mother’s birthday was in March ... only six weeks away. And the necklace would cost fifty cents!

Chapter 19

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It was not easy to earn money in the Glen but Jem went at it determinedly. He made tops out of old reels for the boys in school for two cents apiece. He sold three treasured milk teeth for three cents. He sold his slice of apple crunch pie every Saturday afternoon to Bertie Shakespeare Drew. Every night he put what he had earned into the little brass pig Nan had given him for Christmas. Such a nice shiny brass pig with a slit in his back wherein to drop coins. When you had put in fifty coppers the pig would open neatly of his own accord if you twisted his tail and yield you back your wealth. Finally to make up the last eight cents he sold his string of birds' eggs to Mac Reese. It was the finest string in the Glen and it hurt a little to let it go. But the birthday was drawing nearer and the money must be come by. Jem dropped the eight cents into the pig as soon as Mac had paid him and gloated over it.

"Twist his tail and see if he will really open up," said Mac, who didn't believe he would. But Jem refused; he was not going to open it until he was ready to go for the necklace.

The Missionary Auxiliary met at Ingleside the next afternoon and never forgot it. Right in the middle of Mrs. Norman Taylor's prayer ... and Mrs. Norman Taylor was credited with being very proud of her prayers ... a frantic small boy burst into the livingroom.

"My brass pig's gone, Mother... my brass pig's gone!"

Anne hustled him out but Mrs. Norman always considered that her prayer was spoiled and, as she had especially wanted to impress a visiting minister's wife, it was long years before she forgave Jem or would have his father as a doctor again. After the ladies had gone home Ingleside was ransacked from top to bottom for the pig, without result. Jem, between the scolding he had got for his behaviour and his anguish over his loss, could

remember just when he had seen it last or where. Mac Reese, telephoned to, responded that the last he had seen of the pig it was standing on Jem's bureau.

"You don't suppose, Susan, that Mac Reese ..."

"No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I feel quite sure he didn't. The Reeses have their faults ... terrible keen after the money they are, but it has to be honestly come by. Where can that blessed pig be?"

"Maybe the rats eat it?" said Di. Jem scoffed at the idea but it worried him. Of course rats couldn't eat a brass pig with fifty coppers inside of him. But could they?

"No, no, dear. Your pig will turn up," assured Mother.

It hadn't turned up when Jem went to school the next day. News of his loss had reached school before him and many things were said to him, not exactly comforting. But at recess Sissy Flagg sidled up to him ingratiatingly. Sissy Flagg liked Jem and Jem did not like her, in spite of — or perhaps because of — her thick yellow curls and huge brown eyes. Even at eight one may have problems concerning the opposite sex.

"I can tell you who's got your pig."

"Who?"

"You've got to pick me for Clap-in and Clap-out and I'll tell you."

It was a bitter pill but Jem swallowed it. Anything to find that pig! He sat in an agony of blushes beside the triumphant Sissy while they clapped in and clapped out, and when the bell rang he demanded his reward.

"Alice Palmer says Willy Drew told her Bob Russell told him Fred Elliott said he knew where your pig was. Go and ask Fred."

"Cheat!" cried Jem, glaring at her. "Cheat!"

Sissy laughed arrogantly. She didn't care. Jem Blythe had had to sit with her for once anyhow.

Jem went to Fred Elliott, who at first declared he knew nothing about the old pig and didn't want to. Jem was in despair. Fred Elliott was three years older than he was and a noted bully. Suddenly he had an inspiration. He pointed a grimy forefinger sternly at big, red-faced Fred Elliott.

"You are a transubstantiationist," he said distinctly.

"Here, you, don't you call me names, young Blythe."

"That is more than a name," said Jem. "That is a hoodoo word. If I say it again and point my finger at you ... so ... you may have bad luck for a week. Maybe your toes will drop off. I'll count ten and if you haven't told me before I get to ten I'll hoodoo you."

Fred didn't believe it. But the skating race came off that night and he wasn't taking chances. Besides, toes were toes. At six he surrendered.

"All right ... all right. Don't bust your jaws saying that a second time. Mac knows where your pig is ... he said he did."

Mac was not in school, but when Anne heard Jem's story she telephoned his mother. Mrs. Reese came up a little later, flushed and apologetic.

"Mac didn't take the pig, Mrs. Blythe. He just wanted to see if it would open, so when Jem was out of the room he twisted the tail. It fell apart in two pieces and he couldn't get it together again. So he put the two halves of the pig and the money in one of Jem's Sunday boots in the closet. He hadn't ought to have touched it ... and his father has whaled the stuffing out of him ... but he didn't steal it, Mrs. Blythe."

"What was that word you said to Fred Elliott, Little Jem dear?" asked Susan, when the dismembered pig had been found and the money counted.

"Transubstantiationist," said Jem proudly. "Walter found it in the dictionary last week ... you know he likes great big full words, Susan ...

and ... and we both learned how to pronounce it. We said it over to each other twenty-one times in bed before we went to sleep so that we'd remember it."

Now that the necklace was bought and stowed away in the third box from the top in the middle drawer of Susan's bureau ... Susan having been privy to the plan all along ... Jem thought the birthday would never come. He gloated over his unconscious mother. Little she knew what was hidden in Susan's bureau drawer ... little she knew what her birthday would bring her ... little she knew when she sang the twins to sleep with,

"I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing on the sea,
And oh, it was all laden with pretty things for me,"

what the ship would bring her.

Gilbert had an attack of influenza in early March which almost ran to pneumonia. There were a few anxious days at Ingleside. Anne went about as usual, smoothing out tangles, administering consolation, bending over moonlit beds to see if dear little bodies were warm; but the children missed her laughter.

"What will the world do if Father dies?" whispered Walter, white-lipped.

"He isn't going to die, darling. He is out of danger now."

Anne wondered herself what their small world of Four Winds and the Glens and the Harbour Head would do if ... if ... anything had happened to Gilbert. They were all coming to depend on him so. The Upper Glen people especially seemed really to believe that he could raise the dead and only refrained because it would be crossing the purposes of the Almighty. He had done it once, they averred ... old Uncle Archibald MacGregor had solemnly assured Susan that Samuel Hewett was dead as a doornail when Dr. Blythe brought him to. However that might be, when living people saw Gilbert's lean brown face and friendly hazel eyes by their bedside and heard his cheery, "Why, there's nothing the matter with you," ... well, they believed it until it came true. As for namesakes, he had more than he could

count. The whole Four Winds district was peppered with young Gilberts. There was even a tiny Gilbertine.

So Dad was about again and Mother was laughing again, and ... at last, it was the night before the birthday.

“If you go to bed early, Little Jem, tomorrow will come quicker,” assured Susan.

Jem tried it but it didn't seem to work. Walter fell asleep promptly, but Jem squirmed about. He was afraid to go sleep. Suppose he didn't waken in time and everybody else had given their presents to Mother? He wanted to be the very first. Why hadn't he asked Susan to be sure and call him? She had gone out to make a visit somewhere but he would ask her when she came in. If he were sure of hearing her! Well, he'd just go down and lie on the livingroom sofa and then he couldn't miss her.

Jem crept down and curled up on the chesterfield. He could see over the Glen. The moon was filling the hollows among the white, snowy dunes with magic. The great trees that were so mysterious at night held out their arms about Ingleside. He heard all the night sounds of a house ... a floor creaking ... someone turning in bed ... the crumble and fall of coals in the fireplace ... the scurrying of a little mouse in the china-closet. Was that an avalanche? No, only snow sliding off the roof. It was a little lonesome ... why didn't Susan come? ... if he only had Gyp now ... dear Gyppy. Had he forgotten Gyp? No, not forgotten exactly. But it didn't hurt so much now to think of him ... one did think of other things a good deal of the time. Sleep well, dearest of dogs. Perhaps sometime he would have another dog, after all. It would be nice if he had one right now ... or Shrimp. But the Shrimp wasn't round. Selfish old cat! Thinking of nothing but his own affairs!

No sign of Susan yet, coming along the long road that wound endlessly on through that strange white moonlit distance that was his own familiar Glen in daytime. Well, he would just have to imagine things to pass the time. Some day he would go to Baffin Land and live with Eskimos. Some day he would sail to far seas and cook a shark for Christmas dinner like Captain Jim. He would go on an expedition to the Congo in search of gorillas. He would be a diver and wander through radiant crystal halls under the sea.

He would get Uncle Davy to teach him how to milk into the cat's mouth the next time he went up to Avonlea. Uncle Davy did that so expertly. Perhaps he would be a pirate. Susan wanted him to be a minister. The minister could do the most good but wouldn't a pirate have the most fun? Suppose the little wooden soldier hopped off the mantelpiece and shot off his gun! Suppose the chairs began walking about the room! Suppose the tiger rug came alive! Suppose the "quack beas" which he and Walter "pretended" all over the house when they were very young, really were about! Jem was suddenly frightened. In daytime he did not often forget the difference between romance and reality, but it was different in this endless night. Tick-tack went the clock ... tick-tack ... and for every tick there was a quack bear sitting on a step of the stairs. The stairs were just black with quack bears. They would sit there till daylight ... gibbering.

Suppose God forgot to let the sun rise! The thought was so terrible that Jem buried his face in the afghan to shut it out, and there Susan found him sound asleep, when she came home in the fiery orange of a winter sunrise.

"Little Jem!"

Jem uncoiled himself and sat up, yawning. It had been a busy night for Silversmith Frost and the woods were fairyland. A far-off hill was touched with a crimson spear. All the white fields beyond the Glen were a lovely rose-colour. It was Mother's birthday morning.

"I was waiting for you, Susan ... to tell you to call me ... and you never came ..."

"I went down to see the John Warrens, because their aunt had died, and they asked me to stay and sit up with the corpse," explained Susan cheerfully. "I didn't suppose you'd be trying to catch pneumonia, too, the minute my back was turned. Scamper off to your bed and I'll call you when I hear your mother stirring."

"Susan, how do you stab sharks?" Jem wanted to know before he went upstairs.

"I do not stab them," answered Susan.

Mother was up when he went into her room, brushing her long shining hair before the glass. Her eyes when she saw the necklace!

“Jem darling! For me!”

“Now you won’t have to wait till Dad’s ship comes in,” said Jem with a fine nonchalance. What was that gleaming greenly on Mother’s hand? A ring ... Dad’s present. All very well, but rings were common things ... even Sissy Flagg had one. But a pearl necklace!

“A necklace is such a nice birthdayish thing,” said Mother.

Chapter 2 0

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When Gilbert and Anne went to dinner with friends in Charlottetown one evening in late March Anne put on a new dress of ice-green encrusted with silver around neck and arms; and she wore Gilbert's emerald ring and Jem's necklace.

"Haven't I got a handsome wife, Jem?" asked Dad proudly.

Jem thought Mother was very handsome and her dress very lovely. How pretty the pearls looked on her white throat! He always liked to see Mother dressed up, but he liked it still better when she took off a splendid dress. It had transformed her into an alien. She was not really Mother in it.

After supper Jem went to the village to do an errand for Susan and it was while he was waiting in Mr. Flagg's store ... rather afraid that Sissy might come in as she sometimes did and be entirely too friendly ... that the blow fell ... the shattering blow of disillusionment which is so terrible to a child because so unexpected and so seemingly inescapable.

Two girls were standing before the glass show case where Mr. Carter Flagg kept necklaces and chain bracelets and hair barettes.

"Aren't those pearl strings pretty?" said Abbie Russell.

"You'd almost think they were real," said Leona Reese.

They passed on then, quite unwitting of what they had done to the small boy sitting on the nail-keg. Jem continued to sit there for some time longer. He was incapable of movement.

"What's the matter, sonny?" inquired Mr. Flagg. "You seem kind of low in your mind."

Jem looked at Mr. Flagg with tragic eyes. His mouth was strangely dry.

“Please, Mr. Flagg ... are those ... those necklaces ... they are real pearls, aren’t they?”

Mr. Flagg laughed.

“No, Jem. I’m afraid you can’t get real pearls for fifty cents, you know. A real pearl necklace like that would cost hundreds of dollars. They’re just pearl beads ... very good ones for the price, too. I got ‘em at a bankrupt sale ... that’s why I can sell ‘em so cheap. Ordin’rily they run to a dollar. Only one left ... they went like hot cakes.”

Jem slid off the keg and went out, totally forgetting what Susan had sent him for. He walked blindly up the frozen road home. Overhead was a hard dark wintry sky; there was what Susan called “a feel” of snow in the air, and a skim of ice over the puddles. The harbour lay black and sullen between its bare banks. Before Jem reached home a snow-squall was whitening over them. He wished it would snow ... and snow ... and snow ... till he was buried and everybody was buried fathoms deep. There was no justice anywhere in the world.

Jem was heartbroken. And let no one scoff at his heartbreak for scorn of its cause. His humiliation was utter and complete. He had given Mother what he and she had supposed was a pearl necklace ... and it was only an old imitation. What would she say ... what would she feel like ... when she knew? For of course she must be told. It never occurred to Jem to think for a moment that she need not be told. Mother must not be “fooled” any longer. She must know that her pearls weren’t real. Poor Mother! She had been so proud of them ... had he not seen the pride shining in her eyes when she had kissed him and thanked him for them?

Jem slipped in by the side door and went straight to bed, where Walter was already sound asleep. But Jem could not sleep; he was awake when Mother came home and slipped in to see that Walter and he were warm.

“Jem, dear, are you awake at this hour? You’re not sick?”

“No, but I’m very unhappy here, Mother dearwums,” said Jem, putting his hand on his stomach, fondly believing it to be his heart.

“What is the matter, dear?”

“I ... I ... there is something I must tell you, Mother. You’ll be awfully disappointed, Mother ... but I didn’t mean to deceive you, Mother ... truly I didn’t.”

“I’m sure you didn’t, dear. What is it? Don’t be afraid.”

“Oh, Mother dearwums, those pearls aren’t real pearls ... I thought they were ... I did think they were ... did ...”

Jem’s eyes were full of tears. He couldn’t go on.

If Anne wanted to smile there was no sign of it on her face. Shirley had bumped his head that day, Nan had sprained her ankle, Di had lost her voice with a cold. Anne had kissed and bandaged and soothed; but this was different ... this needed all the secret wisdom of mothers.

“Jem, I never thought you supposed they were real pearls. I knew they weren’t ... at least in one sense of real. In another, they are the most real things I’ve ever had given me. Because there was love and work and self-sacrifice in them ... and that makes them more precious to me than all the gems that divers have fished up from the sea for queens to wear. Darling, I wouldn’t exchange my pretty beads for the necklace I read of last night which some millionaire gave his bride and which cost half a million. So that shows you what your gift is worth to me, dearest of dear little sons. Do you feel better now?”

Jem was so happy he was ashamed of it. He was afraid it was babyish to be so happy. “Oh, life is bearable again,” he said cautiously.

The tears had vanished from his sparkling eyes. All was well. Mother’s arms were about him ... Mother did like her necklace ... nothing else mattered. Some day he would give her one that would cost no mere half but a whole million. Meanwhile, he was tired ... his bed was very warm

and cosy ... Mother's hands smelled like roses ... and he didn't hate Leona Reese any more.

"Mother dearwums, you do look so sweet in that dress," he said sleepily.
"Sweet and pure ... pure as Epps' cocoa."

Anne smiled as she hugged him and thought of a ridiculous thing she had read in a medical journal that day, signed Dr. V. Z. Tomachowsky. "You must never kiss your little son lest you set up a Jocasta complex." She had laughed over it at the time and been a little angry as well. Now she only felt pity for the writer of it. Poor, poor man! For of course V. Z. Tomachowsky was a man. No woman would ever write anything so silly and wicked.

Chapter 2 1

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April came tiptoeing in beautifully that year with sunshine and soft winds for a few days; and then a driving northeast snowstorm dropped a white blanket over the world again. "Snow in April is abominable," said Anne. "Like a slap in the face when you expected a kiss." Ingleside was fringed with icicles and for two long weeks the days were raw and the nights hard-bitten. Then the snow grudgingly disappeared and when the news went round that the first robin had been seen in the Hollow Ingleside plucked up heart and ventured to believe that the miracle of spring was really going to happen again.

"Oh, Mummy, it smells like spring today," cried Nan, delightedly snuffing the fresh moist air. "Mummy, isn't spring an exciting time!"

Spring was trying out her paces that day ... like an adorable baby just learning to walk. The winter pattern of trees and fields was beginning to be overlaid with hints of green and Jem had again brought in the first mayflowers. But an enormously fat lady, sinking puffingly into one of the Ingleside easy-chairs, sighed and said sadly that the springs weren't so nice as they were when she was young.

"Don't you think perhaps the change is in us ... not in the springs, Mrs. Mitchell?" smiled Anne.

"Mebbe so. I know I am changed, all too well. I don't suppose to look at me now you'd think I was once the prettiest girl in these parts."

Anne reflected that she certainly wouldn't. The thin, stringy, mouse-coloured hair under Mrs. Mitchell's crape bonnet and long sweeping "widow's veil" was streaked with grey; her blue, expressionless eyes were faded and hollow; and to call her double chin chinned erred on the side of charity. But Mrs. Anthony Mitchell was feeling quite contented with

herself just then for nobody in Four Winds had finer weeds. Her voluminous black dress was crape to the knees. One wore mourning in those days with a vengeance.

Anne was spared the necessity of saying anything, for Mrs. Mitchell gave her no chance.

“My soft water system went dry this week ... there’s a leak in it ... so I kem down to the village this morning to get Raymond Russell to come and fix it. And thinks I to myself, ‘Now that I’m here I’ll just run up to Ingleside and ask Mrs. Dr. Blythe to write an obitchery for Anthony.’”

“An obituary?” said Anne blankly.

“Yes ... them things they put in the papers about dead people, you know,” explained Mrs. Anthony. “I want Anthony should have a real good one ... something out of the common. You write things, don’t you?”

“Occasionally I do write a little story,” admitted Anne. “But a busy mother hasn’t much time for that. I had wonderful dreams once but now I’m afraid I’ll never be in Who’s Who, Mrs. Mitchell. And I never wrote an obituary in my life.”

“Oh, they can’t be hard to write. Old Uncle Charlie Bates over our way writes most of them for the Lower Glen, but he ain’t a bit poetical and I’ve set my heart on a piece of poetry for Anthony. My, but he was always so fond of poetry. I was up to hear you give that talk on bandages to the Glen Institute last week and thinks I to myself, ‘Anyone who can talk as glib as that can likely write a real poetical obitchery.’ You will do it for me, won’t you, Mrs. Blythe? Anthony would have liked it. He always admired you. He said once that when you come into a room you made all the other women look ‘common and undistinguished.’ He sometimes talked real poetical but he meant well. I’ve been reading a lot of obitcheries ... I have a big scrapbook full of them ... but it didn’t seem to me he’d have liked any of them. He used to laugh at them so much. And it’s time it was done. He’s been dead two months. He died lingering but painless. Coming on spring’s an inconvenient time for anyone to die, Mrs. Blythe, but I’ve made the best of it. I s’pose Uncle Charlie will be hopping mad if I get

anyone else to write Anthony's obituary but I don't care. Uncle Charlie has a wonderful flow of language but him and Anthony never hit it off any too well and the long and short of it is I'm not going to have him write Anthony's obituary. I've been Anthony's wife ... his faithful and loving wife for thirty-five years ... thirty-five years, Mrs. Blythe," ... as if she were afraid Anne might think of only thirty-four ... "and I'm going to have an obituary he'd like if it takes a leg. That was what my daughter Seraphine said to me — she's married at Lowbridge, you know ... nice name, Seraphine, isn't it? ... I got it off a gravestone. Anthony didn't like it ... he wanted to call her Judith after his mother. But I said it was too solemn a name and he give in real kindly. He weren't no hand for arguing ... though he always called her Seraph ... where was I?"

"Your daughter was saying ..."

"Oh, yes, Seraphine said to me, 'Mother, whatever else you have or don't have, have a real nice obituary for Father.' Her and her father were always real thick, though he poked a bit of fun at her now and then, just as he did at me. Now, won't you, Mrs. Blythe?"

"I really don't know a great deal about your husband, Mrs. Mitchell."

"Oh, I can tell you all about him ... if you don't want to know the colour of his eyes. Do you know, Mrs. Blythe, when Seraphine and me was talking things over after the funeral I couldn't tell the colour of his eyes, after living with him thirty-five years. They was kind of soft and dreamy anyhow. He used to look so pleading with them when he was courting me. He had a real hard time to get me, Mrs. Blythe. He was mad about me for years. I was full of bounce then and meant to pick and choose. My life story would be real thrilling if you ever get short of material, Mrs. Blythe. Ah well, them days are gone. I had more beaus than you could shake a stick at. But they kept coming and going ... and Anthony just kept coming. He was kind of goodlooking, too ... such a nice lean man. I never could abide pudgy men ... and he was a cut or two above me ... I'd be the last one to deny that. 'It'll be a step up for a Plummer if you marry a Mitchell,' Ma said ... I was a Plummer, Mrs. Blythe ... John A. Plummer's daughter. And he paid me such nice romantic compliments, Mrs. Blythe. Once he told me I had the ethereal charm of moonlight. I

knew it meant something nice though I don't know yet what 'ethereal' means. I've always been meaning to look it up in the dictionary but I never get around to it. Well, anyway, in the end I passed my word of honour that I would be his bride. That is ... I mean ... I said I'd take him. My, but I wish you could have seen me in my wedding-dress, Mrs. Blythe. They all said I was a picture. Slim as a trout with hair yaller as gold, and such a complexion. Ah, time makes turrible changes in us. You haven't come to that yet, Mrs. Blythe. You're real pretty still ... and a highly eddicated woman into the bargain. Ah well, we can't all be clever ... some of us have to do the cooking. That dress you've got on is real handsome, Mrs. Blythe. You never wear black, I notice ... you're right ... you'll have to wear it soon enough. Put it off till you have to, I say. Well, where was I?"

"You were ... trying to tell me something about Mr. Mitchell."

"Oh, yes. Well, we were married. There was a big comet that night ... I remember seeing it as we drove home. It's a real pity you couldn't have seen that comet, Mrs. Blythe. It was simply pretty. I don't suppose you could work it into the obitchery, could you?"

"It ... might be rather difficult ..."

"Well," Mrs. Mitchell surrendered the comet with a sigh, "you'll have to do the best you can. He hadn't a very exciting life. He got drunk once ... he said he just wanted to see what it was like for once ... he was always of an inquiring turn of mind. But of course you couldn't put that in an obitchery. Nothing much else ever happened to him. Not to complain, but just to state facts he was a bit shiftless and easygoing. He would sit for an hour looking into a hollyhock. My, but he was fond of flowers ... hated to mow down the buttercups. No matter if the wheat crop failed as long as there was farewell-summers and goldenrod. And trees ... that orchard of his ... I always told him, joking like, that he cared more for his trees than for me. And his farm ... my, but he loved his bit of land. He seemed to think it was a human being. Many's the time I've heard him say, 'I think I'll go out and have a little talk to my farm.' When we got old I wanted him to sell, seeing as we had no boys, and retire to Lowbridge, but he would say, 'I can't sell my farm ... I can't sell my heart.' Ain't men funny? Not long before he died he took a notion to have a boiled hen for

dinner, 'cooked in that way you have,' says he. He was always partial to my cooking, if I do say it. The only thing he couldn't abide was my lettuce salad with nuts in it. He said the nuts was so durned unexpected. But there wasn't a hen to spare ... they was all laying good ... and there was only one rooster left and of course I couldn't kill him. My, but I like to see the roosters strutting round. Ain't anything much handsomer than a fine rooster, do you think, Mrs. Blythe? Well, where was I?"

"You were saying your husband wanted you to cook a hen for him."

"Oh, yes. And I've been so sorry ever since I didn't. I wake up in the night and think of it. But I didn't know he was going to die, Mrs. Blythe. He never complained much and always said he was better. And interested in things to the last. If I'd a-known he was going to die, Mrs. Blythe, I'd have cooked a hen for him, eggs or no eggs."

Mrs. Mitchell removed her rusty black lace mitts and wiped her eyes with a handkerchief, black-bordered a full two inches.

"He'd have enjoyed it," she sobbed. "He had his own teeth to the last, poor dear. Well, anyway" ... folding the handkerchief and putting on the mitts, "he was sixty-five, so he weren't far from the allotted span. And I've got another coffin-plate. Mary Martha Plummer and me started collecting coffin-plates at the same time but she soon got ahead of me ... so many of her relation died, not to speak of her three children. She's got more coffin-plates than anyone in these parts. I didn't seem to have much luck but I've got a full mantelpiece at last. My cousin, Thomas Bates, was buried last week and I wanted his wife to give me the coffin-plate, but she had it buried with him. Said collecting coffin-plates was a relic of barbarism. She was a Hampson and the Hampsons were always odd. Well, where was I?"

Anne really could not tell Mrs. Mitchell where she was this time. The coffin-plates had dazed her.

"Oh, well, anyway poor Anthony died. 'I go gladly and in quietness,' was all that he said but he smiled just at the last ... at the ceiling, not at me nor Seraphine. I'm so glad he was so happy just afore he died. There were

times I used to think perhaps he wasn't quite happy, Mrs. Blythe ... he was so terrible highstrung and sensitive. But he looked real noble and sublime in his coffin. We had a grand funeral. It was just a lovely day. He was buried with loads of flowers. I took a sinking spell at the last but otherwise everything went off very well. We buried him in the Lower Glen graveyard though all his family were buried in Lowbridge. But he picked out his graveyard long ago ... said he wanted to be buried near his farm and where he could hear the sea and the wind in the trees ... there's trees around three sides of that graveyard, you know. I was glad, too ... I always thought it was such a cosy little graveyard and we can keep geraniums growing on his grave. He was a good man ... he's likely in Heaven now, so that needn't trouble you. I always think it must be some chore to write an obichery when you don't know where the departed is. I can depend on you, then, Mrs. Blythe?"

Anne consented, feeling that Mrs. Mitchell would stay there and talk until she did consent. Mrs. Mitchell, with another sigh of relief, heaved herself out of her chair.

"I must be stepping. I'm expecting a hatching of turkey poults today. I've enjoyed my conversation with you and I wish I could have stayed longer. It's lonesome being a widow woman. A man mayn't amount to an awful lot but you sort of miss him when he goes."

Anne politely saw her down the walk. The children were stalking robins on the lawn and daffodil tips were poking up everywhere.

"You've got a nice proud house here ... a real nice proud house, Mrs. Blythe. I've always felt I'd like a big house. But with only us and Seraphine ... and where was the money to come from? ... and, anyway, Anthony'd never hear of it. He had an awful affection for that old house. I'm meaning to sell if I get a fair offer and live either in Lowbridge or Mowbray Narrows, whichever I decide would be the best place to be a widow in. Anthony's insurance will come in handy. Say what you like it's easier to bear a full sorrow than an empty one. You'll find that out when you're a widow yourself ... though I hope that'll be a good few years yet. How is the doctor getting on? It's been a real sickly winter so he ought to have done pretty well. My, what a nice little family you've got! Three

girls! Nice now, but wait you till they come to the boy-crazy age. Not that I'd much trouble with Seraphine. She was quiet ... like her father ... and stubborn like him. When she fell in love with John Whitaker, have him she would in spite of all I could say. A rowan tree? Whyn't you have it planted by the front door? It would keep the fairies out."

"But who would want to keep the fairies out, Mrs. Mitchell?"

"Now you're talking like Anthony. I was only joking. O' course I don't believe in fairies ... but if they did happen to exist I've heard they were pesky mischievous. Well, goodbye, Mrs. Blythe. I'll call round next week for the obitchery."

Chapter 2 2

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“You’ve let yourself in for it, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, who had overheard most of the conversation as she polished her silver in the pantry.

“Haven’t I? But, Susan, I really do want to write that ‘obituary.’ I liked Anthony Mitchell ... what little I’ve seen of him ... and I feel sure that he’d turn over in his grave if his obituary was like the run of the mill in the Daily Enterprise. Anthony had an inconvenient sense of humour.”

“Anthony Mitchell was a real nice fellow when he was young, Mrs. Dr. dear. Though a bit dreamy they said. He didn’t hustle enough to suit Bessy Plummer, but he made a decent living and paid his debts. Of course he married the last girl he should have. But although Bessy Plummer looks like a comic valentine now she was pretty as a picture then. Some of us, Mrs. Dr. dear,” concluded Susan with a sigh, “haven’t even that much to remember.”

“Mummy,” said Walter, “the snack-dragons are coming up thick all around the back porch. And a pair of robins are beginning to build a nest on the pantry windowsill. You’ll let them, won’t you, Mummy? You won’t open the window and scare them away?”

Anne had met Anthony Mitchell once or twice, though the little grey house between the spruce woods and the sea, with the great big willow tree over it like a huge umbrella, where he lived, was in the Lower Glen and the doctor from Mowbray Narrows attended most of the people there. But Gilbert had bought hay from him now and then and once when he had brought a load Anne had taken him all over her garden and they had found out that they talked the same language. She had liked him ... his lean, lined, friendly face, his brave, shrewd, yellowish-hazel eyes that had never faltered or been hoodwinked ... save once, perhaps, when Bessy Plummer’s shallow and fleeting beauty had tricked him into a foolish

marriage. Yet he never seemed unhappy or unsatisfied. As long as he could plough and garden and reap he was as contented as a sunny old pasture. His black hair was but lightly frosted with silver and a ripe, serene spirit revealed itself in his rare but sweet smiles. His old fields had given him bread and delight, joy of conquest and comfort in sorrow. Anne was satisfied because he was buried near them. He might have “gone gladly” but he had lived gladly, too. The Mowbray Narrows doctor had said that when he told Anthony Mitchell he could hold out to him no hope of recovery Anthony had smiled and replied, “Well, life is a trifle monotonous at times now I’m getting old. Death will be something of a change. I’m real curious about it, doctor.” Even Mrs. Anthony, among all her rambling absurdities, had dropped a few things that revealed the real Anthony. Anne wrote “The Old Man’s Grave” a few evenings later by her room window and read it over with a sense of satisfaction.

“Make it where the winds may sweep
Through the pine boughs soft and deep,
And the murmur of the sea
Come across the orient lea,
And the falling raindrops sing
Gently to his slumbering.

“Make it where the meadows wide
Greenly lie on every side,
Harvest fields he reaped and trod,
Westering slopes of clover sod,
Orchard lands where bloom and blow
Trees he planted long ago.

“Make it where the starshine dim
May be always close to him,
And the sunrise glory spread
Lavishly around his bed,
And the dewy grasses creep
Tenderly above his sleep.

“Since these things to him were dear
Through full many a well-spent year,
It is surely meet their grace
Should be on his resting place,

And the murmur of the sea
Be his dirge eternally.”

“I think Anthony Mitchell would have liked that,” said Anne, flinging her window open to lean out to the spring. Already there were crooked little rows of young lettuce in the children’s garden; the sunset was soft and pink behind the maple grove; the Hollow rang with the faint, sweet laughter of children.

“Spring is so lovely I hate to go to sleep and miss any of it,” said Anne.

Mrs. Anthony Mitchell came up to get her “obitchery” one afternoon the next week. Anne read it to her with a secret bit of pride; but Mrs. Anthony’s face did not express unmixed satisfaction.

“My, I call that real sprightly. You do put things so well. But ... but ... you didn’t say a word about him being in heaven. Weren’t you sure he is there?”

“So sure that it wasn’t necessary to mention it, Mrs. Mitchell.”

“Well, some people might doubt. He ... he didn’t go to church as often as he might ... though he was a member in good standing. And it doesn’t tell his age ... nor mention the flowers. Why, you just couldn’t count the wreaths on the coffin. Flowers are poetical enough, I should think!”

“I’m sorry ...”

“Oh, I don’t blame you ... not a mite do I blame you. You’ve done your best and it sounds beautiful. What do I owe you?”

“Why ... why ... nothing, Mrs. Mitchell. I couldn’t think of such a thing.”

“Well, I thought likely you’d say that, so I brung you up a bottle of my dandelion wine. It sweetens the stomach if you’re ever bothered with gas. I’d have brung a bottle of my yarb tea, too, only I was afraid the doctor mightn’t approve. But if you’d like some and think you can smuggle it in unbeknownst to him you’ve only to say the word.”

“No, no, thank you,” said Anne rather flatly. She had not yet quite recovered from “sprightly.”

“Just as you like. You’d be welcome to it. I’ll not be needing any more medicine myself this spring. When my second cousin, Malachi Plummer, died in the winter I asked his widow to give me the three bottles of medicine there was left over ... they got it by the dozen. She was going to throw them out but I was always one that could never bear to waste anything. I couldn’t take more than one bottle myself but I made our hired man take the other two. ‘If it doesn’t do you any good it won’t do you any harm,’ I told him. I won’t say I’m not rather relieved you didn’t want any cash for the obituary for I’m rather short of ready money just now. A funeral is so expensive though D. B. Martin is about the cheapest undertaker in these parts. I haven’t even got my black paid for yet. I won’t feel I’m really in mourning till it is. Luckily I hadn’t to get a new bunnit. This was the bunnit I had made for Mother’s funeral ten years ago. It’s kind of fortunate black becomes me, ain’t it? If you’d see Malachi Plummer’s widow now, with her sailer face! Well, I must be stepping. And I’m much obliged to you, Mrs. Blythe, even if ... but I feel sure you did your best and it’s lovely poetry.”

“Won’t you stay and have supper with us?” asked Anne. “Susan and I are all alone ... the doctor is away and the children are having their first picnic supper in the Hollow.”

“I don’t mind,” said Mrs. Anthony, slipping willingly back into her chair. “I’ll be glad to set a spell longer. Somehow it takes so long to get rested when you get old. And,” she added, with a smile of dreamy beatitude on her pink face, “didn’t I smell fried parsnips?”

Anne almost grudged the fried parsnips when the Daily Enterprise came out the next week. There, in the obituary column, was “The Old Man’s Grave” ... with five verses instead of the original four! And the fifth verse was:

“A wonderful husband, companion and aid,
One who was better the Lord never made,

A wonderful husband, tender and true,
One in a million, dear Anthony, was you.”

“! ” said Ingleside.

“I hope you didn’t mind me tacking on another verse,” said Mrs. Mitchell to Anne at the next Institute meeting. “I just wanted to praise Anthony a little more ... and my nephew, Johnny Plummer, writ it. He just sot down and scribbled it off quick as a wink. He’s like you ... he doesn’t look clever but he can poetize. He got it through his mother ... she was a Wickford. The Plummers haven’t a speck of poetry in them ... not a speck.”

“What a pity you didn’t think of getting him to write Mr. Mitchell’s ‘obitchery’ in the first place,” said Anne coldly.

“Yes, isn’t it? But I didn’t know he could write poetry and I’d set my heart on it for Anthony’s send-off. Then his mother showed me a poem he’d writ on a squirrel drowned in a pail of maple syrup ... a really touching thing. But yours was real nice, too, Mrs. Blythe. I think the two combined together made something out of the common, don’t you?”

“I do,” said Anne.

Chapter 2 3

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The Ingleside children were having bad luck with pets. The wriggly curly little black pup Dad brought home from Charlottetown one day just walked out the next week and disappeared into the blue. Nothing was ever seen or heard of him again, and though there were whispers of a sailor from the Harbour Head having been seen taking a small black pup on board his ship the night she sailed, his fate remained one of the deep and dark unsolved mysteries of the Ingleside chronicles. Walter took it harder than Jem, who had not yet quite forgotten his anguish over Gyp's death and was not ever again going to let himself love a dog not wisely but too well. Then Tiger Tom, who lived in the barn and was never allowed in the house because of his thievish propensities but got a good deal of petting for all that, was found stark and stiff on the barn floor and had to be buried with pomp and circumstance in the Hollow. Finally Jem's rabbit, Bun, which he had bought from Joe Russell for a quarter, sickened and died. Perhaps its death was hastened by a dose of patent medicine Jem gave him, perhaps not. Joe had advised it and Joe ought to know. But Jem felt as if he had murdered Bun.

"Is there a curse on Ingleside?" he demanded gloomily, when Bun had been laid to rest beside Tiger Tom. Walter wrote an epitaph for him and he and Jem and the twins wore black ribbons tied round their arms for a week, to the horror of Susan who deemed it sacrilege. Susan was not inconsolable for the loss of Bun, who had got out once and worked havoc in her garden. Still less did she approve of two toads Walter brought in and put in the cellar. She put one of them out when evening came but could not find the other and Walter lay awake and worried.

"Maybe they were husband and wife," he thought. "Maybe they're awful lonely and unhappy now they're separated. It was the little one Susan put out, so I guess she was the lady toad and maybe she's frightened to death

all alone in that big yard without anyone to protect her ... just like a widow.”

Walter couldn't endure thinking about the widow's woes, so he slipped down to the cellar to hunt for the gentleman toad, but only succeeded in knocking down a pile of Susan's discarded tinware with a resulting racket that might have wakened the dead. It woke only Susan, however, who came marching down with a candle, the fluttering flame of which cast the weirdest shadows on her gaunt face.

“Walter Blythe, whatever are you doing?”

“Susan, I've got to find that toad,” said Walter desperately. “Susan, just think how you would feel without your husband, if you had one.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” demanded the justifiably mystified Susan.

At this point the gentleman toad, who had evidently given himself up for lost when Susan appeared on the scene, hopped out into the open from behind Susan's cask of dill pickles. Walter pounced on him and slipped him out through the window, where it is to be hoped he rejoined his supposed love and lived happily ever afterwards.

“You know you shouldn't have brought those creatures into the cellar,” said Susan sternly. “What would they live on?”

“Of course I meant to catch insects for them,” said Walter, aggrieved. “I wanted to study them.”

“There is simply no being up to them,” moaned Susan, as she followed an indignant young Blythe up the stairs. And did not mean the toads.

They had better luck with their robin. They had found him, little more than a baby, on the doorstep after a June night storm of wind and rain. He had a grey back and a mottled breast and bright eyes, and from the first he seemed to have complete confidence in all the Ingleside people, not even excepting the Shrimp, who never attempted to molest him, not even when

Cock Robin hopped saucily up to his plate and helped himself. They fed him on worms at first and he had such an appetite that Shirley spent most of his time digging them. He stored the worms in cans and left them around the house, much to Susan's disgust, but she would have endured more than that for Cock Robin, who lighted so fearlessly on her work-worn finger and chirruped in her very face. Susan had taken a great fancy to Cock Robin and thought it worth mentioning in a letter to Rebecca Dew that his breast was beginning to change to a beautiful rusty red.

"Do not think that my intellect is weakening I beg of you, Miss Dew dear," she wrote. "I suppose it is very silly to be so fond of a bird but the human heart has its weaknesses. He is not imprisoned like a canary ... something I could never abide, Miss Dew dear ... but ranges at will through house and garden and sleeps on a bow by Walter's study platform up in the apple tree looking into Rilla's window. Once when they took him to the Hollow he flew away but returned at eventide to their great joy and I must in all candor add to my own."

The Hollow was "the Hollow" no longer. Walter had begun to feel that such a delightful spot deserved a name more in keeping with its romantic possibilities. One rainy afternoon they had to play in the garret but the sun broke out in the early evening and flooded the Glen with splendor. "Oh, look at the nithe wainbow!" cried Rilla, who always talked with a charming little lisp.

It was the most magnificent rainbow they had ever seen. One end seemed to rest on the very spire of the Presbyterian church while the other dropped down into the reedy corner of the pond that ran into the upper end of the valley. And Walter then and there named it Rainbow Valley.

Rainbow Valley had become a world in itself to the children of Ingleside. Little winds played there ceaselessly and bird-songs reechoed from dawn to dark. White birches glimmered all over it and from one of them ... the White Lady ... Walter pretended that a little dryad came out every night to talk to them. A maple tree and a spruce tree, growing so closely together that their boughs intertwined, he named "The Tree Lovers" and an old string of sleighbells he had hung upon them made chimes elfin and aerial when the wind shook them. A dragon guarded the stone bridge they had

built across the brook. The trees that met over it could be swart Paynims at need and the rich green mosses along the banks were carpets, none finer, from Samarkand. Robin Hood and his merry men lurked on all sides; three water sprites dwelt in the spring; the deserted old Barclay house at the Glen end, with its grass-grown dyke and its garden overgrown with caraway, was easily transformed into a beleaguered castle. The Crusader's sword had long been rust but the Ingleside butcher-knife was a blade forged in fairyland and whenever Susan missed the cover of her roasting pan she knew that it was serving as a shield for a plumed and glittering knight on high adventure bent in Rainbow Valley.

Sometimes they played pirates, to please Jem, who at ten years was beginning to like a tang of gore in his amusements, but Walter always balked at walking the plank, which Jem thought the best of the performance. Sometimes he wondered if Walter really was enough of a stalwart to be a buccaneer, though he smothered the thought loyally and had more than one pitched and successful battle with boys in school who called Walter "Sissy Blythe" ... or had called him that until they found out it meant a set-to with Jem who had a most disconcerting knack with his fists.

Jem was sometimes allowed now to go down to the Harbour Mouth of an evening to buy fish. It was an errand he delighted in, for it meant that he could sit in Captain Malachi Russell's cabin at the foot of a bent-covered field close to the harbour, and listen to Captain Malachi and his cronies, who had once been daredevil young sea captains, spinning yarns. Every one of them had something to tell when tales were going round. Old Oliver Reese ... who was actually suspected of being a pirate in his youth ... had been taken captive by a cannibal king ... Sam Elliott had been through the San Francisco earthquake ... "Bold William" Macdougall had had a lurid fight with a shark ... Andy Baker had been caught in a waterspout. Moreover, Andy could spit straighter, as he averred, than any man in Four Winds. Hook-nosed, lean-jawed Captain Malachi, with his bristly grey moustache, was Jem's favourite. He had been captain of a brigantine when he was only seventeen, sailing to Buenos Aires with cargoes of lumber. He had an anchor tattooed on each cheek and he had a wonderful old watch you wound with a key. When he was in good humour he let Jem wind it

and when he was in very good humour he would take Jem out codfishing or digging clams at low tide, and when he was in his best humour he would show Jem the many ship models he had carved. Jem thought they were romance itself. Among them was a Viking boat, with a striped square sail and a fearsome dragon in front ... a caravel of Columbus ... the Mayflower ... a rakish craft called The Flying Dutchman ... and no end of beautiful brigantines and schooners and barques and clipper-ships and timber droghers.

“Will you teach me how to carve ships like that, Captain Malachi?” pleaded Jem.

Captain Malachi shook his head and spat reflectively into the gulf.

“It doesn’t come by teaching, son. Ye’d have to sail the seas for thirty or forty years and then maybe ye’d have enough understanding of ships to do it ... understanding and love. Ships are like weemen, son ... they’ve got to be understood and loved or they’ll never give up their secrets. And even at that ye may think ye know a ship from stem to stern, inside and out, and ye’ll find she’s still hanging out on ye and keeping her soul shut on you. She’d fly from you like a bird if ye let go your grip on her. There’s one ship I sailed on that I’ve never been able to whittle a model of, times out of mind as I’ve tried. A dour, stubborn vessel she was! And there was one woman ... but it’s time I took in the slack of my jaw. I’ve got a ship all ready to go into a bottle and I’ll let ye into the secret of that, son.”

So Jem never heard anything more of the “woman” and didn’t care, for he was not interested in the sex, apart from Mother and Susan. They were not “weemen.” They were just Mother and Susan.

When Gyp had died Jem had felt he never wanted another dog; but time heals amazingly and Jem was beginning to feel doggish again. The puppy wasn’t really a dog ... he was only an incident. Jem had a procession of dogs marching around the walls of his attic den where he kept Captain Jim’s collection of curios ... dogs clipped from magazines ... a lordly mastiff ... a nice jowly bulldog ... a dachshund that looked as if somebody had taken a dog by his head and heels and pulled him out like elastic ... a shaven poodle with a tassel on the end of his tail ... a fox-terrier ... a

Russian wolfhound ... Jem wondered if Russian wolfhounds ever got anything to eat ... a saucy Pom ... a spotted Dalmatian ... a spaniel with appealing eyes. All dogs of high degree but all lacking something in Jem's eyes ... he didn't just know what.

Then the advertisement came out in the Daily Enterprise. "For sale, a dog. Apply Roddy Crawford, Harbour Head." Nothing more. Jem could not have told why the advertisement stuck in his mind or why he felt there was a sadness in its very brevity. He found out from Craig Russell who Roddy Crawford was.

"Roddy's father died a month ago and he has to go to live with his aunt in town. His mother died years ago. And Jake Millison has bought the farm. But the house is going to be torn down. Maybe his aunt won't let him keep his dog. It's no great shakes of a dog but Roddy has always had an awful notion of it."

"I wonder how much he wants for it. I've only got a dollar," said Jem.

"I guess what he wants most is a good home for it," said Craig. "But your dad would give you the money for it, wouldn't he?"

"Yes. But I want to buy a dog with my own money," said Jem. "It would feel more like my dog then."

Craig shrugged. Those Ingleside kids were funny. What did it matter who put up the cash for an old dog?

That evening Dad drove Jem down to the old, thin, rundown Crawford farm, where they found Roddy Crawford and his dog. Roddy was a boy of about Jem's age ... a pale lad, with straight, reddish-brown hair and a crop of freckles; his dog had silky brown ears, a brown nose and tail and the most beautiful soft brown eyes ever seen in a dog's head. The moment Jem saw that darling dog, with the white stripe down his forehead that parted in two between his eyes and framed his nose, he knew he must have him.

"You want to sell your dog?" he asked eagerly.

“I don’t want to sell him,” said Roddy dully. “But Jake says I’ll have to or he’ll drown him. He says Aunt Vinnie won’t have a dog about.”

“What do you want for him?” asked Jem, scared that some prohibitive price would be named.

Roddy gave a great gulp. He held out his dog.

“Here, take him,” he said hoarsely. “I ain’t going to sell him ... I ain’t. Money would never pay for Bruno. If you’ll give him a good home ... and be kind to him ...”

“Oh, I’ll be kind to him,” said Jem eagerly. “But you must take my dollar. I wouldn’t feel he was my dog if you didn’t. I won’t take him if you don’t.”

He forced the dollar into Roddy’s reluctant hand ... he took Bruno and held him close to his breast. The little dog looked back at his master. Jem could not see his eyes but he could see Roddy’s.

“If you want him so much ...”

“I want him but I can’t have him,” snapped Roddy. “There’s been five people here after him and I wouldn’t let one of them have him ... Jake was awful mad but I don’t care. They weren’t right. But you ... I want you to have him since I can’t ... and take him out of my sight quick!”

Jem obeyed. The little dog was trembling in his arms but he made no protest. Jem held him lovingly all the way back to Ingleside.

“Dad, how did Adam know that a dog was a dog?”

“Because a dog couldn’t be anything but a dog,” grinned Dad. “Could he now?”

Jem was too excited to sleep for ever so long that night. He had never seen a dog he liked so much as Bruno. No wonder Roddy hated parting with him. But Bruno would soon forget Roddy and love him. They would be

pals. He must remember to ask Mother to make sure the butcher sent up the bones.

“I love everybody and everything in the world,” said Jem. “Dear God, bless every cat and dog in the world but specially Bruno.”

Jem fell asleep at last. Perhaps a little dog lying at the foot of the bed with his chin upon his outstretched paws slept, too: and perhaps he did not.

Chapter 2 4

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Cock Robin had ceased to subsist solely on worms and ate rice, corn, lettuce and nasturtium seeds. He had grown to be a huge size ... the “big robin” at Ingleside was becoming locally famous ... and his breast had turned to a beautiful red. He would perch on Susan’s shoulder and watch her knit. He would fly to meet Anne when she returned after an absence and hop before her into the house: he came to Walter’s windowsill every morning for crumbs. He took his daily bath in a basin in the back yard, in the corner of the sweetbriar hedge, and would raise the most unholy fuss if he found no water in it. The doctor complained that his pens and matches were always strewn all over the library, but found nobody to sympathize with him, and even he surrendered when Cock Robin lit fearlessly on his hand one day to pick up a flower seed. Everybody was bewitched by Cock Robin ... except perhaps Jem, who had set his heart on Bruno and was slowly but all too surely learning a bitter lesson ... that you can buy a dog’s body but you cannot buy his love.

At first Jem never suspected this. Of course Bruno would be a bit homesick and lonesome for a time, but that would soon wear off. Jem found it did not. Bruno was the most obedient little dog in the world; he did exactly what he was told and even Susan admitted that a better-behaved animal couldn’t be found. But there was no life in him. When Jem took him out Bruno’s eyes would gleam alertly at first, his tail would wag and he would start off cockily. But after a little while the glow would leave his eyes and he would trot meekly beside Jem with drooping crest. Kindness was showered upon him by all ... the juiciest and meatiest of bones were at his disposal ... not the slightest objection was made to his sleeping at the foot of Jem’s bed every night. But Bruno remained remote ... inaccessible ... a stranger. Sometimes in the night Jem woke and reached down to pat the sturdy little body; but there was never any answering lick of tongue or thump of tail. Bruno permitted caresses but he would not respond to them.

Jem set his teeth. There was a good bit of determination in James Matthew Blythe and he was not going to be beaten by a dog ... His dog whom he had bought fairly and squarely with money hardly saved from his allowance. Bruno would just have to get over being homesick for Roddy ... have to give up looking at you with the pathetic eyes of a lost creature ... have to learn to love him.

Jem had to stand up for Bruno, for the other boys in school, suspecting how he loved the dog, were always trying to “pick on” him.

“Your dog has fleas ... Great Big fleas,” taunted Perry Reese. Jem had to trounce him before Perry would take it back and say Bruno hadn’t a single flea ... not one.

“My pup takes fits once a week,” boasted Rob Russell. “I’ll bet your old pup never had a fit in his life. If I had a dog like that I’d run him through the meat-grinder.”

“We had a dog like that once,” said Mike Drew, “but we drowned him.”

“My dog’s an awful dog,” said Sam Warren proudly. “He kills the chickens and chews up all the clothes on wash-day. Bet your old dog hasn’t spunk enough for that.”

Jem sorrowfully admitted to himself, if not to Sam, that Bruno hadn’t. He almost wished he had. And it stung when Watty Flagg shouted, “Your dog’s a good dog ... he never barks on Sunday,” because Bruno didn’t bark any day.

But with it all he was such a dear, adorable little dog.

“Bruno, why won’t you love me?” almost sobbed Jem. “There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you ... we could have such fun together.” But he would not admit defeat to anyone.

Jem hurried home one evening from a mussel-bake at the Harbour Mouth because he knew a storm was coming. The sea moaned so. Things had a

sinister, lonely look. There was a long rip and tear of thunder as Jem dashed into Ingleside.

“Where’s Bruno?” he shouted.

It was the first time he had gone anywhere without Bruno. He had thought the long walk to the Harbour Mouth would be too much for a little dog. Jem would not admit to himself that such a long walk with a dog whose heart was not in it would be a little too much for him as well.

It developed that nobody knew where Bruno was. He had not been seen since Jem left after supper. Jem hunted everywhere but he was not to be found. The rain was coming down in floods, the world was drowned in lightning. Was Bruno out in that black night ... lost? Bruno was afraid of thunderstorms. The only times he had ever seemed to come near Jem in spirit was when he crept close to him while the sky was riven asunder.

Jem worried so that when the storm was spent Gilbert said:

“I ought to go up to the Head anyway to see how Roy Westcott is getting on. You can come, too, Jem, and we’ll drive round by the old Crawford place on our way home. I’ve an idea Bruno has gone back there.”

“Six miles? He’d never!” said Jem.

But he had. When they got to the old, deserted, lightless Crawford house a shivering bedraggled little creature was huddled forlornly on the wet doorstep, looking at them with tired, unsatisfied eyes. He made no objection when Jem gathered him up in his arms and carried him out to the buggy through the knee-high, tangled grass.

Jem was happy. How the moon was rushing through the sky as the clouds tore past her! How delicious were the smells of the rain-wet woods as they drove along! What a world it was!

“I guess Bruno will be contented at Ingleside after this, Dad.”

“Perhaps,” was all Dad said. He hated to throw cold water but he suspected that a little dog’s heart, losing its last home, was finally broken.

Bruno had never eaten very much but after that night he ate less and less. Came a day when he would not eat at all. The vet was sent for but could find nothing wrong.

“I knew one dog in my experience who died of grief and I think this is another,” he told the doctor aside.

He left a “tonic” which Bruno took obediently and then lay down again, his head on his paws, staring into vacancy. Jem stood looking at him for a long while, his hands in his pockets; then he went into the library to have a talk with Dad.

Gilbert went to town the next day, made some inquiries, and brought Roddy Crawford out to Ingleside. When Roddy came up the verandah steps Bruno, hearing his footfall from the livingroom, lifted his head and cocked his ears. The next moment his emaciated little body hurled itself across the rug towards the pale, browneyed lad.

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan said in an awed tone that night, “the dog was crying ... he was. The tears actually rolled down his nose. I do not blame you if you do not believe it. Never would I have believed it if I had not seen it with my own eyes.”

Roddy held Bruno against his heart and looked half defiantly, half pleadingly at Jem.

“You bought him, I know ... but he belongs to me. Jake told me a lie. Aunt Vinnie says she wouldn’t mind a dog a bit, but I thought I mustn’t ask for him back. Here’s your dollar ... I never spent a cent of it ... I couldn’t.”

For just a moment Jem hesitated. Then he saw Bruno’s eyes. “What a little pig I am!” he thought in disgust with himself. He took the dollar.

Roddy suddenly smiled. The smile changed his sulky face completely but all he could say was a gruff, “Thanks.”

Roddy slept with Jem that night, a replete Bruno stretched between them. But before he went to bed Roddy knelt to say his prayers and Bruno squatted on his haunches beside him, laying his forepaws on the bed. If ever a dog prayed Bruno prayed then ... a prayer of thanksgiving and renewed joy in life.

When Roddy brought him food Bruno ate it eagerly, keeping an eye on Roddy all the time. He pranced friskily after Jem and Roddy when they went down to the Glen. “Such a perked-up dog you never saw,” declared Susan.

But the next evening, after Roddy and Bruno had gone back, Jem sat on the side-door steps in the owl light for a long time. He refused to go digging for pirate hoards in Rainbow Valley with Walter ... Jem felt no longer splendidly bold and buccaneering. He wouldn’t even look at the Shrimp who was humped in the mint, lashing his tail like a fierce mountain lion crouching to spring. What business had cats to go on being happy at Ingleside when dogs broke their hearts!

He was even grumpy with Rilla when she brought him her blue velvet elephant. Velvet elephants when Bruno had gone! Nan got as short shrift when she came and suggested they should say what they thought of God in a whisper.

“You don’t s’pose I’m blaming God for THIS?” said Jem sternly. “You haven’t any sense of proportion, Nan Blythe.”

Nan went away quite crushed through she hadn’t the least glimmering what Jem meant, and Jem scowled at the embers of the smouldering sunset. Dogs were barking all over the Glen. The Jenkins down the road were out calling theirs ... all of them took turns at it. Everyone, even the Jenkins tribe, could have a dog ... everyone but him. Life stretched before him like a desert where there would be no dogs.

Anne came and sat down on a lower step, carefully not looking at him. Jem felt her sympathy.

“Motherest,” he said in a choked voice, “Why wouldn’t Bruno love me when I loved him so much? Am I ... do you think I am the kind of boy dogs don’t like?”

“No, darling. Remember how Gyp loved you. It was just that Bruno had only so much love to give ... and he had given it all. There are dogs like that ... one-man dogs.”

“Anyhow, Bruno and Roddy are happy,” said Jem with grim satisfaction, as he bent over and kissed the top of Mother’s smooth ripply head. “But I’ll never have another dog.”

Anne thought this would pass; he had felt the same when Gyppy died. But it did not. The iron had bitten deeply into Jem’s soul. Dogs were to come and go at Ingleside ... dogs that belonged just to the family and were nice dogs, whom Jem petted and played with as the others did. But there was to be no “Jem’s dog” until a certain “Little Dog Monday” was to take possession of his heart and love him with a devotion passing Bruno’s love ... a devotion that was to make history in the Glen. But that was still many a long year away; and a very lonely boy climbed into Jem’s bed that night.

“I wish I was a girl,” he thought fiercely, “so’s I could cry and cry!”

Chapter 2 5

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Nan and Di were going to school. They started the last week in August.

“Will we know everything by night, Mummy?” asked Di solemnly the first morning.

Now, in early September, Anne and Susan had got used to it, and even took pleasure in seeing the two mites trip off every morning, so tiny and carefree and neat, thinking going to school quite an adventure. They always took an apple in their basket for teacher and they wore frocks of pink and blue ruffled gingham. Since they did not look in the least alike they were never dressed alike. Diana, with her red hair, could not wear pink, but it suited Nan, who was much the prettier of the Ingleside twins. She had brown eyes, brown hair and a lovely complexion, of which she was quite aware even at seven. A certain starriness had gone to the fashioning of her. She held her head proudly, with her little saucy chin a wee bit in evidence, and so was already thought rather “stuck-up.”

“She’ll imitate all her mother’s tricks and poses,” said Mrs. Alec Davies. “She has all her airs and graces already, if you ask me.”

The twins were dissimilar in more than looks. Di, in spite of her physical resemblance to her mother, was very much her father’s child, so far as disposition and qualities went. She had the beginnings of his practical bent, his plain common sense, his twinkling sense of humour. Nan had inherited in full her mother’s gift of imagination and was already making life interesting for herself in her own way. For example, she had had no end of excitement this summer making bargains with God, the gist of the matter being, “If you’ll do such-and-such a thing I’ll do such-and-such a thing.”

All the Ingleside children had been started in life with the old classic, “Now I lay me” ... then promoted to “Our Father” ... then encouraged to make their own small petitions also in whatever language they chose. What gave Nan the idea that God might be induced to grant her petitions by promises of good behaviour or displays of fortitude would be hard to say. Perhaps a certain rather young and pretty Sunday School teacher was indirectly responsible for it by her frequent admonitions that if they were not good girls God would not do this or that for them. It was easy to turn this idea inside out and come to the conclusion that if you were this or that, did this or that, you had a right to expect that God would do the things you wanted. Nan’s first “bargain” in the spring had been so successful that it outweighed some failures and she had gone on all summer. Nobody knew of it, not even Di. Nan hugged her secret and took to praying at sundry times and in divers places, instead of only at night. Di did not approve of this and said so.

“Don’t mix God up with everything,” she told Nan severely. “You make Him too common.”

Anne, overhearing this, rebuked her and said, “God is in everything, dear. He is the Friend who is always near us to give strength and courage. And Nan is quite right in praying to Him and where she wants to.” Though, if Anne had known the truth about her small daughter’s devotions, she would have been rather horrified.

Nan had said one night in May, “If you’ll make my tooth grow in before Amy Taylor’s party next week, dear God, I’ll take every dose of castor-oil Susan gives me without a bit of fuss.”

The very next day the tooth, whose absence had made such an unsightly and too prolonged gap in Nan’s pretty mouth, had appeared and by the day of the party was fully through. What more certain sign could you want than that? Nan kept her side of the compact faithfully and Susan was amazed and delighted whenever she administered castor-oil after that. Nan took it without a grimace or protest, though she sometimes wished she had set a time limit ... say for three months.

God did not always respond. But when she asked Him to send her a special button for her button-string ... collecting buttons had broken out everywhere among the Glen small girls like the measles ... assuring Him that if He did she would never make a fuss when Susan set the chipped plate for her ... the button came the very next day, Susan having found one on an old dress in the attic. A beautiful red button set with tiny diamonds, or what Nan believed to be diamonds. She was the envied of all because of that elegant button and when Di refused the chipped plate that night Nan said virtuously, "Give it to me, Susan. I'll always take it after this." Susan thought she was angelically unselfish and said so. Whereupon Nan both looked and felt smug. She got a fine day for the Sunday School picnic, when everyone predicted rain the night before, by promising to brush her teeth every morning without being told. Her lost ring was restored on the condition that she kept her fingernails scrupulously clean; and when Walter handed over his picture of a flying angel which Nan had long coveted she ate the fat with the lean uncomplainingly at dinner thereafter.

When, however, she asked God to make her battered and patched Teddy Bear young again, promising to keep her bureau drawer tidy, something struck a snag. Teddy did not grow young though Nan looked for the miracle anxiously every morning and wished God would hurry. Finally she resigned herself to Teddy's age. After all, he was a nice old bear and it would be awfully hard to keep that old bureau drawer tidy. When Dad brought her home a new Teddy Bear she didn't really like it and, though with sundry misgivings of her small conscience, decided she need not take any special pains with the bureau drawer. Her faith returned when, having prayed that the missing eye of her china cat would be restored, the eye was in its place next morning, though somewhat askew, giving the cat a rather cross-eyed aspect. Susan had found it when sweeping and stuck it in with glue, but Nan did not know this and cheerfully carried out her promise of walking fourteen times around the barn on all fours. What good walking fourteen times around the barn on all fours could do God or anybody else Nan did not stop to consider. But she hated doing it ... the boys were always wanting her and Di to pretend they were some kind of animals in Rainbow Valley ... and perhaps there was some vague thought in her budding mind that penance might be pleasing to the mysterious Being who gave or withheld at pleasure. At any rate, she thought out several weird

stunts that summer, causing Susan to wonder frequently where on earth children got the notions they did.

“Why do you suppose, Mrs. Dr. dear, that Nan must go twice around the livingroom every day without walking on the floor?”

“Without walking on the floor! How does she manage it, Susan?”

“By jumping from one piece of furniture to the other, including the fender. She slipped on that yesterday and pitched headfirst into the coalscuttle. Mrs. Dr. dear, do you suppose she needs a dose of worm medicine?”

That year was always referred to in the Ingleside chronicles as the one in which Dad almost had pneumonia and Mother had it. One night, Anne, who already had a nasty cold, went with Gilbert to a party in Charlottetown ... wearing a new and very becoming dress and Jem’s string of pearls. She looked so well in it that all the children who had come in to see her before she left thought it was wonderful to have a mother you could be so proud of.

“Such a nice swishy pettycoat,” sighed Nan. “When I grow up will I have tafty petticoats like that, Mummy?”

“I doubt if girls will be wearing petticoats at all by that time,” said Dad. “I’ll back water, Anne, and admit that dress is a stunner even if I didn’t approve of the sequins. Now, don’t try to vamp me, woman. I’ve paid you all the compliments I’m going to tonight. Remember what we read in the Medical Journal today ... ‘Life is nothing more than delicately balanced organic chemistry,’ and let it make you humble and modest. Sequins, indeed! Taffeta petticoat, forsooth. We’re nothing but ‘a fortuitous concatenation of atoms.’ The great Dr. Von Bemburg says so.”

“Don’t quote that horrible Von Bemburg to me. He must have a bad case of chronic indigestion. He may be a concatenation of atoms, but I am not.”

In a few days thereafter Anne was a very sick “concatenation of atoms” and Gilbert a very anxious one. Susan went about looking harassed and tired, and the trained nurse came and went with an anxious face, and a

nameless shadow suddenly swooped and spread and darkened at Ingleside. The children were not told of the seriousness of their mother's illness and even Jem did not realize it fully. But they all felt the chill and the fear and went softly and unhappily. For once there was no laughter in the maple grove and no games in Rainbow Valley. But the worst of all was that they were not allowed to see Mother. No Mother meeting them with smiles when they came home, no Mother slipping in to kiss them goodnight, no Mother to soothe and sympathize and understand, no Mother to laugh over jokes with ... nobody ever laughed like Mother. It was far worse than when she was away, because then you knew she was coming back ... and now you knew ... just nothing. Nobody would tell you anything ... they just put you off.

Nan came home from school very pale over something Amy Taylor had told her.

"Susan, is Mother ... Mother isn't ... she isn't going to die, Susan?"

"Of course not," said Susan, too sharply and quickly. Her hands trembled as she poured out Nan's glass of milk. "Who has been talking to you?"

"Amy. She said ... oh, Susan, she said she thought Mother would make such a sweet-looking corpse!"

"Never you mind what she said, my pet. The Taylors all have wagging tongues. Your blessed Mother is sick enough but she is going to pull through and that you may tie to. Do you not know that your father is at the helm?"

"God wouldn't let Mother die, would he, Susan?" asked a white-lipped Walter, looking at her with the grave intentness that made it very hard for Susan to utter her comforting lies. She was terribly afraid they were lies. Susan was a badly frightened woman. The nurse had shaken her head that afternoon. The doctor had refused to come down to supper.

"I suppose the Almighty knows what He's about," muttered Susan as she washed the supper dishes ... and broke three of them ... but for the first time in her honest, simple life she doubted it.

Nan wandered unhappily around. Dad was sitting by the library table with his head in his hands. The nurse went in and Nan heard her say she thought the crisis would come that night.

“What is a crisis?” she asked Di.

“I think it is what a butterfly hatches out of,” said Di cautiously. “Let’s ask Jem.”

Jem knew, and told them before he went upstairs to shut himself in his room. Walter had disappeared ... he was lying face downward under the White Lady in Rainbow Valley ... and Susan had taken Shirley and Rilla off to bed. Nan went out alone and sat down on the steps. Behind her in the house was a terrible unaccustomed quiet. Before her the Glen was brimming with evening sunshine, but the long red road was misty with dust and the bent grasses in the harbour fields were burned white in the drouth. It had not rained for weeks and the flowers drooped in the garden ... the flowers Mother had loved.

Nan was thinking deeply. Now, if ever, was the time to bargain with God. What would she promise to do if He made Mother well? It must be something tremendous ... something that would make it worth His while. Nan remembered what Dicky Drew had said to Stanley Reese in school one day, “I dare you to walk through the graveyard after night.” Nan had shuddered at the time. How could anybody walk through the graveyard after night ... how could anyone even think of it? Nan had a horror of the graveyard not a soul in Ingleside suspected. Amy Taylor had once told her it was full of dead people ... “and they don’t always stay dead,” said Amy darkly and mysteriously. Nan could hardly bring herself to walk past it alone in broad daylight.

Far away the trees on a misty golden hill were touching the sky. Nan had often thought if she could get to that hill she could touch the sky, too. God lived just on the other side of it ... He might hear you better there. But she could not get to that hill ... she must just do the best she could here at Ingleside.

She clasped her little sunburned paws and lifted her tearstained face to the sky.

“Dear God,” she whispered, “if you make Mother get well I’ll walk through the graveyard after night. O dear God, please, please. And if You do this I won’t bother You for ever so long again.”

Chapter 2 6

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It was life, not death, that came at the ghostliest hour of the night to Ingleside. The children, sleeping at last, must have felt even in their sleep that the Shadow had withdrawn as silently and swiftly as it had come. For when they woke, to a day dark with welcome rain, there was sunshine in their eyes. They hardly needed to be told the good news by a Susan who had grown ten years younger. The crisis was past and Mother was going to live.

It was Saturday, so there was no school. They could not stir outside ... even though they loved to be out in the rain. This downpour was too much for them ... and they had to be very quiet inside. But they had never felt happier. Dad, almost sleepless for a week, had flung himself on the spare-room bed for a long deep slumber ... but not before he had sent a long-distance message to a green-gabled house in Avonlea where two old ladies had been trembling every time the telephone rang.

Susan, whose heart of late had not been in her desserts, concocted a glorious “orange shuffle” for dinner, promised a jam roly-poly for supper, and baked a double batch of butterscotch cookies. Cock Robin chirped all over the place. The very chairs looked as if they wanted to dance. The flowers in the garden lifted up their faces bravely again as the dry earth welcomed the rain. And Nan, amid all her happiness, was trying to face the consequences of her bargain with God.

She had no thought of trying to back out of it, but she kept putting it off, hoping she could get a little more courage for it. The very thought of it “made her blood curdle,” as Amy Taylor was so fond of saying. Susan knew there was something the matter with the child and administered castor-oil, with no visible improvement. Nan took the dose quietly, though she could not help thinking that Susan gave her castor-oil much oftener since that earlier bargain. But what was castor-oil compared to walking

through the graveyard after dark? Nan simply did not see how she could ever do it. But she must.

Mother was still so weak that nobody was allowed to see her save for a brief peep. And then she looked so white and thin. Was it because she, Nan, was not keeping her bargain?

“We must give her time,” said Susan.

How could you give anyone time, Nan wondered. But she knew why Mother was not getting well faster. Nan set her little pearly teeth. Tomorrow was Saturday again and tomorrow night she would do what she had promised to do.

It rained again all the next forenoon and Nan could not help a feeling of relief. If it was going to be a rainy night, nobody, not even God, could expect her to go prowling about graveyards. By noon the rain had stopped but there came a fog creeping up the harbour and over the Glen, surrounding Ingleside with its eerie magic. So still Nan hoped. If it was foggy she couldn't go either. But at supper time a wind sprang up and the dreamlike landscape of the fog vanished.

“There'll be no moon tonight,” said Susan.

“Oh, Susan, can't you make a moon?” cried Nan despairingly. If she had to walk through the graveyard there must be a moon.

“Bless the child, nobody can make moons,” said Susan. “I only meant it was going to be cloudy and you could not see the moon. And what difference can it make to you whether there is a moon or not?”

That was just what Nan could not explain and Susan was more worried than ever. Something must ail the child ... she had been acting so strangely all the week. She did not eat half enough and she moped. Was she worrying about her mother? She needn't ... Mrs. Dr. dear was coming on nicely.

Yes, but Nan knew that Mother would soon stop coming on nicely if she didn't keep her bargain. At sunset the clouds rolled away and the moon rose. But such a strange moon ... such a huge, blood-red moon. Nan had never seen such a moon. It terrified her. Almost would she have preferred the dark.

The twins went to bed at eight and Nan had to wait until Di had gone to sleep. Di took her time about it. She was feeling too sad and disillusioned to sleep readily. Her chum, Elsie Palmer, had walked home from school with another girl and Di believed that life was practically ended for her. It was nine o'clock before Nan felt it safe to slip out of bed and dress with fingers that trembled so she could hardly cope with her buttons. Then she crept down and out of the side door while Susan set the bread in the kitchen and reflected comfortably that all under her charge were safe in bed except the poor doctor, who had been summoned posthaste to a Harbour Mouth household where a baby had swallowed a tack.

Nan went out and down to Rainbow Valley. She must take the short-cut through it and up the hill pasture. She knew that the sight of an Ingleside twin prowling along the road and through the village would cause wonderment and somebody would likely insist on bringing her home. How cold the late September night was! She had not thought about that and had not put on her jacket. Rainbow Valley by night was not the friendly haunt of daytime. The moon had shrunk to a reasonable size and was no longer red but it cast sinister black shadows. Nan had always been rather frightened of shadows. Was that paddy feet in the darkness of the withered bracken by the brook?

Nan held up her head and stuck out her chin. "I'm not frightened," she said aloud valiantly. "It's only my stomach feels a little queer. I'm being a heroine."

The pleasant idea of being a heroine carried her halfway up the hill. Then a strange shadow swept over the world ... a cloud was crossing the moon ... and Nan thought of the Bird. Amy Taylor had once told her such a terrifying tale of a Great Black Bird that swooped down on you in the night and carried you off. Was it the Bird's shadow that had crossed over her? But Mother had said there was no Big Black Bird. "I don't believe

Mother could tell me a lie ... not mother,” said Nan ... and went on until she reached the fence. Beyond was the road ... and across it the graveyard. Nan stopped to get her breath.

Another cloud was over the moon. All around her lay a strange, dim, unknown land. “Oh, the world is too big!” shivered Nan, crowding against the fence. If she were only back in Ingleside! But ... “God is watching me,” said the seven-year-old scrap ... and climbed the fence.

She fell off on the other side, skinning her knee and tearing her dress. As she got to her feet a sharp weed-stub pierced completely through her slipper and cut her foot. But she limped across the road to the graveyard gate.

The old graveyard lay in the shadow of the firs at its eastern end. On one side was the Methodist church, on the other the Presbyterian manse, now dark and silent during the minister’s absence. The moon broke out suddenly from the cloud and the graveyard was full of shadows ... shadows that shifted and danced ... shadows that would grasp at you if you trusted yourself among them. A newspaper someone had discarded blew along the road, like a dancing old witch, and though Nan knew it for what it was, it was all part and parcel of the uncanniness of the night. Swish, swish, went the night-winds in the firs. A long leaf on the willow by the gate suddenly flicked her cheek like the touch of an elfin hand. For a moment her heart stood still ... yet she put her hand on the hook of the gate.

Suppose a long arm reached out of a grave and dragged you down!

Nan turned. She knew now that, bargain or no bargain, she could never walk through that graveyard by night. The grisliest groan suddenly sounded quite close to her. It was only Mrs. Ben Baker’s old cow, which she pastured on the road, getting up from behind a clump of spruces. But Nan did not wait to see what it was. In a spasm of uncontrollable panic she tore down the hill, through the village and up the road to Ingleside. Outside of the gate she dashed headlong through what Rilla called a “pud-muddle.” But there was home, with the soft, glowing lights in the windows

and a moment later she stumbled into Susan's kitchen, mud-spattered, with wet, bleeding feet.

"Good grief!" said Susan blankly.

"I couldn't walk through the graveyard Susan ... I couldn't!" gasped Nan.

Susan asked no questions at first. She picked the chilled, distraught Nan up and peeled off her wet slippers and socks. She undressed her and put on her nightgown and carried her to bed. Then she went down to get a "bite" for her. No matter what the child had been up to she couldn't be let go to bed on an empty stomach.

Nan ate her lunch and sipped her glass of hot milk. How lovely it was to be back in a warm, lighted room, safe in her nice warm bed! But she would not tell Susan one thing about it. "It's a secret between me and God, Susan." Susan went to bed vowing she would be a happy woman when Mrs. Dr. dear was up and about again.

"They're getting beyond me," sighed Susan helplessly.

Mother would certainly die now. Nan woke up with that terrible conviction in her mind. She had not kept her bargain and she could not expect God would. Life was very dreadful for Nan that following week. She could take no pleasure in anything, not even in watching Susan spin in the garret ... something she had always found so fascinating. She would never be able to laugh again. It wouldn't matter what she did. She gave her sawdust dog, off which Ken Ford had pulled the ears and which she loved even better than old Teddy ... Nan always loved old things best ... to Shirley because Shirley had always wanted it, and she gave her prized house made of shells, which Captain Malachi had brought her all the way from the West Indies, to Rilla, hoping that it would satisfy God: but she feared it would not, and when her new kitten, which she had given to Amy Taylor because Amy wanted it, came back home and persisted in coming back home Nan knew God was not satisfied. Nothing would do Him but walking through the graveyard; and poor haunted Nan knew now she could never do that. She was a coward and a sneak. Only sneaks, Jem had said once, tried to get out of bargains.

Anne was allowed to sit up in bed. She was nearly well again after being ill. She would soon be able to keep her house again ... read her books ... lie easily on her pillows ... eat everything she wanted ... sit by her fireplace ... look to her garden ... see her friends ... listen to juicy bits of gossip ... welcome the days shining like jewels on the necklace of the year ... be again a part of the colourful pageantry of life.

She had had such a nice dinner ... Susan's stuffed leg of lamb had been done to a turn. It was delightful to feel hungry again. She looked about her room at all the things she loved. She must get new curtains for it ... something between spring green and pale gold; and certainly those new cupboards for towels must be put in the bathroom. Then she looked out of the window. There was some magic in the air. She could catch a blue glimpse of the harbour through the maples; the weeping birch on the lawn was a soft rain of falling gold. Vast sky-gardens arched over an opulent land holding autumn in fee ... a land of unbelievable colours, mellow light and lengthening shadows. Cock Robin was tilting crazily on a fir-top; the children were laughing in the orchard as they picked apples. Laughter had come back to Ingleside. "Life is something more than 'delicately balanced organic chemistry,'" she thought happily.

Into the room crept Nan, eyes and nose crimson from crying.

"Mummy, I have to tell you ... I can't wait any longer. Mummy, I've cheated God."

Anne thrilled again to the soft touch of a child's little clinging hand ... a child seeking help, and comfort in its bitter little problem. She listened while Nan sobbed out the whole story and managed to keep a straight face. Anne always had contrived to keep a straight face when a straight face was indicated, no matter how crazily she might laugh it over with Gilbert afterwards. She knew Nan's worry was real and dreadful to her; and she also realized that this small daughter's theology needed attention.

"Darling, you're terribly mistaken about it all. God doesn't make bargains. He gives . . . gives without asking anything from us in return except love. When you ask Father or me for something you want, we don't make

bargains with you ... and God is ever and ever so much kinder than we are. And He knows so much better than we do what is good to give."

"And He won't ... He won't make you die, Mummy, because I didn't keep my promise?"

"Certainly not, darling."

"Mummy, even if I was mistaken about God ... oughtn't I to keep my bargain when I made it? I said I would, you know. Daddy says we should always keep our promises. Won't I be disgraced forever if I don't?"

"When I get quite well, dear, I'll go with you some night ... and stay outside the gate ... and I don't think you'll be a bit afraid to go through the graveyard then. That will relieve your poor little conscience ... and you won't make any more foolish bargains with God?"

"No," promised Nan, with a rather regretful feeling that she was giving up something that, with all its drawbacks, had been pleasantly exciting. But the sparkle had come back to her eyes and a bit of the old ginger to her voice.

"I'll go and wash my face and then I'll come back and kiss you, Mummy. And I'll pick you all the snack-dragons I can find. It's been dreadful without you, Mummy."

"Oh, Susan," said Anne when Susan brought in her supper, "what a world it is! What a beautiful, interesting, wonderful world! Isn't it, Susan?"

"I will go so far," admitted Susan, recalling the beautiful row of pies she had just left in the pantry, "as to say that it is very tolerable."

Chapter 2 7

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October was a very happy month at Ingleside that year, full of days when you just had to run and sing and whistle. Mother was about again, refusing to be treated as a convalescent any longer, making garden plans, laughing again ... Jem always thought Mother had such a beautiful, joyous laugh ... answering innumerable questions. “Mummy, how far is it from here to the sunset? ... Mummy, why can’t we gather up the spilled moonlight? ... Mummy, do the souls of dead people really come back on Hallowe’en? ... Mummy, what causes the cause? ... Mummy, wouldn’t you rather be killed by a rattlesnake than a tiger, because the tiger would mess you up and eat you? ... Mummy, what is a cubby? ... Mummy, is a widow really a woman whose dreams have come true? Wally Taylor said she was... . Mummy, what do little birds do when it rains hard? ... Mummy, are we really a too romantic family?”

The last from Jem, who had heard in school that Mrs. Alec Davies had said so. Jem did not like Mrs. Alec Davies, because whenever she met him with Mother or Father she invariably dabbed her long forefinger at him and demanded, “Is Jemmy a good boy in school?” Jemmy! Perhaps they were a bit romantic. Susan must certainly have thought so when she discovered the boardwalk to the barn lavishly decorated with splotches of crimson paint. “We had to have them for our sham battle, Susan,” explained Jem. “They represent gobs of gore.”

At night there might be a line of wild geese flying across a low red moon and Jem when he saw them ached mysteriously to fly far away with them, too ... to unknown shores and bring back monkeys ... leopards ... parrots ... things like that ... to explore the Spanish Main.

Some phrases, like “the Spanish Main,” always sounded irresistibly alluring to Jem ... “secrets of the sea” was another. To be caught in the deadly coils of a python and have a combat with a wounded rhinoceros

was all in the day's work with Jem. And the very word "dragon" gave him a tremendous thrill. His favourite picture, tacked on the wall at the foot of his bed, was of a knight in armour on a beautiful plump white horse, standing on its hind legs while its rider speared a dragon who had a lovely tail flowing behind him in kinks and loops, ending with a fork. A lady in a pink robe knelt peacefully and composedly in the background with clasped hands. There was no doubt in the world that the lady looked a good deal like Maybelle Reese for whose nine-year-old favour lances were already being shattered in the Glen school. Even Susan noticed the resemblance and teased the furiously blushing Jem about it. But the dragon was really a little disappointing ... it looked so small and insignificant under the huge horse. There didn't seem to be any special valour about spearing it. The dragons from which Jem rescued Maybelle in secret dreams were much more dragonish. He had rescued her last Monday from old Sarah Palmer's gander. Peradventure ... ah, "peradventure" had a good smack! ... she had noticed the lordly air with which he had caught the hissing creature by its snaky neck and flung it over the fence. But a gander was somehow not nearly so romantic as a dragon.

It was an October of winds ... small winds that purred in the valley and big ones that lashed the mapletops ... winds that howled along the sandshore but crouched when they came to the rocks ... crouched and sprang. The nights, with their sleepy red hunter's moon, were cool enough to make the thought of a warm bed pleasant, the blueberry bushes turned scarlet, the dead ferns were a rich red-brown, sumacs burned behind the barn, green pastures lay here and there like patches on the sere harvest fields of the Upper Glen and there were gold and russet chrysanthemums in the spruce corner of the lawn. There were squirrels chattering joyfully everywhere and cricket fiddlers for fairy dances on a thousand hills. There were apples to be picked, carrots to be dug. Sometimes the boys went digging "cowhawks" with Captain Malachi when the mysterious "tides" permitted ... tides that came in to caress the land but slipped back to their own deep sea. There was a reek of leaf fires all through the Glen, a heap of big yellow pumpkins in the barn, and Susan made the first cranberry pies.

Ingleside rang with laughter from dawn to sunset. Even when the older children were in school Shirley and Rilla were big enough now to keep up

the tradition of laughter. Even Gilbert laughed more than usual this fall. “I like a dad who can laugh,” Jem reflected. Dr. Bronson of Mowbray Narrows never laughed. He was said to have built up his practice entirely on his owlish look of wisdom; but Dad had a better practice still and people were pretty far gone when they couldn’t laugh over one of his jokes.

Anne was busy in her garden every warm day, drinking in colour like wine, where the late sunshine fell on crimson maples, revelling in the exquisite sadness of fleeting beauty. One gold-grey smoky afternoon she and Jem planted all the tulip bulbs, that would have a resurrection of rose and scarlet and purple and gold in June. “Isn’t it nice to be preparing for spring when you know you’ve got to face winter, Jem?” “And it’s nice to be making the garden beautiful,” said Jem. “Susan says it is God who makes everything beautiful but we can help Him out a bit, can’t we, Mums?”

“Always ... always, Jem. He shares that privilege with us.”

Still, nothing is ever quite perfect. The Ingleside folks were worried over Cock Robin. They had been told that when the robins went away he would want to go too.

“Keep him shut up till all the rest are gone and the snow comes,” advised Captain Malachi. “Then he’ll kind of forget about it and be all right till spring.”

So Cock Robin was a sort of prisoner. He grew very restless. He flew aimlessly about the house or sat on the windowsill and looked wistfully out at his fellows who were preparing to follow who knew what mysterious call. His appetite failed and even worms and Susan’s nuttiest nuts would not tempt him. The children pointed out to him all the dangers he might encounter ... cold, hunger, friendlessness, storms, black nights, cats. But Cock Robin had felt or heard the summons and all his being yearned to answer.

Susan was the last to give in. She was very grim for several days. But finally, “Let him go,” she said. “It is against nature to hold him.”

They set him free the last day of October, after he had been mewed up for a month. The children kissed him goodbye with tears. He flew joyfully off, returning next morning to Susan's sill for crumbs and then spreading his wings for the long flight. "He may come back to us in the spring, darling," Anne said to the sobbing Rilla. But Rilla was not to be comforted.

"That it's too far away," she sobbed.

Anne smiled and sighed. The seasons that seemed so long to Baby Rilla were beginning to pass all too quickly for her. Another summer was ended, lighted out of life by the ageless gold of Lombardy torches. Soon ... all too soon ... the children of Ingleside would be children no longer. But they were still hers ... hers to welcome when they came home at night ... hers to fill life with wonder and delight ... hers to love and cheer and scold ... a little. For sometimes they were very naughty, even though they hardly deserved to be called by Mrs. Alec Davies "that pack of Ingleside demons" when she heard that Bertie Shakespeare Drew had been slightly scorched while playing the part of a Red Indian burned at the stake in Rainbow Valley. It had taken Jem and Walter a little longer to untie him than they had bargained for. They got slightly singed, too, but nobody pitied them.

November was a dismal month that year ... a month of east wind and fog. Some days there was nothing but cold mist driving past or drifting over the grey sea beyond the bar. The shivering poplar trees dropped their last leaves. The garden was dead and all its colour and personality had gone from it ... except the asparagus-bed, which was still a fascinating golden jungle. Walter had to desert his study roost in the maple tree and learn his lessons in the house. It rained ... and rained ... and rained. "Will the world ever be dry again?" moaned Di despairingly. Then there was a week steeped in the magic of Indian summer sunshine, and in the cold sharp evenings Mother would touch a match to the kindling in the grate and Susan would have baked potatoes with supper.

The big fireplace was the centre of the home those evenings. It was the high spot of the day when they gathered around it after supper. Anne sewed and planned little winter wardrobes ... "Nan must have a red dress, since she is so set on it" ... and sometimes thought of Hannah, weaving her little coat every year for the small Samuel. Mothers were the same all

through the centuries ... a great sisterhood of love and service ... the remembered and the unremembered alike.

Susan heard the children's spellings and then they amused themselves as they liked. Walter, living in his world of imagination and beautiful dreams, was absorbed in writing a series of letters from the chipmunk who lived in Rainbow Valley to the chipmunk who lived behind the barn. Susan pretended to scoff at them when he read them to her, but she secretly made copies of them and sent them to Rebecca Dew.

"I found these readable, Miss Dew dear, though you may consider them too trivial to peruse. In that case I know you will pardon a doting old woman for troubling you with them. He is considered very clever in school and at least these compositions are not poetry. I might also add that Little Jem made ninety-nine in his arithmetic examination last week and nobody can understand why the other mark was cut off. Perhaps I should not say so, Miss Dew dear, but it is my conviction that that child is born for greatness. We may not live to see it but he may yet be Premier of Canada."

The Shrimp basked in the glow and Nan's kitten, Pussywillow, which always suggested some dainty exquisite little lady in black and silver, climbed everybody's legs impartially. "Two cats, and mouse tracks everywhere in the pantry," was Susan's disapproving parenthesis. The children talked over their little adventures together and the wail of the distant ocean came through the cold autumn night.

Sometimes Miss Cornelia dropped in for a short call while her husband exchanged opinions in Carter Flagg's store. Little pitchers pricked up their long ears then, for Miss Cornelia always had the latest gossip and they always heard the most interesting things about people. It would be such fun next Sunday to sit in church and look at the said people, savouring what you knew about them, prim and proper as they looked.

"My, but you're cosy here, Anne dearie. It's a real keen night and starting to snow. Is the doctor out?"

"Yes. I hated to see him go ... but they telephoned from the Harbour Head that Mrs. Brooker Shaw insisted on seeing him," said Anne, while Susan

swiftly and stealthily removed from the hearthrug a huge fishbone the Shrimp had brought in, praying that Miss Cornelia had not noticed it.

“She’s no more sick than I am,” said Susan bitterly. “But I hear she has got a new lace nightgown and no doubt she wants her doctor to see her in it. Lace nightgowns!”

“Her daughter Leona brought it home from Boston for her. She came Friday evening, with four trunks,” said Miss Cornelia. “I can remember her starting off to the States nine years ago, lugging a broken old Gladstone bag with things oozing out of it. That was when she was feeling pretty blue over Phil Turner’s jilting her. She tried to hide it but everyone knew. Now she’s back to ‘nurse her mother,’ so she says. She’ll be trying to flirt with the doctor, I warn you, Anne dearie. But I don’t suppose it will matter to him even if he is a man. And you’re not like Mrs. Dr. Bronson at Mowbray Narrows. She is very jealous of her husband’s female patients, I am told.”

“And of the trained nurses,” said Susan.

“Well, some of those trained nurses are far too pretty for their job,” said Miss Cornelia. “There’s Janie Arthur now; she’s taking a rest between cases and trying to keep her two young men from finding out about each other.”

“Pretty as she is, she is no spring chicken now,” said Susan firmly, “and it would be far better for her to make a choice and settle down. Look at her Aunt Eudora ... She said she didn’t intend to marry till she got through flirting, and behold the result. Even yet she tries to flirt with every man in sight though she is forty-five if she is a day. That is what comes of forming a habit. Did you every hear, Mrs. Dr. dear, what she said to her cousin Fanny when she got married? ‘You’re taking my leavings,’ she said. I am informed there was a shower of sparks and they have never spoken since.”

“Life and death are in the power of the tongue,” murmured Anne absently.

“A true word, dear. Speaking of that, I wish Mr. Stanley would be a little more judicious in his sermons. He has offended Wallace Young and Wallace is going to leave the church. Everyone says the sermon last Sunday was preached at him.”

“If a minister preaches a sermon that hits home to some particular individual people always suppose he meant it for that very person,” said Anne. “A hand-me-down cap is bound to fit somebody’s head but it doesn’t follow that it was made for him.”

“Sound sense,” approved Susan. “And I have no use for Wallace Young. He let a firm paint ads on his cows three years ago. That is too economical, in my opinion.”

“His brother David is going to be married at last,” said Miss Cornelia. “He’s been a long time making up his mind which was cheaper — marrying or hiring. ‘Ye can keep a house without a woman but it’s hard sledding, Cornelia,’ he said to me once after his mother died. I had an idea that he was feeling his way but he got no encouragement from me. And at last he’s going to marry Jessie King.”

“Jessie King! But I thought he was supposed to be courting Mary North.”

“He says he wasn’t going to marry any woman who eats cabbage. But there’s a story going around that he proposed to her and she boxed his ears. And Jessie King is reported to have said that she would have liked a better looking man but that he’d have to do. Well, of course it is any port in a storm for some folks.”

“I do not think, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that people in these parts say half the things they are reported to have said,” rebuked Susan. “It is my opinion that Jessie King will make David Young a far better wife than he deserves ... though as far as outward seeming goes I will admit he looks like something that washed in with the tide.”

“Do you know that Alden and Stella have a little daughter?” asked Anne.

“So I understand. I hope Stella will be a little more sensible over it than Lisette was over her. Would you believe it, Anne dear, Lisette positively cried because her cousin Dora’s baby walked before Stella did?”

“We mothers are a foolish race,” smiled Anne. “I remember that I felt perfectly murderous when little Bob Taylor, who was the same age as Jem to a day, cut three teeth before Jem cut one.”

“Bob Taylor’s got to have an operation on his tonsils,” said Miss Cornelia.

“Why don’t we ever have operations, Mother?” demanded Walter and Di together in injured tones. They so often said the same thing together. Then they linked their fingers and made a wish. “We think and feel the same about everything,” Di was wont to explain earnestly.

“Shall I ever forget Elsie Taylor’s marriage?” said Miss Cornelia reminiscently. “Her best friend, Maisie Millison, was to play the wedding march. She played the Dead March in Saul in place of it. Of course she always said she made a mistake because she was so flustered but people had their own opinion. She wanted Mac Moorside for herself. A goodlooking rogue with a silver tongue ... always saying to women just what he thought they’d like to hear. He made Elsie’s life miserable. Ah well, Anne dearie, they’ve both passed long since into the Silent Land and Maisie’s been married to Harley Russell for years and everybody has forgotten that he proposed to her expecting her to say ‘No’ and she said ‘Yes’ instead. Harley has forgotten it himself ... just like a man. He thinks he has got the best wife in the world and congratulates himself on being clever enough to get her.”

“Why did he propose to her if he wanted her to say no? It seems to me a very strange proceeding,” said Susan ... immediately adding with crushing humility, “But of course I would not be expected to know anything about that.”

“His father ordered him to. He didn’t want to, but he thought it was quite safe... . There’s the doctor now.”

As Gilbert came in, a little flurry of snow blew in with him. He threw off his coat and sat gladly down to his own fireside.

“I’m later than I expected to be ...”

“No doubt the new lace nightgown was very attractive,” said Anne, with an impish grin at Miss Cornelia.

“What are you talking about? Some feminine joke beyond my coarse masculine perception, I suppose. I went on to the Upper Glen to see Walter Cooper.”

“It’s a mystery how that man does hang on,” said Miss Cornelia.

“I’ve no patience with him,” smiled Gilbert. “He ought to have been dead long ago. A year ago I gave him two months and here he is ruining my reputation by keeping on living.”

“If you knew the Coopers as well as I do you wouldn’t risk predictions on them. Don’t you know his grandfather came back to life after they’d dug the grave and got the coffin? The undertaker wouldn’t take it back either. However, I understand Walter Cooper is having lots of fun rehearsing his own funeral ... just like a man. Well, there’s Marshall’s bells ... and this jar of pickled pears is for you, Anne dearie.”

They all went to the door to see Miss Cornelia off. Walter’s dark grey eyes peered out into the stormy night.

“I wonder where Cock Robin is tonight and if he misses us,” he said wistfully. Perhaps Cock Robin had gone to that mysterious place Mrs. Elliott was always referring to as the Silent Land.

“Cock Robin is in a southern land of sunshine,” said Anne. “He’ll be back in the spring, I feel quite sure, and that’s only five months away. Chickabids, you should all have been in bed along ago.”

“Susan,” Di was saying in the pantry, “would you like to have a baby? I know where you could get one ... brand-new.”

“Ah now, where?”

“They have a new one at Amy’s. Amy says the angels brought it and she thinks they might have had more sense. They’ve eight children now, not counting it. I heard you say yesterday that it made you lonesome to see Rilla getting so big ... you’d no baby now. I’m sure Mrs. Taylor would give you hers.”

“The things children think of! It runs in the Taylors to have big families. Andrew Taylor’s father never could tell offhand how many children he had ... always had to stop and reckon them up. But I do not think I will take any outside babies on just yet.”

“Susan, Amy Taylor says you are an old maid. Are you, Susan?”

“Such has been the lot an all-wise Providence has ordained for me,” said Susan unflinchingly.

“Do you like being an old maid, Susan?”

“I cannot truthfully say I do, my pet. But,” added Susan, remembering the lot of some wives she knew, “I have learned that there are compensations. Now take your father’s apple pie to him and I’ll bring his tea. The poor man must be faint from hunger.”

“Mother, we’ve got the loveliest home in the world, haven’t we?” said Walter as he went sleepily upstairs. “Only ... don’t you think it would improve it if we had a few ghosts?”

“Ghosts?”

“Yes. Jerry Palmer’s house is full of ghosts. He saw one ... a tall lady in white with a skeleton hand. I told Susan about it and she said he was either fibbing or there was something the matter with his stomach.”

“Susan was right. As for Ingleside, nobody but happy people have ever lived here ... so you see we’re not ghostable. Now say your prayers and go to sleep.”

“Mother, I guess I was naughty last night. I said, ‘Give us tomorrow our daily bread,’ instead of today. It seemed more logical. Do you think God minded, Mother?”

Chapter 2 8

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Cock Robin did come back when Ingleside and Rainbow Valley burned again with the green, evasive flames of spring, and brought a bride with him. The two built a nest in Walter's apple tree and Cock Robin resumed all his old habits, but his bride was shyer or less venturesome and would never let anyone come very near her. Susan thought Cock Robin's return a positive miracle and wrote Rebecca Dew about it that very night.

The spotlight in the little drama of life at Ingleside shifted from time to time, now falling on this one, now on that. They had got through the winter without anything very much out of the way happening to anyone and in June it was Di's turn to have an adventure.

A new girl had begun coming to school ... a girl who said, when the teacher asked her her name, "I am Jenny Penny," as one might say, "I am Queen Elizabeth," or "I am Helen of Troy." You felt the minute she said it that not to know Jenny Penny argued yourself unknown, and not to be condescended to by Jenny Penny meant you didn't exist at all. At least, that was how Diana Blythe felt about it, even if she couldn't have put it into those exact words.

Jenny Penny had nine years to Di's eight but from the first she took rank with the "big girls" of ten and eleven. They found they could not snub or ignore her. She was not pretty but her appearance was striking ... everybody looked at her twice. She had a round creamy face with a soft glossless cloud of soot-black hair about it and enormous dusky blue eyes with long tangled black lashes. When she slowly raised those lashes and looked at you with those scornful eyes you felt that you were a worm honoured in not being stepped on. You liked better to be snubbed by her than courted by any other: and to be selected as a temporary confidante of Jenny Penny's was an honour almost too great to be borne. For Jenny Penny's confidences were exciting. Evidently the Pennys were no common

people. Jenny's Aunt Lina, it appeared, possessed a wonderful gold and garnet necklace which had been given her by an uncle who was a millionaire. One of her cousins had a diamond ring that cost a thousand dollars and another cousin had won a prize in elocution over seventeen hundred competitors. She had an aunt who was a missionary and worked among the leopards in India. In short, the Glen schoolgirls, for a time at least, accepted Jenny Penny at her own valuation, looked up to her with mingled admiration and envy, and talked so much about her at their supper tables that their elders were finally constrained to take notice.

"Who is this little girl Di seems so taken up with, Susan?" asked Anne one evening, after Di had been telling of "the mansion" Jenny lived in, with white wooden lace around its roof, five bay-windows, a wonderful birch grove behind it, and a red marble mantelpiece in the parlor. "Penny is a name I've never heard in Four Winds. Do you know anything about them?"

"They are a new family that have moved to the old Conway farm on the Base Line, Mrs. Dr. dear. Mr. Penny is said to be a carpenter who couldn't make a living carpentering ... being too busy, as I understand, trying to prove there is no God ... and has decided to try farming. From all I can make out they are a queer lot. The young ones do just as they like. He says he was bossed to death when he was a kid and his children are not going to be. That is why this Jenny one is coming to the Glen school. They are nearer the Mowbray Narrows school and the other children go there, but Jenny made up her mind to come to the Glen. Half the Conway farm is in this district, so Mr. Penny pays rates to both schools and, of course, he can send his children to both if he likes. Though it seems this Jenny is his niece, not his daughter. Her father and mother are dead. They say it was George Andrew Penny who put the sheep in the basement of the Baptist church at Mowbray Narrows. I do not say they are not respectable, but they are all so unkempt, Mrs. Dr. dear ... and the house is topsy-turvy ... and, if I may presume to advise, you do not want Diana mixed up with a monkey tribe like that."

"I can't exactly prevent her from associating with Jenny in school, Susan. I don't really know anything against the child, though I feel sure she draws a

long bow in telling of her relatives and adventures. However, Di will probably soon get over this ‘crush’ and we’ll hear no more of Jenny Penny.”

They continued to hear of her, however. Jenny told Di she liked her best of all the girls in the Glen school and Di, feeling that a queen had stooped to her, responded adoringly. They became inseparable at recesses; they wrote notes to each other over the weekends; they gave and received “chews” of gum: they traded buttons and cooperated in dust piles; and finally Jenny asked Di to go home with her from school and stay all night with her.

Mother said, “No,” very decidedly and Di wept copiously.

“You’ve let me stay all night with Persis Ford,” she sobbed.

“That was ... different,” said Anne, a little vaguely. She did not want to make a snob of Di, but all she had heard about the Penny family had made her realize that as friends for the Ingleside children they were quite out of the question and she had been considerably worried of late over the fascination Jenny so evidently possessed for Diana.

“I don’t see any difference,” wailed Di. “Jenny is just as much of a lady as Persis, so there! She never chews bought gum. She has a cousin who knows all the rules of etiquette and Jenny has learned them all from her. Jenny says we don’t know what etiquette is. And she has had the most exciting adventures.”

“Who says she has?” demanded Susan.

“She told me herself. Her folks aren’t rich but they have got very rich and respectable relatives. Jenny has an uncle who is a judge and a cousin of her mother’s is captain of the biggest vessel in the world. Jenny christened the ship for him when it was launched. We haven’t got an uncle who is a judge or an aunt who is a missionary to leopards either.”

“Lepers, dear, not leopards.”

“Jenny said leopards. I guess she ought to know since it is her aunt. And there are so many things at her house I want to see ... her room is papered with parrots ... and their parlour is full of stuffed owls ... and they have a hooked rug with a house on it in the hall ... and window blinds just covered with roses ... and a real house to play in ... her uncle built it for them ... and her Gammy lives with them and is the oldest person in the world. Jenny says she lived before the flood. I may never have another chance to see a person who lived before the flood.”

“The grandmother is close on a hundred, I am told,” said Susan, “but if your Jenny said she lived before the flood she is fibbing. You would be likely to catch goodness knows what if you went to a place like that.”

“They’ve had everything they could have long ago,” protested Di. “Jenny says they’ve had mumps and measles and whooping-cough and scarlet fever all in one year.”

“I wouldn’t put it past them having the smallpox,” muttered Susan. “Talk of people being bewitched!”

“Jenny has to have her tonsils out,” sobbed Di. “But that isn’t catching, is it? Jenny had a cousin who died when she had her tonsils out ... she bled to death without gaining conscious. So it is likely Jenny will too, if it runs in the family. She is delicate ... she fainted three times last week. But she is quite prepared. And that is partly why she is so anxious to have me spend a night with her ... so that I’d have it to remember after she passed away. Please, Mother. I’ll go without the new hat with ribbon streamers you promise me if you’ll let me.”

But Mother was adamant and Di betook herself to a tearful pillow. Nan had no sympathy for her ... Nan “had no use” for Jenny Penny.

“I don’t know what has got into the child,” said Anne worriedly. “She has never behaved like this before. As you say, that Penny girl seems to have bewitched her.”

“You were quite right in refusing to let her go to a place so far beneath her, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“Oh, Susan, I don’t want her to feel that anyone is ‘beneath’ her. But we must draw the line somewhere. It’s not Jenny so much ... I think she’s harmless enough apart from her habit of exaggeration ... but I’m told the boys are really dreadful. The Mowbray Narrows teacher is at her wits’-end with them.”

“Do they TRYannize over you like that?” asked Jenny loftily when Di told her she was not to be allowed to go. “I wouldn’t let anyone use me like that. I have too much spirit. Why, I sleep out of doors all night whenever I take the notion. I s’pose you’d never dream of doing that?”

Di looked wistfully at this mysterious girl who had “often slept out all night.” How wonderful!

“You don’t blame me for not going, Jenny? You know I want to go?”

“Of course I don’t blame you. Some girls wouldn’t put up with it, of course, but I s’pose you just can’t help it. We could have had fun. I’d planned we’d go fishing by moonlight in our back brook. We often do. I’ve caught trout that long. And we have the dearest little pigs and a new foal that’s just sweet and a litter of puppies. Well, I guess I must ask Sadie Taylor. Her father and mother let her call her soul her own.”

“My father and mother are very good to me,” protested Di loyally. “And my father is the best doctor in P. E. Island. Everyone says so.”

“Putting on airs because you have a father and mother and I have none,” said Jenny disdainfully. “Why, my father has wings and always wears a golden crown. But I don’t go about with my head in the air on that account, do I? Now, Di, I don’t want to quarrel with you but I hate to hear anyone bragging about their folks. It’s not etiket. And I have made up my mind to be a lady. When that Persis Ford you’re always talking of comes to Four Winds this summer I am not going to ‘sociate with her. There’s something queer about her ma, Aunt Lina says. She was married to a dead man and he come alive.”

“Oh, it wasn’t like that at all, Jenny. I know ... Mother told me... . Aunt Leslie ...”

“I don’t want to hear about her. Whatever it is, it’s something that’d better not be talked of, Di. There’s the bell.”

“Are you really going to ask Sadie?” choked Di, her eyes widening with hurt.

“Well, not right at once. I’ll wait and see. Maybe I’ll give you one more chance. But if I do it will be the last.”

A few days later Jenny Penny came to Di at recess.

“I heard Jem saying your pa and ma went away yesterday and wouldn’t be back till tomorrow night?”

“Yes, they went up to Avonlea to see Aunt Marilla.”

“Then it’s your chance.”

“My chance?”

“To stay all night with me.”

“Oh, Jenny ... but I couldn’t.”

“Of course you can. Don’t be a ninny. They’ll never know.”

“But Susan wouldn’t let me ...”

“You don’t have to ask her. Just come home with me from school. Nan can tell her where you’ve gone so she won’t be worried. And she won’t tell on you when your pa and ma come back. She’ll be too scared they’d blame her.”

Di stood in an agony of indecision. She knew perfectly well she should not go with Jenny, but the temptation was irresistible. Jenny turned the full battery of her extraordinary eyes upon Di.

“This is your last chance,” she said dramatically. “I can’t go on ‘sociating with anyone who thinks herself too good to visit me. If you don’t come we

part forever.”

That settled it. Di, still in the thrall of Jenny Penny’s fascination, couldn’t face the thought of parting forever. Nan went home alone that afternoon to tell Susan that Di had gone to stay all night with that Jenny Penny.

Had Susan been her usual active self she would have gone straight to the Pennys and brought Di home. But Susan had strained her ankle that morning and while she could make shift to hobble around and get the children’s meals she knew she could never walk a mile down the Base Line road. The Pennys had no telephone and Jem and Walter flatly refused to go. They were invited to a mussel-bake at the lighthouse and nobody would eat Di at the Pennys’. Susan had to resign herself to the inevitable.

Di and Jenny went home across the fields, which made it little more than a quarter of a mile. Di, in spite of her prodding conscience, was happy. They went through so much beauty ... little bays of bracken, elfin haunted, in the bays of deep-green woods, a rustling windy hollow where you waded knee-deep in buttercups, a winding lane under young maples, a brook that was a rainbow scarf of blossom, a sunny pasture field full of strawberries. Di, just wakening to a perception of the loveliness of the world, was enraptured and almost wished Jenny wouldn’t talk so much. That was all right at school but here Di wasn’t sure she wanted to hear about the time Jenny poisoned herself ... ‘zackzidentally of course ... by taking the wrong kind of medicine. Jenny painted her dying agonies finely but was somewhat vague as to the reason she hadn’t died after all. She had “lost conscious” but the doctor had managed to pull her back from the brink of the grave.

“Though I’ve never been the same since. Di Blythe, what are you staring at? I don’t believe you’ve been listening at all.”

“Oh, yes, I have,” said Di guiltily. “I do think you’ve had the most wonderful life, Jenny. But look at the view.”

“The view? What’s a view?”

“Why ... why ... something you’re looking at. That ...” waving her hand at the panorama of meadow and woodland and cloud-smitten hill before them, with that sapphire dent of sea between the hills.

Jenny sniffed.

“Just a lot of old trees and cows. I’ve seen it a hundred times. You’re awful funny by spells, Di Blythe. I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but sometimes I think you’re not all there. I really do. But I s’pose you can’t help it. They say your ma is always raving like that. Well, there’s our place.”

Di gazed at the Penny house and lived through her first shock of disillusionment. Was this the “mansion” Jenny had talked of? It was big enough, certainly, and had the five bay-windows; but it was woefully in need of painting and much of the “wooden lace” was missing. The verandah had sagged badly and the once lovely old fanlight over the front door was broken. The blinds were crooked, there were several brown-paper panes and the “beautiful birch grove” behind the house was represented by a few lean sinewy old trees. The barns were in a very tumbledown condition, the yard was full of old rusty machinery and the garden was a perfect jungle of weeds. Di had never seen such a looking place in her life and for the first time it occurred to her to wonder if all Jenny’s tales were true. Could anyone have so many narrow escapes of her life, even in nine years, as she had claimed to have?

Inside it was not much better. The parlour into which Jenny ushered her was musty and dusty. The ceiling was discoloured and covered with cracks. The famous marble mantelpiece was only painted ... even Di could see that ... and draped with a hideous Japanese scarf, held in place by a row of “moustache” cups. The stringy lace curtains were a bad colour and full of holes. The blinds were of blue paper, much cracked and torn, with a huge basketful of roses depicted on them. As for the parlour being full of stuffed owls, there was a small glass case in one corner containing three rather dishevelled birds, one with its eyes missing entirely. To Di, accustomed to the beauty and dignity of Ingleside, the room looked like something you had seen in a bad dream. The odd thing, however, was that Jenny seemed quite unconscious of any discrepancy between her

descriptions and reality. Di wondered if she had just dreamed that Jenny had told her such and such.

It was not so bad outside. The little playhouse Mr. Penny had built in the spruce corner, looking like a real house in miniature, was a very interesting place and the little pigs and the new foal were “just sweet.” As for the litter of mongrel puppies they were as woolly and delightful as if they had belonged to the dog caste of Vere de Vere. One was especially adorable, with long brown ears and a white spot on its forehead, a wee pink tongue and white paws. Di was bitterly disappointed to learn that they had all been promised.

‘Though I don’t know as we could give you one even if they weren’t,” said Jenny. “Uncle’s awful particular where he puts his dogs. We’ve heard you can’t get a dog to stay at Ingleside at all. There must be something queer about you. Uncle says dogs know things people don’t.”

“I’m sure they can’t know anything nasty about us!” cried Di.

“Well, I hope not. Is your pa cruel to your ma?”

“No, of course he isn’t!”

“Well, I heard that he beat her ... beat her till she screamed. But of course I didn’t believe that. Ain’t it awful the lies people tell? Anyway, I’ve always liked you, Di, and I’ll always stand up for you.”

Di felt she ought to be very grateful for this, but somehow she was not. She was beginning to feel very much out of place and the glamour with which Jenny had been invested in her eyes was suddenly and irrevocably gone. She did not feel the old thrill when Jenny told her about the time she had been almost drowned falling in a millpond. She did not believe it ... Jenny just imagined those things. And likely the millionaire uncle and the thousand-dollar diamond ring and the missionary to the leopards had just been imagined too. Di felt as flat as a pricked balloon.

But there was Gammy yet. Surely Gammy was real. When Di and Jenny returned to the house Aunt Lina, a full-breasted, red-cheeked lady in a

none-too-fresh cotton print, told them Gammy wanted to see the visitor.

“Gammy’s bed-rid,” explained Jenny. “We always take everybody who comes in to see her. She gets mad if we don’t.”

“Mind you don’t forget to ask her how her backache is,” cautioned Aunt Lina. “She doesn’t like it if folks don’t remember her back.”

“And Uncle John,” said Jenny. “Don’t forget to ask her how Uncle John is.”

“Who is Uncle John?” asked Di.

“A son of hers who died fifty years ago,” explained Aunt Lina. “He was sick for years afore he died and Gammy kind of got accustomed to hearing folks ask how he was. She misses it.”

At the door of Gammy’s room Di suddenly hung back. All at once she was terribly frightened of this incredibly old woman.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Jenny. “Nobody’s going to bite you!”

“Is she ... did she really live before the flood, Jenny?”

“Of course not. Whoever said she did? She’ll be a hundred, though, if she lives till her next birthday. Come on!”

Di went, gingerly. In a small, badly cluttered bedroom Gammy lay in a huge bed. Her face, unbelievably wrinkled and shrunken, looked like an old monkey’s. She peered at Di with sunken, red-rimmed eyes and said testily:

“Stop staring. Who are you?”

“This is Diana Blythe, Gammy,” said Jenny ... a rather subdued Jenny.

“Humph! A nice high-sounding name! They tell me you’ve got a proud sister.”

“Nan isn’t proud,” cried Di, with a flash of spirit. Had Jenny been running down Nan?

“A little saucy, ain’t you? I wasn’t brought up to speak like that to my betters. She is proud. Anyone who walks with her head in the air, like Young Jenny tells me she does, is proud. One of your hoity-toity! Don’t contradict me.”

Gammy looked so angry that Di hastily enquired how her back was.

“Who says I’ve got a back? Such presumption! My back’s my own business. Come here ... come close to my bed!”

Di went, wishing herself a thousand miles away. What was this dreadful old woman going to do to her?

Gammy hitched herself alertly to the edge of the bed and put a clawlike hand on Di’s hair.

“Sort of carrotty but real slick. That’s a pretty dress. Turn it up and show me your petticoat.”

Di obeyed, thankful that she had on her white petticoat with its trimming of Susan’s crocheted lace. But what sort of a family was it where you were made to show your petticoat?

“I always judge a girl by her petticoats,” said Gammy. “Yours’ll pass. Now your drawers.”

Di dared not refuse. She lifted her petticoat.

“Humph! Lace on them too! That’s extravagance. And you’ve never asked after John!”

“How is he?” gasped Di.

“How is he, says she, bold as brass. He might be dead, for all you know. Tell me this. Is it true your mother has a gold thimble ... a solid gold thimble?”

“Yes. Daddy gave it to her her last birthday.”

“Well, I’d never have believed it. Young Jenny told me she had, but you can’t never believe a word Young Jenny says. A solid gold thimble! I never heard the beat of that. Well, you’d better go out and get your suppers. Eating never goes out of fashion. Jenny, pull up your pants. One leg’s hanging below your dress. Let us have decency at least.”

“My pant — drawer leg isn’t hanging down,” said Jenny indignantly.

“Pants for Pennys and drawers for Blythes. That’s the distinction between you and always will be. Don’t contradict me.”

The whole Penny family were assembled around the supper table in the big kitchen. Di had not seen any of them before except Aunt Lina, but as she shot a glance around the board she understood why Mother and Susan had not wanted her to come here. The tablecloth was ragged and daubed with ancient gravy stains. The dishes were a nondescript assortment. As for the Pennys ... Di had never sat at table with such company before and she wished herself safely back at Ingleside. But she must go through with it now.

Uncle Ben, as Jenny called him, sat at the head of the table; he had a flaming red beard and a bald, grey-fringed head. His bachelor brother, Parker, lank and unshaven, had arranged himself at an angle convenient for spitting in the woodbox, which he did at frequent intervals. The boys, Curt, twelve, and George Andrew, thirteen, had pale-blue, fishy eyes with a bold stare and bare skin showing through the holes in their ragged shirts. Curt had his hand, which he had cut on a broken bottle, tied up with a bloodstained rag. Annabel Penny, eleven, and “Gert” Penny, ten, were two rather pretty girls with round brown eyes. “Tuppy,” aged two, had delightful curls and rosy cheeks, and the baby, with roguish black eyes, on Aunt Lina’s lap would have been adorable if it had been clean.

“Curt, why didn’t you clean your nails when you knew company was coming?” demanded Jenny. “Annabel, don’t speak with your mouth full. I’m the only one who ever tries to teach this family any manners,” she explained aside to Di.

“Shut up,” said Uncle Ben in a great booming voice.

“I won’t shut up ... you can’t make me shut up!” cried Jenny.

“Don’t sass your uncle,” said Aunt Lina placidly. “Come now, girls, behave like ladies. Curt, pass the potatoes to Miss Blythe.”

“Oh, ho, Miss Blythe,” sniggered Curt.

But Diana had got at least one thrill. For the first time in her life she had been called Miss Blythe.

For a wonder the food was good and abundant. Di, who was hungry, would have enjoyed the meal ... though she hated drinking out of a chipped cup ... if she had only been sure it was clean ... and if everybody hadn’t quarrelled so. Private fights were going on all the time ... between George Andrew and Curt ... between Curt and Annabel ... between Gert and Jen ... even between Uncle Ben and Aunt Lina. They had a terrible fight and hurled the bitterest accusations at each other. Aunt Lina cast up to Uncle Ben all the fine men she might have married and Uncle Ben said he only wished she had married anybody but him.

“Wouldn’t it be dreadful if my father and mother fought like that?” thought Di. “Oh, if I were only back home! Don’t suck your thumb, Tuppy.”

She said that before she thought. They had had such a time breaking Rilla of sucking her thumb.

Instantly Curt was red with rage.

“Let him alone!” he shouted. “He can suck his thumb if he likes! We ain’t bossed to death like you Ingleside kids are. Who do you think you are?”

“Curt, Curt! Miss Blythe will think you haven’t any manners,” said Aunt Lina. She was quite calm and smiling again and put two teaspoons of sugar in Uncle Ben’s tea. “Don’t mind him, dear. Have another piece of pie.”

Di did not want another piece of pie. She only wanted to go home ... and she did not see how it could be brought about.

“Well,” boomed Uncle Ben, as he drained the last of his tea noisily from the saucer, “that’s so much over. Get up in the morning ... work all day ... eat three meals and go to bed. What a life!”

“Pa loves his little joke,” smiled Aunt Lina.

“Talking of jokes ... I saw the Methodist minister in Flagg’s store today. He tried to contradict me when I said there was no God. ‘You talk on Sunday,’ I told him. ‘It’s my turn now. Prove to me there’s a God,’ I told him. ‘It’s you that’s doing the talking,’ says he. They all laughed like ninnies. Thought he was smart.”

No God! The bottom seemed falling out of Di’s world. She wanted to cry.

Chapter 29

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It was worse after supper. Before that she and Jenny had been alone at least. Now there was a mob. George Andrew grabbed her hand and galloped her through a mud-puddle before she could escape him. Di had never been treated like this in her life. Jem and Walter teased her, as did Ken Ford, but she did not know anything about boys like these.

Curt offered her a chew of gum, fresh from his mouth, and was mad when she refused it.

“I’ll put a live mouse on you!” he yelled. “Smartycat! Stuckupitty! Got a sissy for a brother!”

“Walter isn’t a sissy!” said Di. She was half sick from fright but she would not hear Walter called names.

“He is — he writes po’try. Do you know what I’d do if I’d a brother that writ po’try? I’d drown him ... like they do kittens.”

“Talking of kittens, there’s a lot of wild ones in the barn,” said Jen. “Let’s go and hunt them out.”

Di simply would not go hunting kittens with those boys, and said so.

“We’ve got plenty of kittens at home. We’ve got eleven,” she said proudly.

“I don’t believe it!” cried Jen. “You haven’t! Nobody ever had eleven kittens. It wouldn’t be right to have eleven kittens.”

“One cat has five and the other six. And I’m not going to the barn anyhow. I fell down off the loft in Amy Taylor’s barn last winter. I’d have been killed if I hadn’t lit on a pile of chaff.”

“Well, I’d have fell off our loft once if Curt hadn’t caught me,” said Jenny sulkily. Nobody had any right to be falling off lofts but her. Di Blythe having adventures! The impudence of her!

“You should say ‘I’d have fallen,’” said Di; and from that moment everything was over between her and Jenny.

But the night had to be got through somehow. They did not go to bed till late because none of the Pennys ever went to bed early. The big bedroom where Jenny took her at halfpast ten had two beds in it. Annabel and Gert were getting ready for theirs. Di looked at the others. The pillows were very frowsy. The quilt needed washing very badly. The paper ... the famous “parrot” paper ... had been leaked on and even the parrots did not look very parrotly. On the stand by the bed were a granite pitcher and a tin wash-basin half full of dirty water. She could never wash her face in that. Well, for once she must go to bed without washing her face. At least the nightgown Aunt Lina had left for her was clean.

When Di got up from saying her prayers Jenny laughed.

“My, but you’re old-fashioned. You looked so funny and holy saying your prayers. I didn’t know anybody said prayers now. Prayers ain’t any good. What do you say them for?”

“I’ve got to save my soul,” said Di, quoting Susan.

“I haven’t any soul,” mocked Jenny.

“Perhaps not, but I have,” said Di, drawing herself up.

Jenny looked at her. But the spell of Jenny’s eyes was broken. Never again would Di succumb to its magic.

“You’re not the girl I thought you were, Diana Blythe,” said Jennie sadly, as one much deceived.

Before Di could reply George Andrew and Curt rushed into the room. George Andrew wore a mask ... a hideous thing with an enormous nose. Di

screamed.

“Stop squealing like a pig under a gate!” ordered George Andrew. “You’ve got to kiss us goodnight.”

“If you don’t we’ll lock you up in that closet ... and it’s full of rats,” said Curt.

George Andrew advanced towards Di, who shrieked again and retreated before him. The mask paralyzed her with terror. She knew quite well it was only George Andrew behind it and she was not afraid of him; but she would die if that awful mask came near her ... she knew she would. Just as it seemed that the dreadful nose was touching her face she tripped over a stool and fell backward on the floor, striking her head on the sharp edge of Annabel’s bed as she fell. For a moment she was dazed and lay with her eyes shut.

“She’s gone dead ... she’s gone dead!” sniffled Curt, beginning to cry.

“Oh, won’t you get a licking if you’ve killed her, George Andrew!” said Annabel.

“Maybe she’s only pretending,” said Curt. “Put a worm on her. I’ve some in this can. If she’s only foxing that will bring her to.”

Di heard this but was too frightened to open her eyes. (Perhaps they would go away and leave her alone if they thought her dead. But if they put a worm on her ...)

“Prick her with a pin. If she bleeds she ain’t dead,” said Curt.

(She could stand a pin but not a worm.)

“She ain’t dead ... she can’t be dead,” whispered Jenny. “You’ve just scared her into a fit. But if she comes to she’ll be screeching all over the place and Uncle Ben’ll come in and lambast the daylights out of us. I wish I’d never asked her here, the fraid-cat!”

“Do you s’pose we could carry her home before she comes to?” suggested George Andrew.

(Oh, if they only would!)

“We couldn’t ... not that far,” said Jenny.

“It’s only a quarter of a mile ‘cross lots. We’ll each take an arm or leg ... you and Curt and me and Annabel.”

Nobody but the Pennys could have conceived such an idea or carried it out if they had. But they were used to doing anything they took it into their heads to do and a “lambasting” from the head of the household was something to be avoided if possible. Dad didn’t bother about them up to a certain point but beyond that ... good -night!

“If she comes to while we’re carrying her we’ll just cut and run,” said George Andrew.

There wasn’t the least danger of Di coming to. She trembled with thankfulness when she felt herself being hoisted up between the four of them. They crept downstairs and out of the house, across the yard and over the long clover field ... past the woods ... down the hill. Twice they had to lay her down while they rested. They were quite sure now she was dead and all they wanted was to get her home without being seen. If Jenny Penny never prayed in her life before she was praying now ... that nobody in the village would be up. If they could get Di Blythe home they would all swear she had got so homesick at bedtime that she had insisted on going home. What happened after that would be no concern of theirs.

Di ventured to open her eyes once as they plotted this. The sleeping world around looked very strange to her. The fir trees were dark and alien. The stars were laughing at her. (“I don’t like such a big sky. But if I can just hold on a little spell longer I’ll be home. If they find out that I’m not dead they’ll just leave me here and I’ll never get home in the dark alone.”)

When the Pennys dropped Di on the verandah of Ingleside they ran like mad. Di did not dare come back to life too soon, but at last she ventured to

open her eyes. Yes, she was home. It seemed almost too good to be true. She had been a very, very naughty girl but she was quite sure she would never be naughty again. She sat up and the Shrimp came stealthily up the steps and rubbed against her, purring. She hugged him to her. How nice and warm and friendly he was! She did not think she would be able to get in ... she knew Susan would have all the doors locked when Dad was away and she dared not wake Susan up at this hour. But she did not mind. The June night was cold enough but she would get into the hammock and cuddle down with the Shrimp, knowing that, near to her, behind those locked doors, were Susan and the boys and Nan ... and home.

How strange the world was after dark! Was everyone in it asleep but her? The large white roses on the bush by the steps looked like small human faces in the night. The smell of the mint was like a friend. There was a glint of firefly in the orchard. After all, she would be able to brag that she had “slept out all night.”

But it was not to be. Two dark figures came through the gate and up the driveway. Gilbert went around by the back way to force open a kitchen window but Anne came up the steps and stood looking in amazement at the poor mite who sat there, with her armful of cat.

“Mummy ... oh, Mummy!” She was safe in Mother’s arms.

“Di, darling! What does this mean?”

“Oh, Mummy, I was bad ... but I’m so sorry ... and you were right ... and Gammy was so dreadful — but I thought you wouldn’t be back till tomorrow.”

“Daddy got a telephone from Lowbridge ... they have to operate on Mrs. Parker tomorrow and Dr. Parker wanted him to be there. So we caught the evening train and walked up from the station. Now tell me ...”

The whole story was sobbed out by the time Gilbert had got in and opened the front door. He thought he had effected a very silent entrance, but Susan had ears that could hear a bat squeak when the safety of Ingleside was

concerned, and she came limping downstairs with a wrapper over her nightgown.

There were exclamations and explanations, but Anne cut them short.

“Nobody is blaming you, Susan dear. Di has been very naughty but she knows it and I think she has had her punishment. I’m sorry we’ve disturbed you ... you must go straight back to bed and the doctor will see to your ankle.”

“I was not asleep, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think I could sleep, knowing where that blessed child was? And ankle or no ankle I am going to get you both a cup of tea.”

“Mummy,” said Di, from her own white pillow, “is Daddy ever cruel to you?”

“Cruel! To me? Why, Di ...”

“The Pennys said he was ... said he beat you ...”

“Dear, you know what the Pennys are now, so you know better than to worry your small head over anything they said. There is always a bit of malicious gossip floating round in any place ... people like that invent it. You must never bother about it.”

“Are you going to scold me in the morning, Mummy?”

“No. I think you’ve learned your lesson. Now go to sleep, precious.”

“Mummy is so sensible,” was Di’s last conscious thought. But Susan, as she stretched out peacefully in bed, with her ankle expertly and comfortably bandaged, was saying to herself:

“I must hunt up the fine-tooth comb in the morning ... and when I see my fine Miss Jenny Penny I shall give her a ticking off she will not forget.”

Jenny Penny never got the promised ticking off, for she came no more to the Glen school. Instead, she went with the other Pennys to Mowbray

Narrows school, whence rumours drifted back of her yarns, among them being one of how Di Blythe, who lived in the “big house” at Glen St. Mary but was always coming down to sleep with her, had fainted one night and had been carried home at midnight pick-a-back, by her, Jenny Penny, alone and unassisted. The Ingleside people had knelt and kissed her hands out of gratitude and the doctor himself had got out his fringed-top buggy and his famous dappled grey span and driven her home. “And if there is ever anything I can do for you, Miss Penny, for your kindness to my beloved child you have only to name it. My best heart’s blood would not be enough to repay you. I would go to Equatorial Africa to reward you for what you have done,” the doctor had vowed.

Chapter 3 0

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“I know something you don’t know ... something you don’t know ... something you don’t know,” chanted Dovie Johnson, as she teetered back and forth on the very edge of the wharf.

It was Nan’s turn for the spotlight ... Nan’s turn to add a tale to the do-you-remembers of after Ingleside years. Though Nan to the day of her death would blush to be reminded of it. She had been so silly.

Nan shuddered to see Dovie teetering ... and yet it had a fascination. She was so sure Dovie would fall off sometime and then what? But Dovie never fell. Her luck always held.

Everything Dovie did, or said she did ... which were, perhaps, two very different things, although Nan, brought up at Ingleside where nobody ever told anything but the truth even as a joke, was too innocent and credulous to know that ... had a fascination for Nan. Dovie, who was eleven and had lived in Charlottetown all her life knew so much more than Nan, who was only eight. Charlottetown, Dovie said, was the only place where people knew anything. What could you know, shut off in a one-horse place like Glen St. Mary?

Dovie was spending part of her vacation with her Aunt Ella in the Glen and she and Nan had struck up a very intimate friendship in spite of the difference in their ages. Perhaps because Nan looked up to Dovie, who seemed to her to be almost grown up, with the adoration we needs must give the highest when we see it ... or think we see it. Dovie liked her humble and adoring little satellite.

“There’s no harm in Nan Blythe ... she’s only a bit soft,” she told Aunt Ella.

The watchful folks at Ingleside could not see anything out of the way about Dovie ... even if, as Anne reflected, her mother was a cousin of the Avonlea Pyes ... and made no objection to Nan's chumming with her, though Susan from the first mistrusted those gooseberry-green eyes with their pale golden lashes. But what would you? Dovie was "nice-mannered," well-dressed, ladylike, and did not talk too much. Susan could not give any reason for her mistrust and held her peace. Dovie would be going home when school opened and in the meantime there was certainly no need of fine-tooth combs in this case.

So Nan and Dovie spent most of their spare time together at the wharf, where there was generally a ship or two with their folded wings, and Rainbow Valley hardly knew Nan that August. The other Ingleside children did not care greatly for Dovie and no love was lost. She had played a practical joke on Walter and Di had been furious and "said things." Dovie was, it seemed, fond of playing practical jokes. Perhaps that was why none of the Glen girls ever tried to lure her from Nan.

"Oh, please tell me," pleaded Nan.

But Dovie only winked a wicked eye and said that Nan was far too young to be told such a thing. This was just maddening.

"Please tell me, Dovie."

"Can't. It was told me as a secret by Aunt Kate and she's dead. I'm the only person in the world that knows it now. I promised when I heard it that I'd never tell a soul. You'd tell somebody ... you couldn't help it."

"I wouldn't ... I could so!" cried Nan.

"People say you folks at Ingleside tell each other everything. Susan'd pick it out of you in no time."

"She wouldn't. I know lots of things I've never told Susan. Secrets. I'll tell mine to you if you'll tell me yours."

"Oh, I'm not int'rested in the secrets of a little girl like you," said Dovie.

A nice insult that! Nan thought her little secrets were lovely ... that one wild cherry trees she had found blooming in the spruce wood away back behind Mr. Taylor's hay barn ... her dream of a tiny white fairy lying on a lily pad in the marsh ... her fancy of a boat coming up the harbour drawn by swans attached to silver chains ... the romance she was beginning to weave about the beautiful lady at the old MacAllister place. They were all very wonderful and magical to Nan and she felt glad, when she thought it over, that she did not have to tell them to Dovie after all.

But what did Dovie know about her that she didn't know? The query haunted Nan like a mosquito.

The next day Dovie again referred to her secret knowledge.

"I've been thinking it over, Nan ... perhaps you ought to know it since it's about you. Of course what Aunt Kate meant was that I mustn't tell anyone but the person concerned. Look here. If you'll give me that china stag of yours I'll tell you what I know about you."

"Oh, I couldn't give you that, Dovie. Susan gave it to me my last birthday. It would hurt her feelings dreadfully."

"All right, then. If you'd rather have your old stag than know an important thing about yourself you can keep him. I don't care. I'd rather keep it. I always like to know things other girls don't. It makes you important. I'll look at you next Sunday in church and I'll think to myself, 'if you just knew what I know about you, Nan Blythe.' It'll be fun."

"Is what you know about me nice?" queried Nan.

"Oh, it's very romantic ... just like something you'd read in a storybook. But never mind, you ain't interested and I know what I know."

By this time Nan was crazy with curiosity. Life wouldn't be worth living if she couldn't find out what Dovie's mysterious knowledge was. She had a sudden inspiration.

“Dovie, I can’t give you my stag, but if you’ll tell me what you know about me I’ll give you my red parasol.”

Dovie’s gooseberry eyes gleamed. She had been eaten up by envy of that parasol.

“The new red parasol your mother brought you from town last week?” she bargained.

Nan nodded. Her breath came quickly. Was it ... oh, was it possible that Dovie would really tell her?

“Will your mother let you?” demanded Dovie.

Nan nodded again, but a little uncertainly. She was none too sure of it. Dovie scented the uncertainty.

“You’ll have to have that parasol right here,” she said firmly, “before I can tell you. No parasol, no secret.”

“I’ll bring it tomorrow,” promised Nan hastily. She just had to know what Dovie knew about her, that was all there was to it.

“Well, I’ll think it over,” said Dovie doubtfully. “Don’t get your hopes up. I don’t expect I’ll tell you after all. You’re too young ... I’ve told you so often enough.”

“I’m older than I was yesterday,” pleaded Nan. “Oh, come, Dovie, don’t be mean.”

“I guess I’ve got a right to my own knowledge,” said Dovie crushingly. “You’d tell Anne ... that’s your mother ...”

“Of course I know my own mother’s name,” said Nan, a trifle on her dignity. Secrets or no secrets, there were limits. “I told you I wouldn’t tell anybody at Ingleside.”

“Will you swear it?”

“Swear it?”

“Don’t be a poll-parrot. Of course I mean just promising solemnly.”

“I promise solemnly.”

“Solemnner than that.”

Nan didn’t see how she could be any solemnner. Her face would set if she was.

““Clasp your hands, look at the sky,
Cross your heart and hope to die,””

said Dovie.

Nan went through the ritual.

“You’ll bring the parasol tomorrow and we’ll see,” said Dovie. “What did your mother do before she was married, Nan?”

“She taught school ... and taught it well,” said Nan.

“Well, I was just wondering. Mother thinks it was a mistake for your Dad to marry her. Nobody knew anything about her family. And the girls he might have had, Mother says. I must be going now. O revor.”

Nan knew that meant “till tomorrow.” She was very proud of having a chum who could talk French. She continued to sit on the wharf long after Dovie had gone home. She liked to sit on the wharf and watch the fishing boats going out and coming in, and sometimes a ship drifting down the harbour, bound to fair lands far away. Like Jem, she often wished she could sail away in a ship ... down the blue harbour, past the bar of shadowy dunes, past the lighthouse point where at night the revolving Four Winds Light became an outpost of mystery, out, out, to the blue mist that was the summer gulf, on, on, to enchanted islands in golden morning seas. Nan flew on the wings of her imagination all over the world as she squatted there on the old sagging wharf.

But this afternoon she was all keyed up over Dovie's secret. Would Dovie really tell her? What would it be ... what could it be? And what about those girls Father might have married? Nan liked to speculate about those girls. One of them might have been her mother. But that was horrible. Nobody could be her mother except Mother. The thing was simply unthinkable.

"I think Dovie Johnson is going to tell me a secret," Nan confided to Mother that night when she was being kissed bye-bye. "Of course I won't be able to tell even you, Mummy, because I've promised I wouldn't. You won't mind, will you, Mummy?"

"Not at all," said Anne, much amused.

When Nan went down to the wharf the next day she took the parasol. It was her parasol, she told herself. It had been given to her, so she had a perfect right to do what she liked with it. Having quieted her conscience with this sophistry she slipped away when nobody could see her. It gave her a pang to think of giving up her dear, gay little parasol, but by this time the craze to find out what Dovie knew had become too strong to be resisted.

"Here's the parasol, Dovie," she said breathlessly. "And now tell me the secret."

Dovie was really taken aback. She had never meant matters to go as far as this ... she had never believed Nan Blythe's mother would let her give away her red parasol. She pursed her lips.

"I don't know as that shade of red will suit my complexion, after all. It's rather gaudy. I guess I won't tell." Nan had a spirit of her own and Dovie had not yet quite charmed it into blind submission. Nothing roused it more quickly than injustice.

"A bargain is a bargain, Dovie Johnson! You said the parasol for the secret. Here is the parasol and you've got to keep your promise."

"Oh, very well," said Dovie in a bored way.

Everything grew very still. The gusts of wind had died away. The water stopped glug-glugging round the piles of the wharf. Nan shivered with delicious ecstasy. She was going to find out at last what Dovie knew.

“You know the Jimmy Thomases down at the Harbour Mouth,” said Dovie. “Six-toed Jimmy Thomas?”

Nan nodded. Of course she knew the Thomases ... at least, knew of them. Six-toed Jimmy sometimes called at Ingleside selling fish. Susan said you never could be sure of getting good ones from him. Nan did not like the look of him. He had a bald head, with a fluff of curly white hair on either side of it, and a red, hooked nose. But what could the Thomases possibly have to do with the matter?

“And you know Cassie Thomas?” went on Dovie.

Nan had seen Cassie Thomas once when Six-toed Jimmy had brought her round with him in his fishwagon. Cassie was just about her own age, with a mop of red curls and bold, greenish-grey eyes. She had stuck her tongue out at Nan.

“Well... . “Dovie drew a long breath ... “this is the truth about you. You are Cassie Thomas and she is Nan Blythe.”

Nan stared at Dovie. She hadn't the faintest glimmer of Dovie's meaning. What she had said made no sense.

“I ... I ... what do you mean?”

“It's plain enough, I should think,” said Dovie with a pitying smile. Since she had been forced to tell this she was going to make it worth the telling. “You and her were born the same night. It was when the Thomases lived in the Glen. The nurse took Di's twin down to Thomas's and put her in the cradle and took you back to Di's mother. She didn't dare take Di, too, or she would have. She hated your mother and she took that way of getting even. And that is why you are really Cassie Thomas and you ought to be living down there at the Harbour Mouth and poor Cass ought to be up at

Ingleside instead of being banged about by that old stepmother of hers. I feel so sorry for her many's the time."

Nan believed every word of this preposterous yarn. She had never been lied to in her life and not for one moment did she doubt the truth of Dovie's tale. It never occurred to her that anyone, much less her beloved Dovie, would or could make up such a story. She gazed at Dovie with anguished, disillusioned eyes.

"How ... how did your Aunt Kate find it out?" she gasped through dry lips.

"The nurse told her on her deathbed," said Dovie solemnly. "I s'pose her conscience troubled her. Aunt Kate never told anyone but me. When I came to the Glen and saw Cassie Thomas ... Nan Blythe, I mean ... I took a good look at her. She's got red hair and eyes the same colour as your mother's. You've got brown eyes and brown hair. That's why you don't look like Di ... twins always look exactly alike. And Cass has just the same kind of ears as your father ... lying so nice and flat against her head. I don't s'pose anything can be done about it now. But I've often thought it wasn't fair, you having such an easy time and being kept like a doll and poor Cass — Nan — in rags, and not even getting enough to eat, many's the time. And old Six-toed beating her when he comes home drunk! ... Why, what are you looking at me like that for?"

Nan's pain was greater than she could bear. All was horribly clear to her now. Folks had always thought it funny she and Di didn't look one bit alike. This was why.

"I hate you for telling me this, Dovie Johnson!"

Dovie shrugged her fat shoulders.

"I didn't tell you you'd like it, did I? You made me tell. Where are you going?"

For Nan, white and dizzy, had risen to her feet.

"Home ... to tell Mother," she said miserably.

“You mustn’t ... you dassn’t! Remember you swore you wouldn’t tell!” cried Dovie.

Nan stared at her. It was true she had promised not to tell. And Mother always said you mustn’t break a promise.

“I guess I’ll be getting home myself,” said Dovie, not altogether liking the look of Nan.

She snatched up the parasol and ran off, her plump bare legs twinkling along the old wharf. Behind her she left a brokenhearted child, sitting amid the ruins of her small universe. Dovie didn’t care. Soft was no name for Nan. It really wasn’t much fun to fool her. Of course she would tell her mother as soon as she got home and find out she had been hoaxed.

“Just as well I’m going home Sunday,” reflected Dovie.

Nan sat on the wharf for what seemed hours ... blind, crushed, despairing. She wasn’t Mother’s child! She was Six-toed Jimmy’s child ... Six-toed Jimmy of whom she had always had a secret dread simply because of his six toes. She had no business to be living at Ingleside, loved by Mother and Dad. “Oh!” Nan gave a piteous little moan. Mother and Dad wouldn’t love her any more if they knew. All their love would go to Cassie Thomas.

Nan put her hand to her head. “It makes me dizzy,” she said.

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“What is the reason you are not eating anything, pet?” asked Susan at the supper table.

“Were you out in the sun too long, dear?” asked Mother anxiously. “Does your head ache?”

“Ye-e-s,” said Nan. But it wasn’t her head that ached. Was she telling a lie to Mother? And if so, how many more would she have to tell? For Nan knew she would never be able to eat again ... never so long as this horrible knowledge was hers. And she knew she could never tell Mother. Not so much because of the promise ... hadn’t Susan said once that a bad promise was better broken than kept? ... but because it would hurt Mother. Somehow, Nan knew beyond any doubt that it would hurt Mother horribly. And Mother mustn’t ... shouldn’t ... be hurt. Nor Dad.

And yet ... there was Cassie Thomas. She wouldn’t call her Nan Blythe. It made Nan feel awful beyond description to think of Cassie Thomas as being Nan Blythe. She felt as if it blotted her out altogether. If she wasn’t Nan Blythe she wasn’t anybody! She would not be Cassie Thomas.

But Cassie Thomas haunted her. For a week Nan was beset by her ... a wretched week during which Anne and Susan were really worried over the child, who wouldn’t eat and wouldn’t play and, as Susan said, “just moped around.” Was it because Dovie Johnson had gone home? Nan said it wasn’t. Nan said it wasn’t anything. She just felt tired. Dad looked her over and prescribed a dose which Nan took meekly. It was not so bad as castor-oil but even castor-oil meant nothing now. Nothing meant anything except Cassie Thomas ... and the awful question which had emerged from her confusion of mind and taken possession of her.

Shouldn’t Cassie Thomas have her rights?

Was it fair that she, Nan Blythe ... Nan clung to her identity frantically ... should have all the things Cassie Thomas was denied and which were hers by rights? No, it wasn't fair. Nan was despairingly sure it wasn't fair. Somewhere in Nan there was a very strong sense of justice and fair play. And it became increasingly borne in upon her that it was only fair that Cassie Thomas should be told.

After all, perhaps nobody would care very much. Mother and Dad would be a little upset at first, of course, but as soon as they knew that Cassie Thomas was their own child all their love would go to Cassie and, she, Nan, would be of no account to them. Mother would kiss Cassie Thomas and sing to her in the summer twilights ... sing the song Nan liked best...

“I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing on the sea,
“And oh, it was all laden with pretty things for me.”

Nan and Di had often talked about the day their ship would come in. But now the pretty things ... her share of them anyhow ... would belong to Cassie Thomas. Cassie Thomas would take her part as fairy queen in the forthcoming Sunday School concert and wear her dazzling band of tinsel. How Nan had looked forward to that! Susan would make fruit puffs for Cassie Thomas and Pussywillow would purr for her. She would play with Nan's dolls in Nan's moss-carpeted playhouse in the maple grove, and sleep in her bed. Would Di like that? Would Di like Cassie Thomas for a sister?

There came a day when Nan knew she could bear it no longer. She must do what was fair. She would go down to the Harbour Mouth and tell the Thomases the truth. They could tell Mother and Dad. Nan felt that she simply could not do that.

Nan felt a little better when she had come to this decision, but very, very sad. She tried to eat a little supper because it would be the last meal she would ever eat at Ingleside.

“I'll always call Mother ‘Mother,’” thought Nan desperately. “And I won't call Six-toed Jimmy ‘Father.’ I'll just say ‘Mr. Thomas’ very respectfully. Surely he won't mind that.”

But something choked her. Looking up she read castor-oil in Susan's eye. Little Susan thought she wouldn't be here at bedtime to take it. Cassie Thomas would have to swallow it. That was the one thing Nan didn't envy Cassie Thomas.

Nan went off immediately after supper. She must go before it was dark or her courage would fail her. She went in her checked gingham play-dress, not daring to change it, lest Susan or Mother ask why. Besides, all her nice dresses really belonged to Cassie Thomas. But she did put on the new apron Susan had made for her ... such a smart little scalloped apron, the scallops bound in turkey red. Nan loved that apron. Surely Cassie Thomas wouldn't grudge her that much.

She walked down to the village, through the village, past the wharf road, and down the harbour road, a gallant, indomitable little figure. Nan had no idea that she was a heroine. On the contrary she felt very much ashamed of herself because it was so hard to do what was right and fair, so hard to keep from hating Cassie Thomas, so hard to keep from fearing Six-toed Jimmy, so hard to keep from turning round and running back to Ingleside.

It was a lowering evening. Out to sea hung a heavy black cloud, like a great dark bat. Fitful lightning played over the harbour and the wooded hills beyond. The cluster of fishermen's houses at the Harbour Mouth lay flooded in a red light that escaped from under the cloud. Pools of water here and there glowed like great rubies. A ship, silent, white-sailed, was drifting past the dim, misty dunes to the mysterious calling ocean; the gulls were crying strangely.

Nan did not like the smell of the fishing houses or the groups of dirty children who were playing and fighting and yelling on the sands. They looked curiously at Nan when she stopped to ask them which was Six-toed Jimmy's house.

"That one over there," said a boy, pointing. "What's your business with him?"

"Thank you," said Nan, turning away.

“Have ye got no more manners than that?” yelled a girl. “Too stuck-up to answer a civil question!”

The boy got in front of her.

“See that house back of Thomases?” he said. “It’s got a sea-serpent in it and I’ll lock you up in it if you don’t tell me what you want with Six-toed Jimmy.”

“Come now, Miss Proudly,” taunted a big girl. “You’re from the Glen and the glenners all think they’re the cheese. Answer Bill’s question!”

“If you don’t look out,” said another boy, “I’m going to drown some kittens and I’ll quite likely pop you in, too.”

“If you’ve got a dime about you I’ll sell you a tooth,” said a black-browed girl, grinning. “I had one pulled yesterday.”

“I haven’t got a dime and your tooth wouldn’t be of any use to me,” said Nan, plucking up a little spirit. “You let me alone.”

“None of your lip!” said the black-browed.

Nan started to run. The sea-serpent boy stuck out a foot and tripped her up. She fell her length on the tide-rippled sand. The others screamed with laughter.

“You won’t hold your head so high now, I reckon,” said the black-browed. “Strutting about here with your red scallops!”

Then someone exclaimed, “There’s Blue Jack’s boat coming in!” and away they all ran. The black cloud had dropped lower and every ruby pool was grey.

Nan picked herself up. Her dress was plastered with sand and her stockings were soiled. But she was free from her tormentors. Would these be her playmates in the future?

She must not cry ... she must not! She climbed the rickety board steps that led up to Six-toed Jimmy's door. Like all the Harbour Mouth houses Six-toed Jimmy's was raised on blocks of wood to be out of the reach of any unusually high tide, and the space underneath it was filled with a medley of broken dishes, empty cans, old lobster traps, and all kinds of rubbish. The door was open and Nan looked into a kitchen the like of which she had never seen in her life. The bare floor was dirty, the ceiling was stained and smoked, the sink was full of dirty dishes. The remains of a meal were on the rickety old wooden table and horrid big black flies were swarming over it. A woman with an untidy mop of grayish hair was sitting on a rocker nursing a fat lump of a baby ... a baby gray with dirt.

"My sister," thought Nan.

There was no sign of Cassie or Six-toed Jimmy, for which latter fact Nan felt grateful.

"Who are you and what do you want?" said the woman rather ungraciously.

She did not ask Nan in but Nan walked in. It was beginning to rain outside and a peal of thunder made the house shake. Nan knew she must say what she had come to say before her courage failed her, or she would turn and run from that dreadful house and that dreadful baby and those dreadful flies.

"I want to see Cassie, please," she said. "I have something important to tell her."

"Indeed, now!" said the woman. "It must be important, from the size of you. Well, Cass isn't home. Her dad took her to the Upper Glen for a ride and with this storm coming up there's no telling when they'll be back. Sit down."

Nan sat down on a broken chair. She had known the Harbour Mouth folks were poor but she had not known any of them were like this. Mrs. Tom Fitch in the Glen was poor but Mrs. Tom Fitch's house was as neat and

tidy as Ingleside. Of course, everyone knew that Six-toed Jimmy drank up everything he made. And this was to be her home henceforth!

“Anyhow, I’ll try to clean it up,” thought Nan forlornly. But her heart was like lead. The flame of high self-sacrifice which had lured her on had gone out.

“What are you wanting to see Cass for?” asked Mrs. Six-toed curiously, as she wiped the baby’s dirty face with a still dirtier apron. “If it’s about that Sunday School concert she can’t go and that’s flat. She hasn’t a decent rag. How can I get her any? I ask you.”

“No, it’s not about the concert,” said Nan drearily. She might as well tell Mrs. Thomas the whole story. She would have to know it anyhow. “I came to tell her ... to tell her that ... that she is me and I’m her!”

Perhaps Mrs. Six-toed might be forgiven for not thinking this very lucid.

“You must be cracked,” she said. “Whatever on earth do you mean?”

Nan lifted her head. The worst was now over.

“I mean that Cassie and I were born the same night and ... and ... the nurse changed us because she had a spite at Mother, and ... and ... Cassie ought to be living at Ingleside ... and having advantages.”

This last phrase was one she had heard her Sunday School teacher use but Nan thought it made a dignified ending to a very lame speech.

Mrs. Six-toed stared at her.

“Am I crazy or are you? What you’ve been saying doesn’t make any sense. Whoever told you such a rigmarole?”

“Dovie Johnson.”

Mrs. Six-toed threw back her tousled head and laughed. She might be dirty and draggled but she had an attractive laugh. “I might have knowed it. I’ve been washing for her aunt all summer and that kid is a pill! My, doesn’t

she think it smart to fool people! Well, little Miss What's-your-name, you'd better not be believing all Dovie's yarns or she'll lead you a merry dance."

"Do you mean it isn't true?" gasped Nan.

"Not very likely. Good glory, you must be pretty green to fall for anything like that. Cass must be a good year older than you. Who on earth are you, anyhow?"

"I'm Nan Blythe." Oh, beautiful thought! She was Nan Blythe!

"Nan Blythe! One of the Ingleside twins! Why, I remember the night you were born. I happened to call at Ingleside on an errand. I wasn't married to Six-toed then ... more's the pity I ever was ... and Cass's mother was living and healthy, with Cass beginning to walk. You look like your dad's mother ... she was there that night, too, proud as Punch over her twin granddaughters. And to think you'd no more sense than to believe a crazy yarn like that."

"I'm in the habit of believing people," said Nan, rising with a slight stateliness of manner, but too deliriously happy to want to snub Mrs. Six-toed very sharply.

"Well, it's a habit you'd better get out of in this kind of a world," said Mrs. Six-toed cynically. "And quit running round with kids who like to fool people. Sit down, child. You can't go home till this shower's over. It's pouring rain and dark as a stack of black cats. Why, she's gone ... the child's gone!"

Nan was already blotted out in the downpour. Nothing but the wild exultation born of Mrs. Six-toed's assurances could have carried her home through that storm. The wind buffeted her, the rain streamed upon her, the appalling thunderclaps made her think the world had burst open. Only the incessant icy-blue glare of the lightning showed her the road. Again and again she slipped and fell. But at last she reeled, dripping, into the hall at Ingleside.

Mother ran and caught her in her arms.

“Darling, what a fright you have given us! Oh, where have you been?”

“I only hope Jem and Walter won’t catch their deaths out in that rain searching for you,” said Susan, the sharpness of strain in her voice.

Nan had almost had the breath battered out of her. She could only gasp, as she felt Mother’s arms enfolding her:

“Oh, Mother, I’m me ... really me. I’m not Cassie Thomas and I’ll never be anybody but me again.”

“The poor pet is delirious,” said Susan. “She must have et something that disagreed with her.”

Anne bathed Nan and put her to bed before she would let her talk. Then she heard the whole story.

“Oh, Mummy, am I really your child?”

“Of course, darling. How could you think anything else?”

“I didn’t ever think Dovie would tell me a story ... not Dovie. Mummy, can you believe anybody? Jen Penny told Di awful stories ...”

“They are only two girls out of all the little girls you know, dear. None of your other playmates has ever told you what wasn’t true. There are people in the world like that, grownups as well as children. When you are a little older you will be better able to ‘tell the gold from the tinsel.’”

“Mummy, I wish Walter and Jem and Di needn’t know what a silly I was.”

“They needn’t. Di went to Lowbridge with Daddy, and the boys need only know you went too far down the Harbour Road and were caught in the storm. You were foolish to believe Dovie but you were a very fine brave little girl to go and offer what you thought her rightful place to poor little Cassie Thomas. Mother is proud of you.”

The storm was over. The moon was looking down on a cool happy world.

“Oh, I’m so glad I’m me!” was Nan’s last thought as she fell on sleep.

Gilbert and Anne came in later to look on the little sleeping faces that were so sweetly close to each other. Diana slept with the corners of her firm little mouth tucked in but Nan had gone to sleep smiling. Gilbert had heard the story and was so angry that it was well for Dovie Johnson that she was a good thirty miles away from him. But Anne was feeling conscience-stricken.

“I should have found out what was troubling her. But I’ve been too much taken up with other things this week ... things that really mattered nothing compared to a child’s unhappiness. Think of what the poor darling has suffered.”

She stooped repentantly, gloatingly over them. They were still hers ... wholly hers, to mother and love and protect. They still came to her with every love and grief of their little hearts. For a few years longer they would be hers ... and then? Anne shivered. Motherhood was very sweet ... but very terrible.

“I wonder what life holds for them,” she whispered.

“At least, let’s hope and trust they’ll each get as good a husband as their mother got,” said Gilbert teasingly.

Chapter 3 2

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“So the Ladies’ Aid is going to have their quilting at Ingleside,” said the doctor. “Bring out all your lordly dishes, Susan, and provide several brooms to sweep up the fragments of reputations afterwards.”

Susan smiled wanly, as a woman tolerant of a man’s lack of all understanding of vital things, but she did not feel like smiling ... at least, until everything concerning the Aid supper had been settled.

“Hot chicken pie,” she went about murmuring, “mashed potatoes and creamed peas for the main course. And it will be such a good chance to use your new lace tablecloth, Mrs. Dr. dear. Such a thing has never been seen in the Glen and I am confident it will make a sensation. I am looking forward to Annabel Clow’s face when she sees it. And will you be using your blue and silver basket for the flowers?”

“Yes, full of pansies and yellow-green ferns from the maple grove. And I want you to put those three magnificent pink geraniums of yours somewhere around ... in the livingroom if we quilt there or on the balustrade of the verandah if it’s warm enough to work out there. I’m glad we have so many flowers left. The garden has never been so beautiful as it has been this summer, Susan. But then I say that every autumn, don’t I?”

There were many things to be settled. Who should sit by whom ... it would never do, for instance, to have Mrs. Simon Millison sit beside Mrs. William McCreery, for they never spoke to each other because of some obscure old feud dating back to schooldays. Then there was the question of whom to invite ... for it was the hostess’ privilege to ask a few guests apart from the members of the Aid.

“I’m going to have Mrs. Best and Mrs. Campbell,” said Anne.

Susan looked doubtful.

“They are newcomers, Mrs. Dr. dear,” ... much as she might have said,
“They are crocodiles.”

“The doctor and I were newcomers once, Susan.”

“But the doctor’s uncle was here for years before that. Nobody knows anything about these Bests and Campbells. But it is your house, Mrs. Dr. dear, and whom am I to object to anyone you wish to have? I remember one quilting at Mrs. Carter Flagg’s many years ago when Mrs. Flagg invited a strange woman. She came in wincey, Mrs. Dr. dear ... said she didn’t think a Ladies’ Aid worth dressing up for! At least there will be no fear of that with Mrs. Campbell. She is very dressy ... though I could never see myself wearing hydrangea blue to church.”

Anne could not either, but she dared not smile.

“I thought that dress was lovely with Mrs. Campbell’s silver hair, Susan. And by the way, she wants your recipe for spiced gooseberry relish. She says she had some of it at the Harvest Home supper and it was delicious.”

“Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, it is not everyone who can make spiced gooseberry ...” and no more disapproval was expressed of hydrangea blue dresses. Mrs. Campbell might henceforth appear in the costume of a Fiji Islander if she chose and Susan would find excuses for it.

The young months had grown old but autumn was still remembering summer and the quilting day was more like June than October. Every member of the Ladies’ Aid who could possibly come came, looking forward pleasurably to a good dish of gossip and an Ingleside supper, besides, possibly, seeing some sweet new thing in fashions since the doctor’s wife had recently been to town.

Susan, unbowed by the culinary cares that were heaped upon her, stalked about, showing the ladies to the guestroom, serene in the knowledge that not one of them possessed an apron trimmed with crochet lace five inches deep made from Number One Hundred thread. Susan had captured first

prize at the Charlottetown Exhibition the week before with that lace. She and Rebecca Dew had trysted there and made a day of it, and Susan had come home that night the proudest woman in Prince Edward Island.

Susan's face was perfectly controlled but her thoughts were her own, sometimes spiced with a trifle of mild malice.

"Celia Reese is here, looking for something to laugh at as usual. Well, she will not find it at our supper table and that you may tie to. Myra Murray in red velvet ... a little too sumptuous for a quilting in my opinion but I am not denying she looks well in it. At least it is not wincey. Agatha Drew ... and her glasses tied on with a string as usual. Sarah Taylor ... it may be her last quilting ... she has got a terrible heart, the doctor says, but the spirit of her! Mrs. Donald Reese ... thank the Good Lord she didn't bring Mary Anna with her but no doubt we will hear plenty. Jane Burr from the Upper Glen. She isn't a member of the Aid. Well, I shall count the spoons after supper and that you may tie to. That family were all light-fingered. Candace Crawford ... she doesn't often trouble an Aid meeting but a quilting is a good place to show off her pretty hands and her diamond ring. Emma Pollock with her petticoat showing below her dress, of course ... a pretty woman but flimsy-minded like all that tribe. Tillie MacAllister, don't you go and upset the jelly on the tablecloth like you did at Mrs. Palmer's quilting. Martha Crothers, you will have a decent meal for once. It is too bad your husband could not have come too ... I hear he has to live on nuts or something like that. Mrs. Elder Baxter ... I hear the elder has scared Harold Reese away from Mina at last. Harold always had a wishbone in place of a backbone and faint heart never won fair lady as the Good Book says. Well, we have enough for two quilts and some over to thread needles."

The quilts were set up on the broad verandah and everyone was busy with fingers and tongues. Anne and Susan were deep in preparations for supper in the kitchen, and Walter, who had been kept home from school that day because of a slight sore throat, was squatted on the verandah steps, screened from view of the quilters by a curtain of vines. He always liked to listen to older people talking. They said such surprising, mysterious things ... things you could think over afterwards and weave into the very

stuff of drama, things that reflected the colours and shadows, the comedies and tragedies, the jests and the sorrows, of every Four Winds clan.

Of all the women present Walter liked Mrs. Myra Murray best, with her easy infectious laugh and the jolly little wrinkles round her eyes. She could tell the simplest story and make it seem dramatic and vital; she gladdened life wherever she went; and she did look so pretty in her cherry-red velvet, with the smooth ripples in her black hair, and the little red drops in her ears. Mrs. Tom Chubb, who was thin as a needle, he liked least ... perhaps because he had once heard her calling him “a sickly child.” He thought Mrs. Allan Milgrave looked just like a sleek grey hen and that Mrs. Grant Clow was like nothing so much as a barrel on legs. Young Mrs. David Ransome, with her taffy-coloured hair, was very handsome, “too handsome for a farm,” Susan had said when Dave married her. The young bride, Mrs. Morton MacDougall, looked like a sleepy white poppy. Edith Bailey, the Glen dressmaker, with her misty silvery curls and humorous black eyes, didn’t look as if she should be “an old maid.” He liked Mrs. Meade, the oldest woman there, who had gentle, tolerant eyes and listened far more than she talked, and he did not like Celia Reese, with her sly amused look as if she were laughing at everybody.

The quilters had not really started talking yet ... they were discussing the weather and deciding whether to quilt in fans or diamonds, so Walter was thinking of the beauty of the ripened day, the big lawn with its magnificent trees, and the world that looked as if some great kind Being had put golden arms about it. The tinted leaves were drifting slowly down but the knightly hollyhocks were still gay against the brick wall and the poplars wove sorcery of aspen along the path to the barn. Walter was so absorbed in the loveliness around him that the quilting conversation was in full swing before he was recalled to consciousness of it by Mrs. Simon Millison’s pronouncement.

“That clan were noted for their sensational funerals. Will any of you who were there ever forget what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral?”

Walter pricked up his ears. This sounded interesting. But much to his disappointment Mrs. Simon did not go on to tell what had happened. Everybody must either have been at the funeral or heard the story.

("But why are they all looking so uncomfortable about it?")

"There is no doubt that everything Clara Wilson said about Peter was true, but he is in his grave, poor man, so let us leave him there," said Mrs. Tom Chubb self-righteously ... as if somebody had proposed exhuming him.

"Mary Anna is always saying such clever things," said Mrs. Donald Reese. "Do you know what she said the other day when we were starting to Margaret Hollister's funeral? 'Ma,' she said, 'will there be any ice-cream at the funeral?'"

A few women exchanged furtive amused smiles. Most of them ignored Mrs. Donald. It was really the only thing to do when she began dragging Mary Anna into the conversation as she invariably did, in season and out of season. If you gave her the least encouragement she was maddening. "Do you know what Mary Anna said?" was a standing catchword in the Glen.

"Talking of funerals," said Celia Reese, "there was a queer one in Mowbray Narrows when I was a girl. Stanton Lane had gone out West and word came back that he had died. His folks wired to have the body sent home, so it was, but Wallace MacAllister, the undertaker, advised them against opening the casket. The funeral had just got off to a good start when in walked Stanton Lane himself, hale and hearty. It was never found out who the corpse really was."

"What did they do with him?" queried Agatha Drew.

"Oh, they buried him. Wallace said it couldn't be put off. But you couldn't rightly call it a funeral with everyone so happy over Stanton's return. Mr. Dawson changed the last hymn from 'Take Comfort, Christians,' to 'Sometimes a Light Surprises,' but most people thought he'd better have left well enough alone."

"Do you know what Mary Anna said to me the other day? She said, 'Ma, do the ministers know everything?'"

“Mr. Dawson always lost his head in a crisis,” said Jane Burr. “The Upper Glen was part of his charge then and I remember one Sunday he dismissed the congregation and then remembered that the collection hadn’t been taken up. So what does he do but grab a collection plate and run round the yard with it. To be sure,” added Jane, “people gave that day who never gave before or after. They didn’t like to refuse the minister. But it was hardly dignified of him.”

“What I had against Mr. Dawson,” said Miss Cornelia, “was the unmerciful length of his prayers at a funeral. It actually came to such a pass that people said they envied the corpse. He surpassed himself at Letty Grant’s funeral. I saw her mother was on the point of fainting so I gave him a good poke in the back with my umbrella and told him he’d prayed long enough.”

“He buried my poor Jarvis,” said Mrs. George Carr, tears dropping down. She always cried when she spoke of her husband although he had been dead for twenty years.

“His brother was a minister, too,” said Christine Marsh. “He was in the Glen when I was a girl. We had a concert in the hall one night and as he was one of the speakers he was sitting on the platform. He was as nervous as his brother and he kept fidgeting his chair further and further back and all at once he went, chair and all, clean over the edge on the bank of flowers and house-plants we had arranged around the base. All that could be seen of him was his feet sticking up above the platform. Somehow, it always spoiled his preaching for me after that. His feet were so big.”

“The Lane funeral might have been a disappointment,” said Emma Pollock, “but at least it was better than not having any funeral at all. You remember the Cromwell mix-up?”

There was a chorus of reminiscent laughter. “Let us hear the story,” said Mrs. Campbell. “Remember, Mrs. Pollock, I’m a stranger here and all the family sagas are quite unknown to me.”

Emma didn’t know what “sagas” meant but she loved to tell a story.

“Abner Cromwell lived over near Lowbridge on one of the biggest farms in that district and he was an M.P.P. in those days. He was one of the biggest frogs in the Tory puddle and acquainted with everybody of any importance on the Island. He was married to Julie Flagg, whose mother was a Reese and her grandmother was a Clow so they were connected with almost every family in Four Winds as well. One day a notice came out in the Daily Enterprise ... Mr. Abner Cromwell had died suddenly at Lowbridge and his funeral would be held at two o’clock the next afternoon. Somehow the Abner Cromwells missed seeing the notice ... and of course there were no rural telephones in those days. The next morning Abner left for Halifax to attend a Liberal convention. At two o’clock people began arriving for the funeral, coming early to get a good seat, thinking there’d be such a crowd on account of Abner being such a prominent man. And a crowd there was, believe you me. For miles around the roads were just a string of buggies and people kept pouring in till about three. Mrs. Abner was just about crazy trying to make them believe her husband wasn’t dead. Some wouldn’t believe her at first. She said to me in tears that they seemed to think she’d made away with the corpse. And when they were convinced they acted as if they thought Abner ought to be dead. And they tramped all over the lawn flower-beds she was so proud of. Any number of distant relations arrived, too, expecting supper and beds for the night and she hadn’t much cooked ... Julie was never very forehanded, that has to be admitted. When Abner arrived home two days afterwards he found her in bed with nervous prostration and she was months getting over it. She didn’t eat a thing for six weeks ... well, hardly anything. I heard she said if there really had been a funeral she couldn’t have been more upset. But I never believed she really did say it.”

“You can’t be sure,” said Mrs. William MacCreery. “People do say such awful things. When they’re upset the truth pops out. Julie’s sister Clarice actually went and sang in the choir as usual the first Sunday after her husband was buried.”

“Not even a husband’s funeral could damp Clarice down long,” said Agatha Drew. “There was nothing solid about her. Always dancing and singing.”

“I used to dance and sing ... on the shore, where nobody heard me,” said Myra Murray.

“Ah, but you’ve grown wiser since then,” said Agatha.

“No-o-o, foolisher,” said Myra Murray slowly. “Too foolish now to dance along the shore.”

“At first,” said Emma, not to be cheated out of a complete story, “they thought the notice had been put in for a joke ... because Abner had lost his election a few days before ... but it turned out it was for an Amasa Cromwell, living away in the back woods the other side of Lowbridge ... no relation at all. He had really died. But it was a long time before people forgave Abner the disappointment, if they ever did.”

“Well, it was a little inconvenient driving all that distance, right in planting time, too, and finding you had your journey for your pains,” said Mrs. Tom Chubb defensively.

“And people like funerals as a rule,” said Mrs. Donald Reese with spirit. “We’re all like children, I guess. I took Mary Anna to her uncle Gordon’s funeral and she enjoyed it so. ‘Ma, couldn’t we dig him up and have the fun of burying him over again?’ she said.”

They did laugh at this ... everybody except Mrs. Elder Baxter, who primmed up her long thin face and jabbed the quilt mercilessly. Nothing was sacred nowadays. Everyone laughed at everything. But she, an elder’s wife, was not going to countenance any laughter connected with a funeral.

“Speaking of Abner, do you remember the obituary his brother John wrote for his wife?” asked Mrs. Allan Milgrave. “It started out with, ‘God, for reasons best known to Himself, has been pleased to take my beautiful bride and leave my cousin William’s ugly wife alive.’ Shall I ever forget the fuss it made!”

“How did such a thing ever come to be printed at all?” asked Mrs. Best.

“Why, he was managing editor of the Enterprise then. He worshipped his wife ... Bertha Morris, she was ... and he hated Mrs. William Cromwell because she hadn’t wanted him to marry Bertha. She thought Bertha too flighty.”

“But she was pretty,” said Elizabeth Kirk.

“The prettiest thing I ever saw in my life,” agreed Mrs. Milgrave. “Good looks ran in the Morrises. But fickle ... fickle as a breeze. Nobody ever knew how she came to stay in one mind long enough to marry John. They say her mother kept her up to the notch. Bertha was in love with Fred Reese but he was notorious for flirting. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,’ Mrs. Morris told her.”

“I’ve heard that proverb all my life,” said Myra Murray, “and I wonder if it’s true. Perhaps the birds in the bush could sing and the one in the hand couldn’t.”

Nobody knew just what to say but Mrs. Tom Chubb said it anyhow.

“You’re always so whimsical, Myra.”

“Do you know what Mary Anna said to me the other day?” said Mrs. Donald. “She said, ‘Ma, what will I do if nobody ever asks me to marry him?’”

“Us old maids could answer that, couldn’t we?” asked Celia Reese, giving Edith Bailey a nudge with her elbow. Celia disliked Edith because Edith was still rather pretty and not entirely out of the running.

“Gertrude Cromwell was ugly,” said Mrs. Grant Clow. “She had a figure like a slat. But a great housekeeper. She washed every curtain she owned every month and if Bertha washed hers once a year it was as much as ever. And her window-shades were always crooked. Gertrude said it just gave her the shivers to drive past John Cromwell’s house. And yet John Cromwell worshipped Bertha and William just put up with Gertrude. Men are strange. They say William overslept on his wedding morning and

dressed in such a tearing hurry he got to the church with old shoes and odd socks on.”

“Well, that was better than Oliver Random,” giggled Mrs. George Carr. “He forgot to have a wedding suit made and his old Sunday suit was simply impossible. It had been patched. So he borrowed his brother’s best suit. It only fitted him here and there.”

“And at least William and Gertrude did get married,” said Mrs. Simon. “Her sister Caroline didn’t. She and Ronny Drew quarrelled over what minister they’d have marry them and never got married at all. Ronny was so mad he went and married Edna Stone before he’d time to cool off. Caroline went to the wedding. She held her head high but her face was like death.”

“But she held her tongue at least,” said Sarah Taylor. “Philippa Abbey didn’t. When Jim Mowbray jilted her she went to his wedding and said the bitterest things out loud all through the ceremony. They were all Anglicans, of course,” concluded Sarah Taylor, as if that accounted for any vagaries.

“Did she really go to the reception afterwards wearing all the jewelry Jim had given her while they were engaged?” asked Celia Reese.

“No, she didn’t! I don’t know how such stories get around, I’m sure. You’d think some people never did anything but repeat gossip. I daresay Jim Mowbray lived to wish he’d stuck to Philippa. His wife kept him down good and solid ... though he always had a riotous time in her absence.”

“The only time I ever saw Jim Mowbray was the night the junebugs nearly stampeded the congregation at the anniversary service in Lowbridge,” said Christine Crawford. “And what the junebugs left undone Jim Mowbray contributed. It was a hot night and they had all the windows open. The junebugs just poured in and blundered about in hundreds. They picked up eighty-seven dead bugs on the choir platform the next morning. Some of the women got hysterical when the bugs flew too near their faces. Just across the aisles from me the new minister’s wife was sitting ... Mrs. Peter Loring. She had on a big lace hat with willow plumes...”

“She was always considered far too dressy and extravagant for a minister’s wife,” interpolated Mrs. Elder Baxter.

“‘Watch me flick that bug off Mrs. Preacher’s hat,’ I heard Jim Mowbray whisper ... he was sitting right behind her. He leaned forward and aimed a blow at the bug ... missed it, but sideswiped the hat and sent it skittering down the aisle clean to the communion railing. Jim almost had a conniption. When the minister saw his wife’s hat come sailing through the air he lost his place in his sermon, couldn’t find it again and gave up in despair. The choir sang the last hymn, dabbing at Junebugs all the time. Jim went down and brought the hat back to Mrs. Loring. He expected a calling down, for she was said to be high-spirited. But she just stuck it on her pretty yellow head again and laughed at him. ‘If you hadn’t done that,’ she said, ‘Peter would have gone on for another twenty minutes and we’d all have been stark staring mad.’ Of course, it was nice of her not to be angry but people thought it wasn’t just the thing for her to say of her husband.”

“But you must remember how she was born,” said Martha Crothers.

“Why, how?”

“She was Bessy Talbot from up west. Her father’s house caught fire one night and in all the fuss and upheaval Bessy was born ... out in the garden ... under the stars.”

“How romantic!” said Myra Murray.

“Romantic! I call it barely respectable.”

“But think of being born under the stars!” said Myra dreamily. “Why, she ought to have been a child of the stars ... sparkling ... beautiful ... brave ... true ... with a twinkle in her eyes.”

“She was all that,” said Martha, “whether the stars were accountable for it or not. And a hard time she had in Lowbridge where they thought a minister’s wife should be all prunes and prisms. Why, one of the elders caught her dancing around her baby’s cradle one day and he told her she

ought not to rejoice over her son until she found out if he was elected or not.”

“Talking of babies, do you know what Mary Anna said the other day, ‘Ma,’ she said, ‘do queens have babies?’”

“That must have been Alexander Wilson,” said Mrs. Allan. “A born crab if ever there was one. He wouldn’t allow his family to speak a word at meal-times, I’ve heard. As for laughing ... there never was any done in his house.”

“Think of a house without laughter!” said Myra.

“Why, it’s ... sacrilegious.”

“Alexander used to take spells when he wouldn’t speak to his wife for three days at a time,” continued Mrs. Allan. “It was such a relief to her,” she added.

“Alexander Wilson was a good honest business man at least,” said Mrs. Grant Clow stiffly. “He said Alexander was her fourth cousin and the Wilsons were clannish. “He left forty thousand dollars when he died.”

“Such a pity he had to leave it,” said Celia Reese.

“His brother Jeffry didn’t leave a cent,” said Mrs. Clow. “He was the ne’er-do-well of that family, I must admit. Goodness knows he did enough laughing. Spent everything he earned ... hail-fellow-well-met with everyone ... and died penniless. What did he get out of life with all his flinging about and laughing?”

“Not much perhaps,” said Myra, “but think of all he put into it. He was always giving ... cheer, sympathy, friendliness, even money. He was rich in friends at least and Alexander never had a friend in his life.”

“Jeff’s friends didn’t bury him,” retorted Mrs. Allan. “Alexander had to do that ... and put up a real fine tombstone for him, too. It cost a hundred dollars.”

“But when Jeff asked him for a loan of one hundred to pay for an operation that might have saved his life, didn’t Alexander refuse it?” asked Celia

Drew.

“Come, come, we’re getting too uncharitable,” protested Mrs. Carr. “After all, we don’t live in a world of forget-me-nots and daisies and everyone has some faults.”

“Lem Anderson is marrying Dorothy Clark today,” said Mrs. Millison, thinking it was high time the conversation took a more cheerful line. “And it isn’t a year since he swore he would blow out his brains if Jane Elliott wouldn’t marry him.”

“Young men do say such odd things,” said Mrs. Chubb. “They’ve kept it very close ... it never leaked out till three weeks ago that they were engaged. I was talking to his mother last week and she never hinted at a wedding so soon. I am not sure that I care much for a woman who can be such a Spinx.”

“I am surprised at Dorothy Clark taking him,” said Agatha Drew. “I thought last spring that she and Frank Clow were going to make a match of it.”

“I heard Dorothy say that Frank was the best match but she really couldn’t abide the thought of seeing that nose sticking out over the sheet every morning when she woke up.”

Mrs. Elder Baxter gave a spinsterish shudder and refused to join in the laughter.

“You shouldn’t say such things before a young girl like Edith,” said Celia, winking around the quilt.

“Is Ada Clark engaged yet?” asked Emma Pollock.

“No, not exactly,” said Mrs. Milison. “Just hopeful. But she’ll land him yet. Those girls all have a knack of picking husbands. Her sister Pauline married the best farm over the harbour.”

“Pauline is pretty but she is full of silly notions as ever,” said Mrs. Milgrave. “Sometimes I think she’ll never learn any sense.”

“Oh, yes, she will,” said Myra Murray. “Some day she will have children of her own and she will learn wisdom from them ... as you and I did.”

“Where are Lem and Dorothy going to live?” asked Mrs. Meade.

“Oh, Lem has bought a farm at the Upper Glen. The old Carey place, you know, where poor Mrs. Roger Carey murdered her husband.”

“Murdered her husband!”

“Oh, I’m not saying he didn’t deserve it, but everybody thought she went a little too far. Yes — weed-killer in his teacup ... or was it his soup? Everybody knew it but nothing was ever done about it. The spool, please, Celia.”

“But do you mean to say, Mrs. Millison, that she was never tried ... or punished?” gasped Mrs. Campbell.

“Well, nobody wanted to get a neighbour into a scrape like that. The Careys were well connected in the Upper Glen. Besides, she was driven to desperation. Of course nobody approves of murder as a habit but if ever a man deserved to be murdered Roger Carey did. She went to the States and married again. She’s been dead for years. Her second outlived her. It all happened when I was a girl. They used to say Roger Carey’s ghost walked.”

“Surely nobody believes in ghosts in this enlightened age,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Why aren’t we to believe in ghosts?” demanded Tillie MacAllister. “Ghosts are interesting. I know a man who was haunted by a ghost that always laughed at him ... sneering like. It used to make him so mad. The scissors, please, Mrs. MacDougall.”

The little bride had to be asked for the scissors twice and handed them over blushing deeply. She was not yet used to being called Mrs. MacDougall.

“The old Truax house over harbour was haunted for years ... raps and knocks all over the place ... a most mysterious thing,” said Christine Crawford.

“All the Truaxes had bad stomachs,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Of course if you don’t believe in ghosts they can’t happen,” said Mrs. MacAllister sulkily. “But my sister worked in a house in Nova Scotia that was haunted by chuckles of laughter.”

“What a jolly ghost!” said Myra. “I shouldn’t mind that.”

“Likely it was owls,” said the determinedly sceptical Mrs. Baxter.

“My mother seen angels around her deathbed,” said Agatha Drew with an air of plaintive triumph.

“Angels ain’t ghosts,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Speaking of mothers, how is your Uncle Parker, Tillie?” asked Mrs. Chubb.

“Very poorly by spells. We don’t know what is going to come of it. It’s holding us all up ... about our winter clothes, I mean. But I said to my sister the other day when we were talking it over, ‘We’d better get black dresses anyhow,’ I said, ‘and then it’s no matter what happens.’”

“Do you know what Mary Anna said the other day? She said, ‘Ma, I’m going to stop asking God to make my hair curly. I’ve asked Him every night for a week and He hasn’t done a thing.’”

“I’ve been asking Him something for twenty years,” bitterly said Mrs. Bruce Duncan, who had not spoken before or lifted her dark eyes from the quilt. She was noted for her beautiful quilting ... perhaps because she was

never diverted by gossip from setting each stitch precisely where it should be.

A brief hush fell over the circle. They could all guess what she had asked for ... but it was not a thing to be discussed at a quilting. Mrs. Duncan did not speak again.

“Is it true that May Flagg and Billy Carter have broken up and that he is going with one of the over-harbour MacDougalls?” asked Martha Crothers after a decent interval.

“Yes. Nobody knows what happened though.”

“It’s sad ... what little things break off matches sometimes,” said Candace Crawford. “Take Dick Pratt and Lilian MacAllister ... he was just starting to propose to her at a picnic when his nose began to bleed. He had to go to the brook ... and he met a strange girl there who lent him her handkerchief. He fell in love and they were married in two weeks’ time.”

“Did you hear what happened to Big Jim MacAllister last Saturday night in Milt Cooper’s store at the Harbour Head?” asked Mrs. Simon, thinking it time somebody introduced a more cheerful topic than ghosts and jiltings. “He had got into the habit of setting on the stove all summer. But Saturday night was cold and Milt had lit a fire. So when poor Big Jim sat down ... well, he scorched his ...”

Mrs. Simon would not say what he had scorched but she patted a portion of her anatomy silently.

“His bottom,” said Walter gravely, poking his head through the creeper screen. He honestly thought that Mrs. Simon could not remember the right word.

An appalled silence descended on the quilters. Had Walter Blythe been there all the time? Everyone was raking her recollection of the tales told to recall if any of them had been too terribly unfit for the ears of youth. Mrs. Dr. Blythe was said to be so fussy about what her children heard. Before

their paralyzed tongues recovered Anne had come out and asked them to come to supper.

“Just ten minutes more, Mrs. Blythe. We’ll have both quilts finished then,” said Elizabeth Kirk.

The quilts were finished, taken out, shaken, held up and admired.

“I wonder who’ll sleep under them,” said Myra Murray.

“Perhaps a new mother will hold her first baby under one of them,” said Anne.

“Or little children cuddle under them on a cold prairie night,” said Miss Cornelia unexpectedly.

“Or some poor old rheumatic body be cosier for them,” said Mrs. Meade.

“I hope nobody dies under them,” said Mrs. Baxter sadly.

“Do you know what Mary Anna said before I came?” said Mrs. Donald as they filed into the dining-room. “She said, ‘Ma, don’t forget you must eat everything on your plate.’”

Whereupon they all sat down and ate and drank to the glory of God, for they had done a good afternoon’s work and there was very little malice in most of them, after all.

After supper they went home. Jane Burr walked as far as the village with Mrs. Simon Millison.

“I must remember all the fixings to tell ma,” said Jane wistfully, not knowing that Susan was counting the spoons. “She never gets out since she’s bed-ridden but she loves to hear about things. That table will be a real treat to her.”

“It was just like a picture you’d seen in a magazine,” agreed Mrs. Simon with a sigh. “I can cook as good a supper as anyone, if I do say it, but I

can't fix up a table with a single prestige of style. As for that young Walter, I could spank his bottom with a relish. Such a turn as he gave me!"

"And I suppose Ingleside is strewn with dead characters?" the doctor was saying.

"I wasn't quilting," said Anne, "so I didn't hear what was said."

"You never do, dearie," said Miss Cornelia, who had lingered to help Susan bind the quilts. "When you are at the quilt they never let themselves go. They think you don't approve of gossip."

"It all depends on the kind," said Anne.

"Well, nobody really said anything too terrible today. Most of the people they talked about were dead ... or ought to be," said Miss Cornelia, recalling the story of Abner Cromwell's abortive funeral with a grin.

"Only Mrs. Millison had to drag in that gruesome old murder story again about Madge Carey and her husband. I remember it all. There wasn't a vestige of proof that Madge did it ... except that a cat died after eating some of the soup. The animal had been sick for a week. If you ask me, Roger Carey died of appendicitis ... though of course nobody knew they had appendixes then."

"And indeed I think it is a great pity they ever found out," said Susan. "The spoons are all intact, Mrs. Dr. dear, and nothing happened to the tablecloth."

"Well, I must be getting home," said Miss Cornelia. "I'll send you up some spare-ribs next week when Marshall kills the pig."

Walter was again sitting on the steps with eyes full of dreams. Dusk had fallen. Where, he wondered, had it fallen from? Did some great spirit with bat-like wings pour it all over the world from a purple jar? The moon was rising and three wind-twisted old spruces looked like three lean, humpbacked old witches hobbling up a hill against it. Was that a little faun with furry ears crouching in the shadows? Suppose he opened the door in the brick wall now, wouldn't he step, not into the well-known garden but

into some strange land of faery, where princesses were waking from enchanted sleeps, where perhaps he might find and follow Echo as he so often longed to do? One dared not speak. Something would vanish if one did.

“Darling,” said Mother coming out, “you mustn’t sit here any longer. It is getting cold. Remember your throat.”

The spoken word had broken the spell. Some magic light had gone. The lawn was still a beautiful place but it was no longer fairyland. Walter got up.

“Mother, will you tell me what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral?”

Anne thought for a moment ... then shivered.

“Not now, dear. Perhaps ... sometime... .”

Chapter 3 3

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Anne, alone in her room ... for Gilbert had been called out ... sat down at her window for a few minutes of communion with the tenderness of the night and of enjoyment of the eerie charm of her moonlit room. Say what you will, thought Anne, there is always something a little strange about a moonlit room. Its whole personality is changed. It is not so friendly ... so human. It is remote and aloof and wrapped up in itself. Almost it regards you as an intruder.

She was a little tired after her busy day and everything was so beautifully quiet now ... the children asleep, Ingleside restored to order. There was no sound in the house except a faint rhythmic thumping from the kitchen where Susan was setting her bread.

But through the open window came the sounds of the night, every one of which Anne knew and loved. Low laughter drifted up from the harbour on the still air. Someone was singing down in the Glen and it sounded like the haunting notes of some song heard a long ago. There were silvery moonlight paths over the water but Ingleside was hooded in shadow. The trees were whispering “dark sayings of old” and an owl was hooting in Rainbow Valley.

“What a happy summer this has been,” thought Anne ... and then recalled with a little pang something she had heard Aunt Highland Kitty of the Upper Glen say once ... “the same summer will never be coming twice.”

Never quite the same. Another summer would come ... but the children would be a little older and Rilla would be going to school ... “and I’ll have no baby left,” thought Anne sadly. Jem was twelve now and there was already talk of “the Entrance” ... Jem who but yesterday had been a wee baby in the old House of Dreams. Walter was shooting up and that very morning she had heard Nan teasing Di about some “boy” in school; and Di

had actually blushed and tossed her red head. Well, that was life. Gladness and pain ... hope and fear ... and change. Always change! You could not help it. You had to let the old go and take the new to your heart ... learn to love it and then let it go in turn. Spring, lovely as it was, must yield to summer and summer lose itself in autumn. The birth ... the bridal ... the death... .

Anne suddenly thought of Walter asking to be told what had happened at Peter Kirk's funeral. She had not thought of it for years, but she had not forgotten it. Nobody who had been there, she felt sure, had forgotten it or ever would. Sitting there in the moonlit dusk she recalled it all.

It had been in November ... the first November they had spent at Ingleside ... following a week of Indian summer days. The Kirks lived at Mowbray Narrows but came to the Glen church and Gilbert was their doctor; so he and Anne both went to the funeral.

It had been, she remembered, a mild, calm, pearl-grey day. All around them had been the lonely brown-and-purple landscape of November, with patches of sunlight here and there on upland and slope where the sun shone through a rift in the clouds. "Kirkwynd" was so near the shore that a breath of salt wind blew through the grim firs behind it. It was a big, prosperous-looking house but Anne always thought that the gable of the L looked exactly like a long, narrow, spiteful face.

Anne paused to speak to a little knot of women on the stiff flowerless lawn. They were all good hardworking souls to whom a funeral was a not unpleasant excitement.

"I forgot to bring a handkerchief," Mrs. Bryan Blake was saying plaintively. "Whatever will I do when I cry?"

"Why will you have to cry?" bluntly asked her sister-in-law, Camilla Blake. Camilla had no use for women who cried too easily. "Peter Kirk is no relation to you and you never liked him."

"I think it is proper to cry at a funeral," said Mrs. Blake stiffly. "It shows feeling when a neighbour has been summoned to his long home."

“If nobody cries at Peter’s funeral except those who liked him there won’t be many wet eyes,” said Mrs. Curtis Rodd dryly. “That is the truth and why mince it? He was a pious old humbug and I know it if nobody else does. Who is that coming at the little gate? Don’t ... don’t tell me it’s Clara Wilson.”

“It is,” whispered Mrs. Bryan incredulously.

“Well, you know after Peter’s first wife died she told him she would never enter his house again until she came to his funeral and she’s kept her word,” said Camilla Blake. “She’s a sister of Peter’s first wife,” ... in an explanatory aside to Anne, who looked curiously at Clara Wilson as she swept past them, unseeing, her smouldering topaz eyes staring straight ahead. She was a thin slip of a woman with a dark-browed, tragic face and black hair under one of the absurd bonnets elderly women still wore ... a thing of feathers and “bugles” with a skimpy nose veil. She looked at and spoke to no one, as her long black taffeta skirt swished over the grass and up the verandah steps.

“There’s Jed Clinton at the door, putting on his funeral face,” said Camilla sarcastically. “He’s evidently thinking it is time we went in. It’s always been his boast that at his funerals everything goes according to schedule. He’s never forgiven Winnie Clow for fainting before the sermon. It wouldn’t have been so bad afterwards. Well, nobody is likely to faint at this funeral. Olivia isn’t the fainting kind.”

“Jed Clinton ... the Lowbridge undertaker,” said Mrs. Reese. “Why didn’t they have the Glen man?”

“Who? Carter Flagg? Why, woman dear, Peter and him have been at daggers drawn all their lives. Carter wanted Amy Wilson, you know.”

“A good many wanted her,” said Camilla. “She was a very pretty girl, with her coppery red hair and inky black eyes. Though people thought Clara the handsomer of the two then. It’s odd she never married. There’s the minister at last ... and the Rev. Mr. Owen of Lowbridge with him. Of course he is Olivia’s cousin. All right except that he puts too many ‘Oh’s’ in his prayers. We’d better go in or Jed will have a conniption.”

Anne paused to look at Peter Kirk on her way to a chair. She had never liked him. "He has a cruel face," she thought, the first time she had ever seen him. Handsome, yes ... but with cold steely eyes even then becoming pouchy, and the thin pinched merciless mouth of a miser. He was known to be selfish and arrogant in his dealings with his fellow-men in spite of his profession of piety and his unctuous prayers. "Always feels his importance," she had heard someone say once. Yet, on the whole, he had been respected and looked up to.

He was as arrogant in his death as in his life and there was something about the too-long fingers clasped over his still breast that made Anne shudder. She thought of a woman's heart being held in them and glanced at Olivia Kirk, sitting opposite to her in her mourning. Olivia was a tall, fair, handsome woman with large blue eyes ... "no ugly woman for me," Peter Kirk had said once ... and her face was composed and expressionless. There was no apparent trace of tears ... but, then, Olivia had been a Random and the Randoms were not emotional. At least she sat decorously and the most heartbroken widow in the world could not have worn heavier weeds.

The air was cloyed with the perfume of the flowers that banked the coffin ... for Peter Kirk, who had never known flowers existed. His lodge had sent a wreath, the church had sent one, the Conservative Association had sent one, the school trustees had sent one, the Cheese Board had sent one. His one, long-alienated son had sent nothing, but the Kirk clan at large had sent a huge anchor of white roses with "Harbour At Last" in red rosebuds across it, and there was one from Olivia herself ... a pillow of calla-lilies. Camilla Blake's face twitched as she looked at it and Anne remembered that she had once heard Camilla say that she had been at Kirkwynd soon after Peter's second marriage when Peter had fired out of the window a potted calla-lily which the bride had brought with her. He wasn't, so he said, going to have his house cluttered up with weeds.

Olivia had apparently taken it very coolly and there had been no more calla-lilies at Kirkwynd. Could it be possible that Olivia ... but Anne looked at Mrs. Kirk's placid face and dismissed the suspicion. After all, it was generally the florist who suggested the flowers.

The choir sang “Death like a narrow sea divides that heavenly land from ours” and Anne caught Camilla’s eye and knew they were both wondering just how Peter Kirk would fit into that heavenly land. Anne could almost hear Camilla saying, “Fancy Peter Kirk with a harp and halo if you dare.”

The Rev. Mr. Owen read a chapter and prayed, with many “Oh’s” and many entreaties that sorrowing hearts might be comforted. The Glen minister gave an address which many privately considered entirely too fulsome, even allowing for the fact that you had to say something good of the dead. To hear Peter Kirk called an affectionate father and a tender husband, a kind neighbour and an earnest Christian was, they felt, a misuse of language. Camilla took refuge behind her handkerchief, not to shed tears, and Stephen Macdonald cleared his throat once or twice. Mrs. Bryan must have borrowed a handkerchief from someone, for she was weeping into it, but Olivia’s down-dropped blue eyes remained tearless.

Jed Clinton drew a breath of relief. All had gone beautifully. Another hymn ... the customary parade for a last look at “the remains” ... and another successful funeral would be added to his long list.

There was a slight disturbance in a corner of the large room and Clara Wilson made her way through the maze of chairs to the table beside the casket. She turned there and faced the assembly. Her absurd bonnet had slipped a trifle to one side and a loose end of heavy black hair had escaped from its coil and hung down on her shoulder. But nobody thought Clara Wilson looked absurd. Her long sallow face was flushed, her haunted tragic eyes were flaming. She was a woman possessed. Bitterness, like some gnawing incurable disease, seemed to pervade her being.

“You have listened to a pack of lies ... you people who have come here ‘to pay your respects’ ... or glut your curiosity, whichever it was. Now I shall tell you the truth about Peter Kirk. I am no hypocrite ... I never feared him living and I do not fear him now that he is dead. Nobody has ever dared to tell the truth about him to his face but it is going to be told now ... here at his funeral where he has been called a good husband and a kind neighbour. A good husband! He married my sister Amy ... my beautiful sister, Amy. You all know how sweet and lovely she was. He made her life a misery to her. He tortured and humiliated her ... he liked to do it. Oh, he went to

church regularly ... and made long prayers ... and paid his debts. But he was a tyrant and a bully ... his very dog ran when he heard him coming.

“I told Amy she would repent marrying him. I helped her make her wedding dress ... I’d rather have made her shroud. She was wild about him then, poor thing, but she hadn’t been his wife a week before she knew what he was. His mother had been a slave and he expected his wife to be one. ‘There will be no arguments in my household,’ he told her. She hadn’t the spirit to argue ... her heart was broken. Oh, I know what she went through, my poor pretty darling. He crossed her in everything. She couldn’t have a flower-garden ... she couldn’t even have a kitten ... I gave her one and he drowned it. She had to account to him for every cent she spent. Did ever any of you see her in a decent stitch of clothes? He would fault her for wearing her best hat if it looked like rain. Rain couldn’t hurt any hat she had, poor soul. Her that loved pretty clothes! He was always sneering at her people. He never laughed in his life ... did any of you ever hear him really laugh? He smiled ... oh yes, he always smiled, calmly and sweetly when he was doing the most maddening things. He smiled when he told her after her little baby was born dead that she might as well have died, too, if she couldn’t have anything but dead brats. She died after ten years of it ... and I was glad she had escaped him. I told him then I’d never enter his house again till I came to his funeral. Some of you heard me. I’ve kept my word and now I’ve come and told the truth about him. It is the truth ... You know it” ... she pointed fiercely at Stephen Macdonald ... “You know it” ... the long finger darted at Camilla Blake ... “You know it” ... Olivia Kirk did not move a muscle ... “You know it” ... the poor minister himself felt as if that finger stabbed completely through him. “I cried at Peter Kirk’s wedding but I told him I’d laugh at his funeral. And I am going to do it.”

She swished furiously about and bent over the casket. Wrongs that had festered for years had been avenged. She had wreaked her hatred at last. Her whole body vibrated with triumph and satisfaction as she looked down at the cold quiet face of a dead man. Everybody listened for the burst of vindictive laughter. It did not come. Clara Wilson’s angry face suddenly changed ... twisted ... crumpled up like a child’s. Clara was ... crying.

She turned, with the tears streaming down her ravaged cheeks, to leave the room. But Olivia Kirk rose before her and laid a hand on her arm. For a moment the two women looked at each other. The room was engulfed in a silence that seemed like a personal presence.

“Thank you, Clara Wilson,” said Olivia Kirk. Her face was as inscrutable as ever but there was an undertone in her calm, even voice that made Anne shudder. She felt as if a pit had suddenly opened before her eyes. Clara Wilson might hate Peter Kirk, alive and dead, but Anne felt that her hatred was a pale thing compared to Olivia Kirk’s.

Clara went out, weeping, passing an infuriated Jed with a spoiled funeral on his hands. The minister, who had intended to announce for a last hymn, “Asleep in Jesus,” thought better of it and simply pronounced a tremulous benediction. Jed did not make the usual announcement that friends and relatives might now take a parting look at “the remains.” The only decent thing to do, he felt, was to shut down the cover of the casket at once and bury Peter Kirk out of sight as soon as possible.

Anne drew a long breath as she went down the verandah steps. How lovely the cold fresh air was after that stifling, perfumed room where two women’s bitterness had been as their torment.

The afternoon had grown colder and greyer. Little groups here and there on the lawn were discussing the affair with muted voices. Clara Wilson could still be seen crossing a sere pasture field on her way home.

“Well, didn’t that beat all?” said Nelson dazedly.

“Shocking ... shocking!” said Elder Baxter.

“Why didn’t some of us stop her?” demanded Henry Reese.

“Because you all wanted to hear what she had to say,” retorted Camilla.

“It wasn’t ... decorous,” said Uncle Sandy MacDougall. He had got hold of a word that pleased him and rolled it under his tongue. “Not decorous. A funeral should be decorous whatever else it may be ... decorous.”

“Gosh, ain’t life funny?” said Augustus Palmer.

“I mind when Peter and Amy began keeping company,” mused old James Porter. “I was courting my woman that same winter. Clara was a fine-looking bit of goods then. And what a cherry pie she could make!”

“She was always a bitter-tongued girl,” said Boyce Warren. “I suspected there’d be dynamite of some kind when I saw her coming but I didn’t dream it would take that form. And Olivia! Would you have thought it? Weemen are a queer lot.”

“It will make quite a story for the rest of our lives,” said Camilla. “After all, I suppose if things like this never happened history would be dull stuff.”

A demoralized Jed had got his pallbearers rounded up and the casket carried out. As the hearse drove down the lane, followed by the slow-moving procession of buggies, a dog was heard howling heartbrokenly in the barn. Perhaps, after all, one living creature mourned Peter Kirk.

Stephen Macdonald joined Anne as she waited for Gilbert. He was a tall Upper Glen man with the head of an old Roman emperor. Anne had always liked him.

“Smells like snow,” he said. “It always seems to me that November is a homesick time. Does it ever strike you that way, Mrs. Blythe?”

“Yes. The year is looking back sadly to her lost spring.”

“Spring ... spring! Mrs. Blythe, I’m getting old. I find myself imagining that the seasons are changing. Winter isn’t what it was ... I don’t recognize summer ... and spring ... there are no springs now. At least, that’s how we feel when folks we used to know don’t come back to share them with us. Poor Clara Wilson now ... what did you think of it all?”

“Oh, it was heartbreaking. Such hatred ...”

“Ye-e-e-s. You see, she was in love with Peter herself long ago ... terribly in love. Clara was the handsomest girl in Mowbray Narrows then ... little dark curls all round her cream-white face ... but Amy was a laughing, lilting thing. Peter dropped Clara and took up with Amy. It’s strange the way we’re made, Mrs. Blythe.”

There was an eerie stir in the wind-torn firs behind Kirkwynd; far away a snow-squall whitened over a hill where a row of lombardies stabbed the grey sky. Everybody was hurrying to get away before it reached Mowbray Narrows.

“Have I any right to be so happy when other women are so miserable?” Anne wondered to herself as they drove home, remembering Olivia Kirk’s eyes as she thanked Clara Wilson.

Anne got up from her window. It was nearly twelve years ago now. Clara Wilson was dead and Olivia Kirk had gone to the coast where she had married again. She had been much younger than Peter.

“Time is kinder than we think,” thought Anne. “It’s a dreadful mistake to cherish bitterness for years ... hugging it to our hearts like a treasure. But I think the story of what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral is one which Walter must never know. It was certainly no story for children.”

Chapter 3 4

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Rilla sat on the verandah steps at Ingleside with one knee crossed over the other ... such adorable little fat brown knees! ... very busy being unhappy. And if anyone asks why a petted little puss should be unhappy that inquirer must have forgotten her own childhood when things that were the merest trifles to grownups were dark and dreadful tragedies to her. Rilla was lost in deeps of despair because Susan had told her she was going to bake one of her silver-and-gold cakes for the Orphanage social that evening and she, Rilla, must carry it to the church in the afternoon.

Don't ask me why Rilla felt she would rather die than carry a cake through the village to the Glen St. Mary Presbyterian church. Tots get odd notions into their little pates at times and somehow Rilla had got it into hers that it was a shameful and humiliating thing to be seen carrying a cake anywhere. Perhaps it was because, one day when she was only five, she had met old Tillie Pake carrying a cake down the street with all the little village boys yelping at her heels and making fun of her. Old Tillie lived down at the Harbour Mouth and was a very dirty ragged old woman.

“Old Tillie Pake
Up and stole a cake
And it give her stomachache,”

chanted the boys.

To be classed with Tillie Pake was something Rilla just could not bear. The idea had become lodged in her mind that you just “couldn't be a lady” and carry cakes about. So this was why she sat disconsolately on the steps and the dear little mouth, with one front tooth missing, was without its usual smile. Instead of looking as if she understood what daffodils were thinking about or as if she shared with the golden rose a secret they alone knew, she looked like one crushed forever. Even her big hazel eyes that almost shut

up when she laughed, were mournful and tormented, instead of being the usual pools of allurement. "It's the fairies that have touched your eyes," Aunt Kitty MacAllister told her once. Her father vowed she was born a charmer and had smiled at Dr. Parker half an hour after she was born. Rilla could, as yet, talk better with her eyes than her tongue, for she had a decided lisp. But she would grow out of that ... she was growing fast. Last year Daddy had measured her by a rosebush; this year it was the phlox; soon it would be the hollyhocks and she would be going to school. Rilla had been very happy and very well-contented with herself until this terrible announcement of Susan's. Really, Rilla told the sky indignantly, Susan had no sense of shame. To be sure, Rilla pronounced it "thenth of thame" but the lovely soft-blue sky looked as if it understood.

Mummy and Daddy had gone to Charlottetown that morning and all the other children were in school, so Rilla and Susan were alone at Ingleside. Ordinarily Rilla would have been delighted under such circumstances. She was never lonely; she would have been glad to sit there on the steps or on her own particular mossy green stone in Rainbow Valley, with a fairy kitten or two for company, and spin fancies about everything she saw ... the corner of the lawn that looked like a merry little land of butterflies ... the poppies floating over the garden ... that great fluffy cloud all alone in the sky ... the big bumblebees booming over the nasturtiums ... the honeysuckle that hung down to touch her red-brown curls with a yellow finger ... the wind that blew ... where did it blow to? ... Cock Robin, who was back again and was strutting importantly along the railing of the verandah, wondering why Rilla would not play with him ... Rilla who could think of nothing but the terrible fact that she must carry a cake ... a cake ... through the village to the church for the old social they were getting up for the orphans. Rilla was dimly aware that the Orphanage was at Lowbridge and that poor little children lived there who had no fathers or mothers. She felt terribly sorry for them. But not even for the orphanest of orphans was small Rilla Blythe willing to be seen in public carrying a cake.

Perhaps if it rained she wouldn't have to go. It didn't look like rain but Rilla clasped her hands together ... there was a dimple at the root of every finger ... and said earnestly:

“Plethe, dear God, make it rain hard. Make it rain pitchforkth. Or elth...” Rilla thought of another saving possibility, “make Thusanth cake burn ... burn to a crithp.”

Alas, when dinner time came the cake, done to a turn, filled and iced, was sitting triumphantly on the kitchen table. It was a favourite cake of Rilla’s ... “Gold-and-silver cake” did sound so luxuriant ... but she felt that never again would she be able to eat a mouthful of it.

Still ... wasn’t that thunder rolling over the low hills across the harbour? Perhaps God had heard her prayer ... perhaps there would be an earthquake before it was time to go. Couldn’t she take a pain in her stomach if worst came to worst? No. Rilla shuddered. That would mean castor-oil. Better the earthquake!

The rest of the children did not notice that Rilla, sitting in her own dear chair, with the saucy white duck worked in crewels on the back, was very quiet. Thelfith pigth! If Mummy had been home she would have noticed it. Mummy had seen right away how troubled she was that dreadful day when Dad’s picture had come out in the Enterprise. Rilla was crying bitterly in bed when Mummy came in and found out that Rilla thought it was only murderers that had their pictures in the papers. It had not taken Mummy long to put that to rights. Would Mummy like to see her daughter carrying cake through the Glen like old Tillie Pake?

Rilla found it hard to eat any dinner, though Susan had put down her own lovely blue plate with the wreath of rosebuds on it that Aunt Rachel Lynde had sent her on her last birthday and which she was generally allowed to have only on Sundays. Blue plateth and rothbudth! When you had to do such a shameful thing! Still, the fruit puffs Susan had made for dessert were nice.

“Thuthan, can’t Nan and Di take the cake after thchool?” she pleaded.

“Di is going home from school with Jessie Reese and Nan has a bone in her leg,” said Susan, under the impression that she was being joky.

“Besides it would be too late. The committee wants all the cakes in by three so they can cut them up and arrange the tables before they go home

to have their suppers. Why in the world don't you want to go, Roly-poly? You always think it is such fun to go for the mail."

Rilla was a bit of a roly-poly but she hated to be called that.

"I don't want to hurt my feelingth" she explained stiffly.

Susan laughed. Rilla was beginning to say things that made the family laugh. She never could understand why they laughed because she was always in earnest. Only Mummy never laughed; she hadn't laughed even when she found out that Rilla thought Daddy was a murderer.

"The social is to make money for poor little boys and girls who haven't any kind fathers or mothers," explained Susan ... as if she was a baby who didn't understand!

"I'm next thing to an orphan," said Rilla. "I've only got one father and mother."

Susan just laughed again. Nobody understood.

"You know your mother promised the committee that cake, pet. I have not time to take it myself and it must go. So put on your blue gingham and toddle off."

"My doll hath been tookeen ill," said Rilla desperately. "I mutht put her to bed and thtay with her. Maybe ithth ammonia."

"Your doll will do very well till you get back. You can go and come in half an hour," was Susan's heartless response.

There was no hope. Even God had failed her ... there wasn't a sign of rain. Rilla, too near tears to protest any further, went up and put on her new smocked organdy and her Sunday hat, trimmed with daisies. Perhaps if she looked respectable people wouldn't think she was like old Tillie Pake.

"I think my fathe ithth clean if you will kindly look behind my earth," she told Susan with great stateliness.

She was afraid Susan might scold her for putting on her best dress and hat. But Susan merely inspected her ears, handed her a basket containing the cake, told her to mind her pretty manners and for goodness' sake not to stop to talk to every cat she met.

Rilla made a rebellious "face" at Gog and Magog and marched away. Susan looked after her tenderly.

"Fancy our baby being old enough to carry a cake all alone to the church," she thought, half proudly, half sorrowfully, as she went back to work, blissfully unaware of the torture she was inflicting on a small mite she would have given her life for.

Rilla had not felt so mortified since the time she had fallen asleep in church and tumbled off the seat. Ordinarily she loved going down to the village; there were so many interesting things to see: but today Mrs. Carter Flagg's fascinating clothesline, with all those lovely quilts on it, did not win a glance from Rilla, and the new cast-iron deer Mr. Augustus Palmer had set up in his yard left her cold. She had never passed it before without wishing they could have one like it on the lawn at Ingleside. But what were cast-iron deer now? Hot sunshine poured along the street like a river and everybody was out. Two girls went by, whispering to each other. Was it about her? She imagined what they might be saying. A man driving along the road stared at her. He was really wondering if that could be the Blythe baby and by George, what a little beauty she was! But Rilla felt that his eyes pierced the basket and saw the cake. And when Annie Drew drove by with her father Rilla was sure she was laughing at her. Annie Drew was ten and a very big girl in Rilla's eyes.

Then there was a whole crowd of boys and girls on Russell's corner. She had to walk past them. It was dreadful to feel that their eyes were all looking at her and then at each other. She marched by, so proudly desperate that they all thought she was stuck-up and had to be brought down a peg or two. They'd show that kitten-faced thing! A regular hoity-toity like all those Ingleside girls! Just because they lived up at the big house!

Millie Flagg strutted along behind her, imitating her walk and scuffing up clouds of dust over them both.

“Where’s the basket going with the child?” shouted “Slicky” Drew.

“There’s a smudge on your nose, Jam-face,” jeered Bill Palmer.

“Cat got your tongue?” said Sarah Warren.

“Snippet!” sneered Beenie Bentley.

“Keep on your side of the road or I’ll make you eat a junebug,” big Sam Flagg stopped gnawing a raw carrot long enough to say.

“Look at her blushing,” giggled Mamie Taylor.

“Bet you’re taking a cake to the Presbyterian church,” said Charlie Warren. “Half dough like all Susan Baker’s cakes.”

Pride would not let Rilla cry, but there was a limit to what one could bear. After all, an Ingleside cake... .

“The next time any of you are thick I’ll tell my father not to give you any medithine,” she said defiantly.

Then she stared in dismay. That couldn’t be Kenneth Ford coming around the corner of the Harbour road! It couldn’t be! It was!

It was not to be borne. Ken and Walter were pals and Rilla thought in her small heart that Ken was the nicest, handsomest boy in the whole world. He seldom took much notice of her ... though once he had given her a chocolate duck. And one unforgettable day he had sat down beside her on a mossy stone in Rainbow Valley and told her the story of the Three Bears and the Little House in the Wood. But she was content to worship afar. And now this wonderful being had caught her carrying a cake!

“Lo, Roly-poly! Heat’s something fierce, isn’t it? Hope I’ll get a slice of that cake tonight.”

So he knew it was a cake! Everybody knew it!

Rilla was through the village and thought the worst was over when the worst happened. She looked down a side-road and saw her Sunday School teacher, Miss Emmy Parker, coming along it. Miss Emmy Parker was still quite a distance away but Rilla knew her by her dress ... that frilled organdy dress of pale green with clusters of little white flowers all over it ... the “cherry blossom dress,” Rilla secretly called it. Miss Emmy had it on in Sunday School last Sunday and Rilla had thought it the sweetest dress she had ever seen. But then Miss Emmy always wore such pretty dresses ... sometimes lacy and frilly, sometimes with the whisper of silk about them.

Rilla worshipped Miss Emmy. She was so pretty and dainty, with her white, white skin and her brown, brown eyes and her sad, sweet smile ... sad, another small girl had whispered to Rilla one day, because the man she was going to marry had died. She was so glad she was in Miss Emmy’s class. She would have hated to be in Miss Florrie Flagg’s class ... Florrie Flagg was ugly and Rilla couldn’t bear an ugly teacher.

When Rilla met Miss Emmy away from Sunday School and Miss Emmy smiled and spoke to her it was one of the high moments of life for Rilla. Only to be nodded to on the street by Miss Emmy gave a strange, sudden lift of the heart and when Miss Emmy had invited all her class to a soap-bubble party, where they made the bubbles red with strawberry juice, Rilla had all but died of sheer bliss.

But to meet Miss Emmy, carrying a cake, was just not to be endured and Rilla was not going to endure it. Besides, Miss Emmy was going to get up a dialogue for the next Sunday School concert and Rilla was cherishing secret hopes of being asked to take the fairy’s part in it ... a fairy in scarlet with a little peaked green hat. But there would be no use in hoping for that if Miss Emmy saw her carrying a cake.

Miss Emmy was not going to see her! Rilla was standing on the little bridge crossing the brook, which was quite deep and creek-like just there. She snatched the cake out of the basket and hurled it into the brook where the alders met over a dark pool. The cake hurtled through the branches and

sank with a plop and a gurgle. Rilla felt a wild spasm of relief and freedom and escape, as she turned to meet Miss Emmy, who, she now saw, was carrying a big bulgy brown paper parcel.

Miss Emmy smiled down at her, from beneath a little green hat with a tiny orange feather in it.

“Oh, you’re beautiful, teacher ... beautiful,” gasped Rilla adoringly.

Miss Emmy smiled again. Even when your heart is broken ... and Miss Emmy truly believed hers was ... it is not unpleasant to be given such a sincere compliment.

“It’s the new hat, I expect, dear. Fine feathers, you know. I suppose” ... glancing at the empty basket ... “you’ve been taking your cake up for the social. What a pity you’re not going instead of coming. I’m taking mine ... such a big, gooey chocolate cake.”

Rilla gazed up piteously, unable to utter a word. Miss Emmy was carrying a cake, therefore, it could not be a disgraceful thing to carry a cake. And she ... oh, what had she done? She had thrown Susan’s lovely gold-and-silver cake into the brook ... and she had lost the chance of walking up to the church with Miss Emmy, both carrying cakes!

After Miss Emmy had gone on Rilla went home with her dreadful secret. She buried herself in Rainbow Valley until supper time, when again nobody noticed that she was very quiet. She was terribly afraid Susan would ask to whom she had given the cake but there were no awkward questions. After supper the others went to play in Rainbow Valley but Rilla sat alone on the steps until the sun went down and the sky was all a windy gold behind Ingleside and the lights sprang up in the village below. Always Rilla liked to watch them blooming out, here and there, all over the Glen, but tonight she was interested in nothing. She had never been so unhappy in her life. She just didn’t see how she could live. The evening deepened to purple and she was still more unhappy. A most delectable odour of maple sugar buns drifted out to her ... Susan had waited for the evening coolness to do the family baking ... but maple sugar buns, like all else, were just vanity. Miserably she climbed the stairs and went to bed under the new,

pink-flowered spread she had once been so proud of. But she could not sleep. She was still haunted by the ghost of the cake she had drowned. Mother had promised the committee that cake ... what would they think of Mother for not sending it? And it would have been the prettiest cake there! The wind had such a lonely sound tonight. It was reproaching her. It was saying, "Silly ... silly ... silly," over and over again.

"What is keeping you awake, pet?" said Susan, coming in with a maple sugar bun.

"Oh, Thuthan, I'm ... I'm jutht tired of being me."

Susan looked troubled. Come to think of it, the child had looked tired at supper.

"And of course the doctor's away. Doctors' families die and shoemakers' wives go barefoot," she thought. Then aloud:

"I am going to see if you have a temperature, my pet."

"No, no, Thuthan. It'th jutht ... I've done thomething dreadful, Thuthan ... Thatan made me do it ... no, no, he didn't, Thuthan ... I did it mythelf, I ... I threw the cake into the creek."

"Land of hope and glory!" said Susan blankly. "Whatever made you do that?"

"Do what?" It was Mother, home from town. Susan retreated gladly, thankful that Mrs. Doctor had the situation in hand. Rilla sobbed out the whole story.

"Darling, I don't understand. Why did you think it was such a dreadful thing to take a cake to the church?"

"I thought it wath jutht like old Tillie Pake, Mummy. And I've dithgrathed you! Oh, Mummy, if you'll forgive me I'll never be naughty again ... and I'll tell the committee you did thend a cake ..."

“Never mind the committee, darling. They would have more than enough cakes ... they always do. It’s not likely anyone would notice we didn’t send one. We just won’t talk of this to anybody. But always after this, Bertha Marilla Blythe, remember the fact that neither Susan nor Mother would ever ask you to do anything disgraceful.”

Life was sweet again. Daddy came to the door to say, “Goodnight, Kittenkin,” and Susan slipped in to say they were going to have a chicken pie for dinner tomorrow.

“With lotth of gravy, Thuthan?”

“Lashings of it.”

“And may I have a brown egg for breakfath, Thuthan. I don’t detherve it ...”

“You shall have two brown eggs if you want them. And now you must eat your bun and go to sleep, little pet.”

Rilla ate her bun but before she went to sleep she slipped out of bed and knelt down. Very earnestly she said:

“Dear God, pleathe make me a good and obedient child alwayth, no matter what I’m told to do. And bleth dear Mith Emmy and all the poor orphanth.”

Chapter 3 5

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The Ingleside children played together and walked together and had all kinds of adventures together; and each of them, in addition to this, had his and her own inner life of dream and fancy. Especially Nan, who from the very first had fashioned secret drama for herself out of everything she heard or saw or read and sojourned in realms of wonder and romance quite unsuspected in her household circle. At first she wove patterns of pixy dances and elves in haunted valleys and dryads in birch trees. She and the great willow at the gate had whispered secrets and the old empty Bailey house at the upper end of Rainbow Valley was the ruin of a haunted tower. For weeks she might be a king's daughter imprisoned in a lonely castle by the sea ... for months she was a nurse in a leper colony in India or some land "far, far away." "Far, far away" had always been words of magic to Nan ... like faint music over a windy hill.

As she grew older she built up her drama about the real people she saw in her little life. Especially the people in church. Nan liked to look at the people in church because everyone was so nicely dressed. It was almost miraculous. They looked so different from what they did on week days.

The quiet respectable occupants of the various family pews would have been amazed and perhaps a little horrified if they had known the romances the demure, browneyed maiden in the Ingleside pew was concocting about them. Black-browed, kindhearted Annetta Millison would have been thunderstruck to know that Nan Blythe pictured her as a kidnapper of children, boiling them alive to make potions that would keep her young forever. Nan pictured this so vividly that she was half frightened to death when she met Annetta Millison once in a twilight lane astir with the golden whisper of buttercups. She was positively unable to reply to Annetta's friendly greeting and Annetta reflected that Nan Blythe was really getting to be a proud and saucy little puss and needed a bit of training in good manners. Pale Mrs. Rod Palmer never dreamed that she

had poisoned someone and was dying of remorse. Elder Gordon MacAllister of the solemn face had no notion that a curse had been put on him at birth by a witch, the result being that he could never smile. Dark-moustached Fraser Palmer of a blameless life little knew that when Nan Blythe looked at him she was thinking, "I am sure that man has committed a dark and desperate deed. He looks as if he had some dreadful secret on his conscience." And Archibald Fyfe had no suspicion that when Nan Blythe saw him coming she was busy making up a rhyme as a reply to any remark he might make because he was never to be spoken to except in rhyme. He never did speak to her, being exceedingly afraid of children, but Nan got no end of fun out of desperately and quickly inventing a rhyme.

"I'm very well, thank you, Mr. Fyfe,
How are you yourself and your wife?"

or,

"Yes, it is a very fine day,
Just the right kind for making hay."

There is no knowing what Mrs. Morton Kirk would have said if she had been told that Nan Blythe would never come to her house ... supposing she had ever been invited ... because there was a red footprint on her doorstep; and her sister-in-law, placid, kind, unsought Elizabeth Kirk, did not dream she was an old maid because her lover had dropped dead at the altar just before the wedding ceremony.

It was all very amusing and interesting and Nan never lost her way between fact and fiction until she became possessed with the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes.

It is no use asking how dreams grow. Nan herself could never have told you how it came about. It started with the GLOOMY HOUSE ... Nan saw it always just like that, spelled in capitals. She liked to spin her romances about places as well as people and the GLOOMY HOUSE was the only place around, except the old Bailey house, which lent itself to romance. Nan had never seen the HOUSE itself ... she only knew that it was there, behind a thick dark spruce on the Lowbridge side-road, and had been

vacant from time immemorial, — so Susan said. Nan didn't know what time immemorial was but it was a most fascinating phrase, just suited to gloomy houses.

Nan always ran madly past the lane that led up to the GLOOMY HOUSE when she went along the side-road to visit her chum, Dora Clow. It was a long dark tree-arched lane with thick grass growing between its ruts and ferns waist-high under the spruces. There was a long grey maple bough near the tumbledown gate that looked exactly like a crooked old arm reaching down to encircle her. Nan never knew when it might reach a wee bit further and grab her. It gave her such a thrill to escape it.

One day Nan, to her astonishment, heard Susan saying that Thomasine Fair had come to live in the GLOOMY HOUSE ... or, as Susan unromantically phrased it, the old MacAllister place.

“She will find it rather lonely, I should imagine,” Mother had said. “It's so out-of-the-way.”

“She will not mind that,” said Susan. “She never goes anywhere, not even to church. Has not gone anywhere for years ... though they say she walks in her garden at night. Well, well, to think what she has come to ... her that was so handsome and such a terrible flirt. The hearts she broke in her day! And look at her now! Well, it is a warning and that you may tie to.”

Just to whom it was a warning Susan did not explain and nothing more was said, for nobody at Ingleside was very much interested in Thomasine Fair. But Nan, who had grown a little tired of all her old dream lives and was agog for something new, seized on Thomasine Fair in the GLOOMY HOUSE. Bit by bit, day after day, night after night ... one could believe anything at night ... she built up a legend about her until the whole thing flowered out unrecognisably and became a dearer dream to Nan than any she had hitherto known. Nothing before had ever seemed so entrancing, so real, as this vision of the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. Great black velvet eyes ... hollow eyes ... haunted eyes ... filled with remorse for the hearts she had broken. Wicked eyes ... anyone who broke hearts and never went to church must be wicked. Wicked people were so interesting. The Lady was burying herself from the world as a penance for her crimes.

Could she be a princess? No, princesses were too scarce in P. E. Island. But she was tall, slim, remote, icily beautiful like a princess, with long jet-black hair in two thick braids over her shoulders, right to her feet. She would have a clear-cut ivory face, a beautiful Grecian nose, like the nose of Mother's Artemis of the Silver Bow, and white lovely hands which she would wring as she walked in the garden at night, waiting for the one true lover she had disdained and learned too late to love ... you perceive how the legend was growing? ... while her long black velvet skirts trailed over the grass. She would wear a golden girdle and great pearl earrings in her ears and she must live her life of shadow and mystery until the lover came to set her free. Then she would repent of her old wickedness and heartlessness and hold out her beautiful hands to him and bend her proud head in submission at last. They would sit by the fountain ... there was a fountain by this time ... and pledge their vows anew and she would follow him, "over the hills and faraway, beyond their utmost purple rim," just as the Sleeping Princess did in the poem Mother read to her one night from the old volume of Tennyson Father had given her long, long ago. But the lover of the Mysterious Eyed gave her jewels beyond all compare.

The GLOOMY HOUSE would be beautifully furnished, of course, and there would be secret rooms and staircases, and the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes would sleep on a bed made of mother-of-pearl under a canopy of purple velvet. She would be attended by a greyhound ... a brace of them ... a whole retinue of them ... and she would always be listening ... listening ... listening ... for the music of a very far-off harp. But she could not hear it as long as she was wicked until her lover came and forgave her ... and there you were.

Of course it sounds very foolish. Dreams do sound so foolish when they are put into cold brutal words. Ten-year-old Nan never put hers into words ... she only lived them. This dream of the wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes became as real to her as the life that went on around her. It took possession of her. For two years now it had been part of her ... she had somehow come, in some strange way, to believe it. Not for worlds would she have told anyone, not even Mother, about it. It was her own peculiar treasure, her inalienable secret, without which she could no longer

imagine life going on. She would rather steal off by herself to dream of the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes than play in Rainbow Valley.

Anne noticed this tendency and worried a little over it. Nan was getting too much that way. Gilbert wanted to send her up to Avonlea for a visit, but Nan, for the first time, pleaded passionately not to be sent. She didn't want to leave home, she said piteously. To herself she said she would just die if she had to go so far away from the strange sad lovely Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. True, the Mysterious Eyed never went out anywhere. But she might go out some day and if she, Nan, were away she would miss seeing her. How wonderful it would be to get just a glimpse of her! Why, the very road along which she passed would be forever romantic. The day on which it happened would be different from all other days. She would make a ring around it in the calendar. Nan had got to the point when she greatly desired to see her just once. She knew quite well that much she had imagined about her was nothing but imagination. But she hadn't the slightest doubt that Thomasine Fair was young and lovely and wicked and alluring ... Nan was by this time absolutely certain she had heard Susan say so ... and as long as she was that, Nan could go on imagining things about her forever.

Nan could hardly believe her ears when Susan said to her one morning:

"There is a parcel I want to send up to Thomasine Fair at the old MacAllister place. Your father brought it out from town last night. Will you run up with it this afternoon, pet?"

Just like that! Nan caught her breath. Would she? Did dreams really come true in such fashion? She would see the GLOOMY HOUSE ... she would see her beautiful wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. Actually see her ... perhaps hear her speak ... perhaps ... oh, bliss! ... touch her slender white hand. As for the greyhounds and the fountain and so forth, Nan knew she had only imagined them but surely the reality would be equally wonderful.

Nan watched the clock all the forenoon, seeing the time draw slowly ... oh, so slowly ... nearer and nearer. When a thundercloud rolled up ominously and rain began to fall she could hardly keep the tears back.

“I don’t see how God could let it rain today,” she whispered rebelliously.

But the shower was soon over and the sun shone again. Nan could eat hardly any dinner for excitement.

“Mummy, may I wear my yellow dress?”

“Why do you want to dress up like that to call on a neighbour, child?”

A neighbour! But of course Mother didn’t understand ... couldn’t understand.

“Please, Mummy.”

“Very well,” said Anne. The yellow dress would be outgrown very soon. May as well let Nan get the good of it.

Nan’s legs were fairly trembling as she set off, the precious small parcel in her hand. She took a short-cut through Rainbow Valley, up the hill, to the side-road. The raindrops were still lying on the nasturtium leaves like great pearls; there was a delicious freshness in the air; the bees were buzzing in the white clover that edged the brook; slim blue dragonflies were glittering over the water ... devil’s-darning-needles, Susan called them; in the hill pasture the daisies nodded to her ... swayed to her ... waved to her ... laughed to her, with cool gold-and-silver laughter. Everything was so lovely and she was going to see the Wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. What would the Lady say to her? And was it quite safe to go to see her? Suppose you stayed a few minutes with her and found that a hundred years had gone by, as in the story she and Walter had read last week?

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Nan felt a queer tickly sensation in her spine as she turned into the lane. Did the dead maple bough move? No, she had escaped it ... she was past. Aha, old witch, you didn't catch Me! She was walking up the lane of which the mud and the ruts had no power to blight her anticipation. Just a few steps more ... the GLOOMY HOUSE was before her, amid and behind those dark dripping trees. She was going to see it at last! She shivered a little ... and did not know that it was because of a secret unadmitted fear of losing her dream. Which is always, for youth or maturity or age, a catastrophe.

She pushed her way through a gap in a wild growth of young spruces that was choking up the end of the lane. Her eyes were shut; could she dare to open them? For a moment sheer terror possessed her and for two pins she would have turned and run. After all ... the Lady was wicked. Who knew what she might do to you? She might even be a Witch. How was it that it had never occurred to her before that the Wicked Lady might be a Witch?

Then she resolutely opened her eyes and stared piteously.

Was this the GLOOMY HOUSE ... the dark, stately, towered and turreted mansion of her dreams? This!

It was a big house, once white, now a muddy gray. Here and there, broken shutters, once green, were swinging loose. The front steps were broken. A forlorn glassed-in porch had most of its panes shattered. The scrolled trimming around the verandah was broken. Why, it was only a tired old house worn out with living!

Nan looked about desperately. There was no fountain ... no garden ... well, nothing you could really call a garden. The space in front of the house, surrounded by a ragged paling, was full of weeds and knee-high tangled

grass. A lank pig rooted beyond the paling. Burdocks grew along the mid-walk. Straggly clumps of golden-glow were in the corners, but there was one splendid clump of militant tiger-lilies and, just by the worn steps, a gay bed of marigolds.

Nan went slowly up the walk to the marigold bed. The GLOOMY HOUSE was gone forever. But the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes remained. Surely she was real ... she must be! What had Susan really said about her so long ago?

“Laws-a-mercy, ye nearly scared the liver out of me!” said a rather mumbly though friendly voice.

Nan looked at the figure that had suddenly risen up from beside the marigold bed. Who was it? It could not be ... Nan refused to believe that this was Thomasine Fair. It would be just too terrible!

“Why,” thought Nan, heartsick with disappointment, “she ... she’s old!”

Thomasine Fair, if Thomasine Fair it was ... and she knew now it was Thomasine Fair ... was certainly old. And fat! She looked like the featherbed with the string tied round its middle to which angular Susan was always comparing stout ladies. She was barefooted, wore a green dress that had faded yellowish, and a man’s old felt hat on her sparse, sandy-grey hair. Her face was round as an O, ruddy and wrinkled, with a snub nose. Her eyes were a faded blue, surrounded by great, jolly-looking crow’s-feet.

Oh, my Lady ... my charming, Wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes, where are you? What has become of you? You did exist!

“Well now, and what nice little girl are you?” asked Thomasine Fair.

Nan clutched after her manners.

“I’m ... I’m Nan Blythe. I came up to bring you this.”

Thomasine pounced on the parcel joyfully.

“Well, if I ain’t glad to get my specks back!” she said. “I’ve missed ‘em turrible for reading the almanack on Sundays. And you’re one of the Blythe girls? What pretty hair you’ve got! I’ve always wanted to see some of you. I’ve heered your ma was bringing you up scientific. Do you like it?”

“Like ... what?” Oh, wicked, charming Lady, you did not read the almanack on Sundays. Nor did you talk of “ma’s.”

“Why, bein’ brought up scientific.”

“I like the way I’m being brought up,” said Nan, trying to smile and barely succeeding.

“Well, your ma is a real fine woman. She’s holding her own. I declare the first time I saw her at Libby Taylor’s funeral I thought she was a bride, she looked so happy. I always think when I see your ma come into a room that everyone perks up as if they expected something to happen. The new fashions set her, too. Most of us just ain’t made to wear ‘em. But come in and set a while ... I’m glad to see someone ... it gets kinder lonesome by spells. I can’t afford a telephone. Flowers is company ... did ye ever see finer merrygolds? And I’ve got a cat.”

Nan wanted to flee to the uttermost parts of the earth, but she felt it would never do to hurt the old lady’s feelings by refusing to go in. Thomasine, her petticoat showing below her skirt, led the way up the sagging steps into a room which was evidently kitchen and livingroom combined. It was scrupulously clean and gay with thrifty house plants. The air was full of the pleasant fragrance of newly cooked bread.

“Set here,” said Thomasine kindly, pushing forward a rocker with a gay patched cushion. “I’ll move that callow-lily out of your way. Wait till I get my lower plate in. I look funny with it out, don’t I? But it hurts me a mite. There, I’ll talk clearer now.”

A spotted cat, uttering all kinds of fancy meows, came forward to greet them. Oh, for the greyhounds of a vanished dream!

“That cat’s a fine ratter,” said Thomasine. “This place is overrun with rats. But it keeps the rain out and I got sick of living round with relations. Couldn’t call my soul my own. Ordered round as if I was dirt. Jim’s wife was the worst. Complained because I was making faces at the moon one night. Well, what if I was? Did it hurt the moon? Says I, ‘I ain’t going to be a pincushion any longer.’ So I come here on my own and here I’ll stay as long as I have use of my legs. Now, what’ll you have? Can I make you an onion sandwich?”

“No ... no, thank you.”

“They’re fine when you have a cold. I’ve been having one ... notice how hoarse I am? But I just tie a piece of red flannel with turpentine and goose-grease on it round my throat when I go to bed. Nothing better.”

Red flannel and goose-grease! Not to speak of turpentine!

“If you won’t have a sandwich ... sure you won’t? ... I’ll see what’s in the cooky box.”

The cookies ... cut in the shape of roosters and ducks ... were surprisingly good and fairly melted in your mouth. Mrs. Fair beamed at Nan out of her round faded eyes.

“Now you’ll like me, won’t you? I like to have little girls like me.”

“I’ll try,” gasped Nan, who at that moment was hating poor Thomasine Fair as we can hate only those who destroy our illusions.

“I’ve got some little grandchildren of my own out West, you know.”

Grandchildren!

“I’ll show you their pictures. Pretty, ain’t they? That’s poor dear Poppa’s picture up there. Twenty years since he died.”

Poor dear Poppa’s picture was a large “crayon” of a bearded man with a curly fringe of white hair surrounding a bald head.

Oh, lover disdained!

“He was a good husband though he was bald at thirty,” said Mrs. Fair fondly. “My, but I had the pick of the beaus when I was a girl. I’m old now but I had a fine time when I was young. The beaus on Sunday nights! Trying to sit each other out! And me holding up my head as haughty as any queen! Poppa was among them from the start but at first I hadn’t nothing to say to him. I liked ‘em a bit more dashing. There was Andrew Metcalf now ... I was as near as no matter running away with him. But I knew ‘twould be unlucky. Don’t you ever run away. It is unlucky and don’t let anyone ever tell you different.”

“I ... I won’t ... indeed I won’t.”

“In the end I married Poppa. His patience gin out at last and he give me twenty-four hours to take him or leave him. My pa wanted me to settle down. He got nervous when Jim Hewitt drowned himself because I wouldn’t have him. Poppa and I were real happy when we got used to each other. He said I suited him because I didn’t do too much thinking. Poppa held women weren’t made for thinking. He said it made ‘em dried-up and unnatteral. Baked beans disagreed with him turrible and he had spells of lumbago but my balmagilia balsam always straightened that out. There was a specialist in town said he could cure him permanent but Poppa always said if you got into the hands of them specialists they’d never let you out again ... never. I miss him to feed the pig. He was real fond of pork. I never eat a bit of bacon but I think of him. That picture opposite Poppa is Queen Victoria. Sometimes I say to her, ‘If they stripped all them lace and jewels off you, my dear, I doubt if you’d be any better-looking than I am.”

Before she let Nan go she insisted on her taking a bag of peppermints, a pink glass slipper for holding flowers, and a glass of gooseberry jelly.

“That’s for your ma. I’ve always had good luck with my gooseberry jelly. I’m coming down to Ingleside some day. I want to see them chiney dogs of yours. Tell Susan Baker I’m much obliged for that mess of turnip greens she sent me in the spring.”

Turnip greens!

“I ‘lowed I’d thank her at Jacob Warren’s funeral but she got away too quick. I like to take my time at funerals. There hasn’t been one for a month. I always think it’s a dull old time when there’s no funerals going. There’s always a fine lot of funerals over Lowbridge way. It don’t seem fair. Come again and see me, won’t you? You’ve got something about you ... ‘loving favour is better than silver and gold,’ the Good Book says and I guess it’s right.”

She smiled very pleasantly at Nan ... she had a sweet smile. In it you saw the pretty Thomasine of long ago. Nan managed another smile herself. Her eyes were stinging. She must get away before she cried outright.

“Nice, well-behaved leetle creetur,” mused old Thomasine Fair, looking out of her window after Nan. “Hasn’t got her ma’s gift of gab but maybe none the worse of that. Most of the kids today think they’re smart when they’re just being sassy. That little thing’s visit has kind of made me feel young again.”

Thomasine sighed and went out to finish cutting her marigolds and hoeing up some of the burdocks.

“Thank goodness, I’ve kept limber,” she reflected.

Nan went back to Ingleside the poorer by a lost dream. A dell full of daisies could not lure her ... singing water called to her in vain. She wanted to get home and shut herself away from human eyes. Two girls she met giggled after they passed her. Were they laughing at her? How everybody would laugh if they knew! Silly little Nan Blythe who had spun a romance of cobweb fancies about a pale queen of mystery and found instead poor Poppa’s widow and peppermints.

Peppermints!

Nan would not cry. Big girls of ten must not cry. But she felt indescribably dreary. Something precious and beautiful was gone ... lost ... a secret store of joy which, so she believed, could never be hers again. She found

Ingleside filled with the delicious smell of spice cookies but she did not go into the kitchen to coax some out of Susan. At supper her appetite was noticeably poor, even though she read castor-oil in Susan's eye. Anne had noticed that Nan had been very quiet ever since her return from the old MacAllister place ... Nan, who sang literally from daylight to dark and after. Had the long walk on a hot day been too much for the child?

"Why that anguished expression, daughter?" she asked casually, when she went into the twins' room at dusk with fresh towels and found Nan curled up on the window-seat, instead of being down stalking tigers in Equatorial jungles with the others in Rainbow Valley.

Nan hadn't meant to tell anybody that she had been so silly. But somehow things told themselves to Mother.

"Oh, Mother, is everything in life a disappointment?"

"Not everything, dear. Would you like to tell me what disappointed you today?"

"Oh, Mummy, Thomasine Fair is ... is good! And her nose turns up!"

"But why," asked Anne in honest bewilderment, "should you care whether her nose turns up or down?"

It all came out then. Anne listened with her usual serious face, praying that she be not betrayed into a stifled shriek of laughter. She remembered the child she had been at old Green Gables. She remembered the Haunted Wood and two small girls who had been terribly frightened by their own pretending thereof. And she knew the dreadful bitterness of losing a dream.

"You musn't take the vanishing of your fancies so much to heart, dear."

"I can't help it," said Nan despairingly. "If I had my life to live over again I'd never imagine anything. And I never will again."

“My foolish dear ... my dear foolish dear, don’t say that. An imagination is a wonderful thing to have ... but like every gift we must possess it and not let it possess us. You take your imaginings a wee bit too seriously. Oh, it’s delightful ... I know that rapture. But you must learn to keep on this side of the borderline between the real and the unreal. Then the power to escape at will into a beautiful world of your own will help you amazingly through the hard places of life. I can always solve a problem more easily after I’ve had a voyage or two to the Islands of Enchantment.”

Nan felt her self-respect coming back to her with these words of comfort and wisdom. Mother did not think it so silly after all. And no doubt there was somewhere in the world a Wicked Beautiful Lady with Mysterious Eyes, even if she did not live in the GLOOMY HOUSE ... which, now that Nan came to think of it, was not such a bad place after all, with its orange marigolds and its friendly spotted cat and its geraniums and poor dear Poppa’s picture. It was really rather a jolly place and perhaps some day she would go and see Thomasine Fair again and get some more of those nice cookies. She did not hate Thomasine any longer.

“What a nice mother you are!” she sighed, in the shelter and sanctuary of those beloved arms.

A violet-grey dusk was coming over the hill. The summer night darkened about them ... a night of velvet and whispers. A star came out over the big apple tree. When Mrs. Marshall Elliott came and Mother had to go down Nan was happy again. Mother had said she was going to repaper their room with a lovely buttercup-yellow paper and get a new cedar chest for her and Di to keep things in. Only it would not be a cedar chest. It would be an enchanted treasure chest which could not be opened unless certain mystic words were pronounced. One word the Witch of the Snow might whisper to you, the cold and lovely white Witch of the Snow. A wind might tell you another, as it passed you ... a sad grey wind that mourned. Sooner or later you would find all the words and open the chest, to find it filled with pearls and rubies and diamonds galore. Wasn’t galore a nice word?

Oh, the old magic had not gone. The world was still full of it.

Chapter 3 7

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“Can I be your dearest friend this year?” asked Delilah Green, during that afternoon recess.

Delilah had very round, dark-blue eyes, sleek sugar-brown curls, a small rosy mouth, and a thrilling voice with a little quaver in it. Diana Blythe responded to the charm of that voice instantly.

It was known in the Glen school that Diana Blythe was rather at loose ends for a chum. For two years she and Pauline Reese had been cronies but Pauline’s family had moved away and Diana felt very lonely. Pauline had been a good sort. To be sure, she was quite lacking in the mystic charm that the now almost forgotten Jenny Penny had possessed but she was practical, full of fun, sensible. That last was Susan’s adjective and was the highest praise Susan could bestow. She had been entirely satisfied with Pauline as a friend for Diana.

Diana looked at Delilah doubtfully, then glanced across the playground at Laura Carr, who was also a new girl. Laura and she had spent the forenoon recess together and had found each other very agreeable. But Laura was rather plain, with freckles and unmanageable sandy hair. She had none of Delilah Green’s beauty and not a spark of her allure.

Delilah understood Diana’s look and a hurt expression crept over her face; her blue eyes seemed ready to brim with tears.

“If you love her you can’t love me. Choose between us,” said Delilah, holding out her hands dramatically. Her voice was more thrilling than ever ... it positively sent a creep along Diana’s spine. She put her hands in Delilah’s and they looked at each other solemnly, feeling dedicated and sealed. At least, Diana felt that way.

“You’ll love me forever, won’t you?” asked Delilah passionately.

“Forever,” vowed Diana with equal passion.

Delilah slipped her arms around Diana’s waist and they walked down to the brook together. The rest of the Fourth class understood that an alliance had been concluded. Laura Carr gave a tiny sigh. She had liked Diana Blythe very much. But she knew she could not compete with Delilah.

“I’m so glad you’re going to let me love you,” Delilah was saying. “I’m so very affectionate ... I just can’t help loving people. Please be kind to me, Diana. I am a child of sorrow. I was put under a curse at birth. Nobody ... nobody loves me.”

Delilah somehow contrived to put ages of loneliness and loveliness into that “nobody.” Diana tightened her clasp.

“You’ll never have to say that after this, Delilah. I will always love you.”

“World without end?”

“World without end,” answered Diana. They kissed each other, as in a rite. Two boys on the fence whooped derisively, but who cared?

“You’ll like me ever so much better than Laura Carr,” said Delilah. “Now that we’re dear friends I can tell you what I wouldn’t have dreamed of telling you if you had picked her. She is deceitful. Dreadfully deceitful. She pretends to be your friend to your face and behind your back she makes fun of you and says the meanest things. A girl I know went to school with her at Mowbray’s Narrows and she told me. You’ve had a narrow escape. I’m so different from that ... I am as true as gold, Diana.”

“I’m sure you are. But what did you mean by saying you were a child of sorrow, Delilah?”

Delilah’s eyes seemed to expand until they were absolutely enormous.

“I have a stepmother,” she whispered.

“A stepmother?”

“When your mother dies and your father marries again she is a stepmother,” said Delilah, with still more thrills in her voice. “Now you know it all, Diana. If you knew the way I am treated! But I never complain. I suffer in silence.”

If Delilah really suffered in silence it might be wondered where Diana got all the information she showered on the Ingleside folks during the next few weeks. She was in the throes of a wild passion of adoration and sympathy for and with sorrow-laden, persecuted Delilah, and she had to talk about her to anyone who would listen.

“I suppose this new infatuation will run its course in due time,” said Anne. “Who is this Delilah, Susan? I don’t want the children to be little snobs ... but after our experience with Jenny Penny ...”

“The Greens are very respectable, Mrs. Dr. dear. They are well-known at Lowbridge. They moved into the old Hunter place this summer. Mrs. Green is the second wife and has two children of her own. I do not know much about her but she seems to have a slow, kind, easy way with her. I can hardly believe she uses Delilah as Di says.”

“Don’t put too much credence in everything Delilah tells you,” Anne warned Diana. “She may be prone to exaggerate a little. Remember Jenny Penny ...”

“Why, Mother, Delilah isn’t a single bit like Jenny Penny,” said Di indignantly. “Not one bit. She is scrupulously truthful. If you only saw her, Mother, you’d know she couldn’t tell a lie. They all pick on her at home because she is so different. And she has such an affectionate nature. She has been persecuted from her birth. Her stepmother hates her. It just breaks my heart to hear of her sufferings. Why, Mother, she doesn’t get enough to eat, truly she doesn’t. She never knows what it is not to be hungry. Mother, they send her to bed without any supper lots of times and she cries herself to sleep. Did you ever cry because you were hungry, Mother?”

“Often,” said Mother.

Diana stared at her mother, all the wind taken out of the sails of her rhetorical question.

“I was often very hungry before I came to Green Gables — at the orphanage ... and before. I’ve never cared to talk of those days.”

“Well, you ought to be able to understand Delilah, then,” said Di, rallying her confused wits. “When she is so hungry she just sits down and imagines things to eat. Just think of her imagining things to eat!”

“You and Nan do enough of that yourselves,” said Anne. But Di would not listen.

“Her sufferings are not only physical but spiritual. Why, she wants to be a missionary, Mother ... to consecrate her life ... and they all laugh at her.”

“Very heartless of them,” agreed Anne. But something in her voice made Di suspicious.

“Mother, why will you be so sceptical?” she demanded reproachfully.

“For the second time,” smiled Mother, “I must remind you of Jenny Penny. You believed in her, too.”

“I was only a child then and it was easy to fool me,” said Diana in her stateliest manner. She felt that Mother was not her usual sympathetic and understanding self in regard to Delilah Green. After that Diana talked only to Susan about her, since Nan merely nodded when Delilah’s name was mentioned. “Just jealousy,” thought Diana sadly.

Not that Susan was so markedly sympathetic either. But Diana just had to talk to somebody about Delilah and Susan’s derision did not hurt like Mother’s. You wouldn’t expect Susan to understand fully. But Mother had been a girl ... Mother had loved Aunt Diana ... Mother had such a tender heart. How was it that the account of poor darling Delilah’s ill-treatment left her so cold?

“Maybe she’s a little jealous, too, because I love Delilah so much,” reflected Diana sagely. “They say mothers do get like that. Kind of possessive.”

“It makes my blood boil to hear of the way her stepmother treats Delilah,” Di told Susan. “She is a martyr, Susan. She never has anything but a little porridge for breakfast and supper ... a very little bit of porridge. And she isn’t allowed sugar on the porridge. Susan, I’ve given up taking sugar on mine because it made me feel guilty.”

“Oh, so that’s why. Well, sugar has gone up a cent, so maybe it is just as well.”

Diana vowed she wouldn’t tell Susan anything more about Delilah, but next evening she was so indignant she couldn’t help herself.

“Susan, Delilah’s mother chased her last night with a red-hot teakettle. Think of it, Susan. Of course Delilah says she doesn’t do that very often ... only when she is greatly exasperated. Mostly she just locks Delilah in a dark garret ... a haunted garret. The ghosts that poor child has seen, Susan! It can’t be healthy for her. The last time they shut her in the garret she saw the weirdest little black creature sitting on the spinning-wheel, humming.”

“What kind of a creature,” asked Susan gravely. She was beginning to enjoy Delilah’s tribulations and Di’s italics, and she and Mrs. Dr. laughed over them in secret.

“I don’t know ... it was just a creature. It almost drove her to suicide. I am really afraid she will be driven to it yet. You know, Susan, she had an uncle who committed suicide twice.”

“Was not once enough?” asked Susan heartlessly.

Di went off in a huff, but next day she had to come back with another tale of woe.

“Delilah has never had a doll, Susan. She did so hope she would get one in her stocking last Christmas. And what do you think she found instead,

Susan? A switch! They whip her almost every day, you know. Think of that poor child being whipped, Susan.”

“I was whipped several times when I was young and I am none the worse of it now,” said Susan, who would have done goodness knows what if anyone had ever tried to whip an Ingleside child.

“When I told Delilah about our Christmas trees, she wept, Susan. She never had a Christmas tree. But she is bound she is going to have one this year. She had found an old umbrella with nothing but the ribs and she is going to set it in a pail and decorate it for a Christmas tree. Isn’t that pathetic, Susan?”

“Are there not plenty of young spruces handy? The back of the old Hunter place has practically gone spruce of late years,” said Susan. “I do wish that girl was called anything but Delilah. Such a name for a Christian child!”

“Why, it is in the Bible, Susan. Delilah is very proud of her Bible name. Today in school, Susan, I told Delilah we were going to have chicken for dinner tomorrow and she said ... what do you think she said, Susan?”

“I am sure I could never guess,” said Susan emphatically. “And you have no business to be talking in school.”

“Oh, we don’t. Delilah says we must never break any of the rules. Her standards are very high. We write each other letters in our scribbles and exchange them. Well, Delilah said, ‘Could you bring me a bone, Diana?’ It brought tears to my eye. I’m going to take her a bone ... with a lot of meat on it. Delilah needs good food. She has to work like a slave ... a slave, Susan. She has to do all the housework ... well, nearly all anyway. And if it isn’t done right she is savagely shaken ... or made to eat in the kitchen with the servants.”

“The Greens have only one little French hired boy.”

“Well, she has to eat with him. And he sits in his sockfeet and eats in his shirtsleeves. Delilah says she doesn’t mind those things now when she has me to love her. She has no one to love her but me, Susan?”

“Awful!” said Susan, with great gravity of countenance.

“Delilah says if she had a million dollars she’d give it all to me, Susan. Of course I wouldn’t take it but it shows how good her heart is.”

“It is as easy to give away a million as a hundred if you have not got either,” was as far as Susan would go.

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Diana was overjoyed. After all, Mother wasn't jealous ... Mother wasn't possessive ... Mother did understand.

Mother and Father were going up to Avonlea for the weekend and Mother had told her she could ask Delilah Green to spend Saturday and Saturday night at Ingleside.

"I saw Delilah at the Sunday School picnic," Anne told Susan. "She is a pretty, ladylike little thing ... though of course she must exaggerate. Perhaps her stepmother is a little hard on her ... and I've heard her father is rather dour and strict. She probably has some grievances and likes to dramatize them by way of getting sympathy."

Susan was a bit dubious.

"But at least anyone living in Laura Green's house will be clean," she reflected. Fine-tooth combs did not enter into this question.

Diana was full of plans for Delilah's entertainment.

"Can we have a roast chicken, Susan ... with lots of stuffing? And pie. You don't know how that poor child longs to taste pie. They never have pies ... her stepmother is too mean."

Susan was very nice about it. Jem and Nan had gone to Avonlea and Walter was down at the House of Dreams with Kenneth Ford. There was nothing to cast a shadow on Delilah's visit and it certainly seemed to go off very well. Delilah arrived Saturday morning very nicely dressed in pink muslin ... at least the stepmother seemed to do her well in the matter of clothes. And she had, as Susan saw at a glance, irreproachable ears and nails.

“This is the day of my life,” she said solemnly to Diana. “My, what a grand house this is! And them’s the china dogs! Oh, they’re wonderful!”

Everything was wonderful. Delilah worked the poor word to death. She helped Diana set the table for dinner and picked the little glass basket full of pink sweetpeas for a centrepiece.

“Oh, you don’t know how I love to do something just because I like to do it,” she told Diana. “Isn’t there anything else I can do, please?”

“You can crack the nuts for the cake I’m going to make this afternoon,” said Susan, who was herself falling under the spell of Delilah’s beauty and voice. After all, perhaps Laura Green was a Tartar. You couldn’t always go by what people seemed like in public. Delilah’s plate was heaped with chicken and stuffing and gravy and she got a second piece of pie without hinting for it.

“I’ve often wondered what it would be like to have all you could eat for once. It is a wonderful sensation,” she told Diana as they left the table.

They had a gay afternoon. Susan had given Diana a box of candy and Diana shared it with Delilah. Delilah admired one of Di’s dolls and Di gave it to her. They cleaned out the pansy bed and dug up a few stray dandelions that had invaded the lawn. They helped Susan polish the silver and assisted her to get supper. Delilah was so efficient and tidy that Susan capitulated completely. Only two things marred the afternoon ... Delilah contrived to spatter her dress with ink and she lost her pearl bead necklace. But Susan took the ink out nicely ... some of the colour coming out too ... with salts of lemon and Delilah said it didn’t matter about the necklace. Nothing mattered except that she was at Ingleside with her dearest Diana.

“Aren’t we going to sleep in the spare-room bed?” asked Diana when bedtime came. “We always put company in the spare-room, Susan.”

“Your Aunt Diana is coming with your father and mother tomorrow night,” said Susan. “The spare-room has been made up for her. You can have the Shrimp on your own bed and you couldn’t have him in the spare-room.”

“My, but your sheets smell nice!” said Delilah as they snuggled down.

“Susan always boils them with orris root,” said Diana.

Delilah sighed.

“I wonder if you know what a lucky girl you are, Diana. If I had a home like you ... but it’s my lot in life. I just have to bear it.”

Susan, on her nightly round of the house before retiring, came in and told them to stop chattering and go to sleep. She gave them two maple sugar buns apiece.

“I can never forget your kindness, Miss Baker,” said Delilah, her voice quivering with emotion. Susan went to her bed reflecting that a nicer-mannered, more appealing little girl she had never seen. Certainly she had misjudged Delilah Green. Though at that moment it occurred to Susan that, for a child who never got enough to eat, the bones of the said Delilah Green were very well covered!

Delilah went home the next afternoon and Mother and Father and Aunt Diana came at night. On Monday the bolt fell from the proverbial blue. Diana, returning to school at the noon hour, caught her own name as she entered the school porch. Inside the schoolroom Delilah Green was the centre of a group of curious girls.

“I was so disappointed in Ingleside. After the way Di has bragged about her house I expected a mansion. Of course it’s big enough, but some of the furniture is shabby. The chairs want to be recovered the worst way.”

“Did you see the china dogs?” asked Bessy Palmer.

“They’re nothing wonderful. They haven’t even got hair. I told Diana right on the spot I was disappointed.”

Diana was standing “rooted to the ground” ... or at least to the porch floor. She did not think about eavesdropping ... she was simply too dumfounded to move.

“I’m sorry for Diana,” went on Delilah. “The way her parents neglect their family is something scandalous. Her mother is an awful gadabout. The way she goes off and leaves them young ones is terrible with only that old Susan to look after them ... and she’s half cracked. She’ll land them all in the poorhouse yet. The waste that goes on in her kitchen you wouldn’t believe. The doctor’s wife is too gay and lazy to cook even when she is home, so Susan has it all her own way. She was going to give us our meals in the kitchen but I just up and said to her, ‘Am I company or am I not?’ Susan said if I gave her any sass she’d shut me up in the back closet. I said, ‘You don’t dare to,’ and she didn’t. ‘You can overcrowd the Ingleside children, Susan Baker, but you can’t overcrowd me,’ I said to her. Oh, I tell you I stood up to Susan. I wouldn’t let her give Rilla soothing-syrup. ‘Don’t you know it’s poison to children?’ I said.

“She took it out on me at meals though. The mean little helpings she gives you! There was chicken but I only got the Pope’s nose and nobody even asked me to take the second piece of pie. But Susan would have let me sleep in the spare-room though and Di wouldn’t hear to it ... just out of pure meanness. She’s so jealous. But still I’m sorry for her. She told me Nan pinches her something scandalous. Her arms are black and blue. We slept in her room and a mangy old tomcat was lying on the foot of the bed all night. It wasn’t haygeenic and I told Di so. And my pearl necklace disappeared. Of course I’m not saying Susan took it. I believe she’s honest ... but it’s funny. And Shirley threw an ink-bottle at me. It ruined my dress but I don’t care. Ma’ll have to get me a new one. Well, anyhow, I dug all the dandelions out of their lawn for them and polished up the silver. You should have seen it. I don’t know when it has been cleaned before. I tell you Susan takes it easy when the doctor’s wife’s away. I let her see I saw through her. ‘Why don’t you ever wash the potato pot, Susan?’ I asked her. You should of seen her face. Look at my new ring, girls. A boy I know at Lowbridge give it to me.”

“Why, I’ve seen Diana Blythe wearing that ring often,” said Peggy MacAllister contemptuously.

“And I don’t believe one single word you’ve been saying about Ingleside, Delilah Green,” said Laura Carr.

Before Delilah could reply Diana, who had recovered her powers of locomotion and speech, dashed into the schoolroom.

“Judas!” she said. Afterwards she thought repentantly that it had not been a very ladylike thing to say. But she had been stung to the heart and when your feelings are all stirred up you can’t pick and choose your words.

“I ain’t Judas!” muttered Delilah, flushing, probably for the first time in her life.

“You are! There isn’t one spark of sincerity in you! Don’t you ever speak to me again as long as you live!”

Diana rushed out of the schoolhouse and ran home. She couldn’t stay in school that afternoon ... she just couldn’t! The Ingleside front door was banged as it had never been banged before.

“Darling, what is the matter?” asked Anne, interrupted in her kitchen conference with Susan by a weeping daughter who flung herself stormily against the maternal shoulder.

The whole story was sobbed out, somewhat disjointedly.

“I’ve been hurt in all my finer feelings, Mother. And I’ll never believe in anyone again!”

“My dear, all your friends won’t be like this. Pauline wasn’t.”

“This is twice,” said Diana bitterly, still smarting under the sense of betrayal and loss. “There isn’t going to be any third time.”

“I’m sorry Di has lost her faith in humanity,” said Anne rather ruefully, when Di had gone upstairs. “This is a real tragedy for her. She has been unlucky in some of her chums. Jenny Penny ... and now Delilah Green. The trouble is Di always falls for the girls who can tell interesting stories. And Delilah’s martyr pose was very alluring.”

“If you ask me, Mrs. Dr. dear, that Green child is a perfect minx,” said Susan, all the more implacably because she had been so neatly fooled

herself by Delilah's eyes and manners. "The idea of her calling our cats mangy! I am not saying that there are not such things as tomcats, Mrs. Dr. dear, but little girls should not talk of them. I am no lover of cats, but the Shrimp is seven years old and should at least be respected. And as for my potato pot ..."

But Susan really couldn't express her feelings about the potato pot.

In her own room Di was reflecting that perhaps it was not too late to be "best friends" with Laura Carr after all. Laura was true, even if she wasn't very exciting. Di sighed. Some colour had gone out of life with her belief in Delilah's piteous lot.

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A bitter east wind was snarling around Ingleside like a shrewish old woman. It was one of those chill, drizzly, late August days that take the heart out of you, one of those days when everything goes wrong ... what in old Avonlea days had been called “a Jonah day.” The new pup Gilbert had brought home for the boys had gnawed the enamel off the dining table leg ... Susan had found that the moths had been having a Roman holiday in the blanket closet ... Nan’s new kitten had ruined the choicest fern ... Jem and Bertie Shakespeare had been making the most abominable racket in the garret all the afternoon with tin pails for drums ... Anne herself had broken a painted glass lampshade. But somehow it had done her good just to hear it smash! Rilla had had earache and Shirley had a mysterious rash on his neck, which worried Anne but at which Gilbert only glanced casually and said in an absentminded voice that he didn’t think it meant anything. Of course it didn’t mean anything to him! Shirley was only his own son! And it didn’t matter to him either that he had invited the Trents to dinner one evening last week and forgotten to tell Anne until they arrived. She and Susan had had an extra busy day and had planned a pick-up supper. And Mrs. Trent with the reputation of being Charlottetown’s smartest hostess! Where were Walter’s stockings with the black tops and the blue toes? “Do you think, Walter, that you could just for once put a thing where it belongs? Nan, I don’t know where the Seven Seas are. For mercy’s sake, stop asking questions! I don’t wonder they poisoned Socrates. They ought to have.”

Walter and Nan stared. Never had they heard their mother speak in such a tone before. Walter’s look annoyed Anne still more.

“Diana, is it necessary to be forever reminding you not to twist your legs around the piano stool? Shirley, if you haven’t got that new magazine all sticky with jam! And perhaps somebody would be kind enough to tell me where the prisms of the hanging lamp have gone!”

Nobody could tell her ... Susan having unhooked them and taken them out to wash them ... and Anne whisked herself upstairs to escape from the grieved eyes of her children. In her own room she paced up and down feverishly. What was the matter with her? Was she turning into one of those peevish creatures who had no patience with anybody? Everything annoyed her these days. A little mannerism of Gilbert's she had never minded before got on her nerves. She was sick-and-tired of never-ending, monotonous duties ... sick-and-tired of catering to her family's whims. Once everything she did for her house and household gave her delight. Now she did not seem to care what she did. She felt all the time like a creature in a nightmare, trying to overtake someone with fettered feet.

The worst of it all was that Gilbert never noticed that there was any change in her. He was busy night and day and seemed to care for nothing but his work. The only thing he had said at dinner that day had been "Pass the mustard, please."

"I can talk to the chairs and table, of course," thought Anne bitterly. "We're just getting to be a sort of habit with each other ... nothing else. He never noticed that I had on a new dress last night. And it's so long since he called me 'Anne-girl' that I've forgotten when. Well, I suppose all marriages come to this in the end. Probably most women go through this. He just takes me for granted. His work is the only thing that means anything to him now. Where is my handkerchief?"

Anne got her handkerchief and sat down in her chair to torture herself luxuriantly. Gilbert didn't love her any more. When he kissed her he kissed her absently ... just "habit." All the glamour was gone. Old jokes they had laughed together over came up in recollection, charged with tragedy now. How could she ever have thought them funny? Monty Turner who kissed his wife systematically once a week ... made a memorandum to remind him. ("Would any wife want such kisses?") Curtis Ames who met his wife in a new bonnet and didn't know her. Mrs. Clancy Dare who had said, "I don't care an awful lot about my husband but I'd miss him if he wasn't round." ("I suppose Gilbert would miss me if I weren't around! Has it come to that with us?") Nat Elliott who told his wife after ten years of marriage, "if you must know I'm just tired of being married." ("And

we've been married fifteen years!") Well, perhaps all men were like that. Probably Miss Cornelia would say that they were. After a time they were hard to hold. ("If my husband has to be 'held' I don't want to hold him.") But there was Mrs. Theodore Clow who had said proudly at a Ladies' Aid, "We've been married twenty years and my husband loves me as much as he did on our wedding day." But perhaps she was deceiving herself or only "keeping face." And she looked every day of her age and more. ("I wonder if I am beginning to look old.")

For the first time her years felt like a weight. She went to the mirror and looked at herself critically. There were some tiny crow's-feet around her eyes but they were only visible in a strong light. Her chin lines were yet unblurred. She had always been pale. Her hair was thick and wavy without a grey thread. But did anybody really like red hair? Her nose was still definitely good. Anne patted it as a friend, recalling certain moments of life when her nose was all that carried her through. But Gilbert just took her nose for granted now. It might be crooked or pug, for all it mattered to him. Likely he had forgotten that she had a nose. Like Mrs. Dare, he might miss it if it wasn't there.

"Well, I must go and see to Rilla and Shirley," thought Anne drearily. "At least, they need me still, poor darlings. What made me so snappish with them? Oh, I suppose they're all saying behind my back, 'How cranky poor Mother is getting!'"

It continued to rain and the wind continued to wail. The fantasia of tin pans in the garret had stopped but the ceaseless chirping of a solitary cricket in the livingroom nearly drove her mad. The noon mail brought her two letters. One was from Marilla ... but Anne sighed as she folded it up. Marilla's handwriting was getting so frail and shaky. The other letter was from Mrs. Barrett Fowler of Charlottetown whom Anne knew very slightly. And Mrs. Barrett Fowler wanted Dr. and Mrs. Blythe to dine with her next Tuesday night at seven o'clock "to meet your old friend, Mrs. Andrew Dawson of Winnipeg, nee Christine Stuart."

Anne dropped the letter. A flood of old memories poured over her ... some of them decidedly unpleasant. Christine Stuart of Redmond ... the girl to whom people had once said Gilbert was engaged ... the girl of whom she

had once been so bitterly jealous ... yes, she admitted it now, twenty years after ... she had been jealous ... she had hated Christine Stuart. She had not thought of Christine for years but she remembered her distinctly. A tall, ivory-white girl with great dark-blue eyes and blue-black masses of hair. And a certain air of distinction. But with a long nose ... yes, definitely a long nose. Handsome ... oh, you couldn't deny that Christine had been very handsome. She remembered hearing many years ago that Christine had "married well" and gone West.

Gilbert came in for a hurried bite of supper ... there was an epidemic of measles in the Upper Glen ... and Anne silently handed him Mrs. Fowler's letter.

"Christine Stuart! Of course we'll go. I'd like to see her for old sake's sake," he said, with the first appearance of admiration he had shown for weeks. "Poor girl, she has had her own troubles. She lost her husband four years ago, you know."

Anne didn't know. And how came Gilbert to know? Why had he never told her? And had he forgotten that next Tuesday was the anniversary of their own wedding day? A day on which they had never accepted any invitation but went off on a little bat of their own. Well, she wouldn't remind him. He could see his Christine if he wanted to. What had a girl at Redmond once said to her darkly, "There was a good deal more between Gilbert and Christine than you ever knew, Anne." She had merely laughed at it at the time ... Claire Hallett was a spiteful thing. But perhaps there had been something in it. Anne suddenly remembered, with a little chill of the spirit, that not long after her marriage she had found a small photograph of Christine in an old pocketbook of Gilbert's. Gilbert had seemed quite indifferent and said he'd wondered where that old snap had got to. But ... was it one of those unimportant things that are significant of things tremendously important? Was it possible ... had Gilbert ever loved Christine? Was she, Anne, only a second choice? The consolation prize?

"Surely I'm not ... jealous," thought Anne, trying to laugh. It was all very ridiculous. What more natural than that Gilbert should like the idea of meeting an old Redmond friend? What more natural than that a busy man, married for fifteen years, should forget times and seasons and days and

months? Anne wrote to Mrs. Fowler, accepting her invitation ... and then put in the three days before Tuesday hoping desperately that somebody in the Upper Glen would start having a baby Tuesday afternoon about half past five.

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The hoped for baby arrived too soon. Gilbert was sent for at nine Monday night. Anne wept herself to sleep and wakened at three. It used to be delicious to wake in the night ... to lie and look out of her window at the night's enfolding loveliness ... to hear Gilbert's regular breathing beside her ... to think of the children across the hall and the beautiful new day that was coming. But now! Anne was still awake when the dawn, clear and green as fluor-spar, was in the eastern sky and Gilbert came home at last. "Twins," he said hollowly as he flung himself into bed and was asleep in a minute. Twins, indeed! The dawn of the fifteenth anniversary of your wedding day and all your husband could say to you was "Twins." He didn't even remember it was an anniversary.

Gilbert apparently didn't remember it any better when he came down at eleven. For the first time he did not mention it; for the first time he had no gift for her. Very well, he shouldn't get his gift either. She had had ready for weeks ... a silver-handled pocket-knife with the date on one side and his initials on the other. Of course he must buy it from her with a cent, lest it cut their love. But since he had forgotten she would forget too, with a vengeance.

Gilbert seemed in a sort of daze all day. He hardly spoke to anyone and moped about the library. Was he lost in glamorous anticipation of seeing his Christine again? Probably he had been hankering after her all these years in the back of his mind. Anne knew quite well this idea was absolutely unreasonable but when was jealousy ever reasonable? It was no use trying to be philosophical. Philosophy had no effect on her mood.

They were going to town on the five-o'clock train. "Can we come in and watch you dreth, Mummy?" asked Rilla.

“Oh, if you want to,” said Anne ... then pulled herself up sharply. Why, her voice was getting querulous. “Come along, darling,” she added repentantly.

Rilla had no greater delight than watching Mummy dress. But even Rilla thought Mummy was not getting much fun out of it that night.

Anne took some thought as to what dress she should wear. Not that it mattered, she told herself bitterly, what she put on. Gilbert never noticed now. The mirror was no longer her friend ... she looked pale and tired ... and unwanted. But she must not look too countrified and passé before Christine. (“I won’t have her sorry for me.”) Was it to be her new apple-green net over a slip with rosebuds in it? Or her cream silk gauze with its Eton jacket of Cluny lace? She tried both of them on and decided on the net. She experimented with several hair-do’s and concluded that the new drooping pompadour was very becoming.

“Oh, Mummy, you look beautiful!” gasped Rilla in round-eyed admiration.

Well, children and fools were supposed to tell the truth. Had not Rebecca Dew once told her that she was “comparatively beautiful”? As for Gilbert, he used to pay her compliments in the past but when had he given utterance to one of late months? Anne could not recall a single one.

Gilbert passed through on his way to his dressing closet and said not a word about her new dress. Anne stood for a moment burning with resentment; then she petulantly tore off the dress and flung it on the bed. She would wear her old black ... a thin affair that was considered extremely “smart” in Four Winds circles but which Gilbert had never liked. What should she wear on her neck? Jem’s beads, though treasured for years, had long since crumbled. She really hadn’t a decent necklace. Well ... she got out the little box containing the pink enamel heart Gilbert had given her at Redmond. She seldom wore it now ... after all, pink didn’t go well with her red hair ... but she would put it on tonight. Would Gilbert notice it? There, she was ready. Why wasn’t Gilbert? What was keeping him? Oh, no doubt he was shaving very carefully! She tapped sharply on the door.

“Gilbert, we’re going to miss the train if you don’t hurry.”

“You sound school-teacherish,” said Gilbert, coming out. “Anything wrong with your metatarsals?”

Oh, he could make a joke of it, could he? She would not let herself think how well he looked in his tails. After all, the modern fashions of men’s clothes were really ridiculous. Entirely lacking in glamour. How gorgeous it must have been in “the spacious days of Great Elizabeth” when men could wear white satin doublets and cloaks of crimson velvet and lace ruffs! Yet they were not effeminate. They were the most wonderful and adventurous men the world had ever seen.

“Well, come along if you’re in such a hurry,” said Gilbert absently. He was always absent now when he spoke to her. She was just a part of the furniture ... yes, just a piece of furniture!

Jem drove them to the station. Susan and Miss Cornelia ... who had come up to ask Susan if they could depend on her as usual for scalloped potatoes for the church supper ... looked after them admiringly.

“Anne is holding her own,” said Miss Cornelia.

“She is,” agreed Susan, “though I have sometimes thought these past few weeks that her liver needed stirring up a bit. But she keeps her looks. And the doctor has got the same nice flat stomach he always had.”

“An ideal couple,” said Miss Cornelia.

The ideal couple said nothing in particular very beautifully all the way to town. Of course Gilbert was too profoundly stirred over the prospect of seeing his old love to talk to his wife! Anne sneezed. She began to be afraid she was taking a cold in the head. How ghastly it would be to sniffle all through dinner under the eyes of Mrs. Andrew Dawson, nee Christine Stuart! A spot on her lip stung ... probably a horrible cold-sore was coming on it. Did Juliet ever sneeze? Fancy Portia with chilblains! Or Argive Helen hiccougging! Or Cleopatra with corns!

When Anne came downstairs in the Barrett Fowler residence she stumbled over the bear's head on the rug in the hall, staggered through the drawing-room door and across the wilderness of overstuffed furniture and gilt fandangoes Mrs. Barrett Fowler called her drawing-room, and fell on the chesterfield, fortunately landing right side up. She looked about in dismay for Christine, then thankfully realized that Christine had not yet put in an appearance. How awful it would have been had she been sitting there amusedly watching Gilbert Blythe's wife make such a drunken entrance! Gilbert hadn't even asked if she were hurt. He was already deep in conversation with Dr. Fowler and some unknown Dr. Murray, who hailed from New Brunswick and was the author of a notable monograph on tropical diseases which was making a stir in medical circles. But Anne noticed that when Christine came downstairs, heralded by a sniff of heliotrope, the monograph was promptly forgotten. Gilbert stood up with a very evident light of interest in his eyes.

Christine stood for an impressive moment in the doorway. No falling over bears' heads for her. Christine, Anne remembered, had of old that habit of pausing in the doorway to show herself off. And no doubt she regarded this as an excellent chance to show Gilbert what he had lost.

She wore a gown of purple velvet with long flowing sleeves, lined with gold, and a fish-tail train lined with gold lace. A gold bandeau encircled the still dark wings of her hair. A long, thin gold chain, starred with diamonds, hung from her neck. Anne instantly felt frumpy, provincial, unfinished, dowdy, and six months behind the fashion. She wished she had not put on that silly enamel heart.

There was no question that Christine was as handsome as ever. A bit too sleek and well-preserved, perhaps ... yes, considerably stouter. Her nose had assuredly not grown any shorter and her chin was definitely middle-aged. Standing in the doorway like that, you saw that her feet were ... substantial. And wasn't her air of distinction getting a little shopworn? But her cheeks were still like smooth ivory and her great dark-blue eyes still looked out brilliantly from under that intriguing parallel crease that had been considered so fascinating at Redmond. Yes, Mrs. Andrew Dawson

was a very handsome woman ... and did not at all convey the impression that her heart had been wholly buried in the said Andrew Dawson's grave.

Christine took possession of the whole room the moment she entered it. Anne felt as if she were not in the picture at all. But she sat up erectly. Christine should not see any middle-aged sag. She would go into battle with all flags flying. Her grey eyes turned exceedingly green and a faint flush coloured her oval cheek. ("Remember you have a nose!") Dr. Murray, who had not noticed her particularly before, thought in some surprise that Blythe had a very uncommon-looking wife. That posturing Mrs. Dawson looked positively commonplace beside her.

"Why, Gilbert Blythe, you're as handsome as ever," Christine was saying archly ... Christine arch! ... "It's so nice to find you haven't changed."

("She talks with the same old drawl. How I always hated that velvet voice of hers!")

"When I look at you," said Gilbert, "time ceases to have any meaning at all. Where did you learn the secret of immortal youth?"

Christine laughed.

("Isn't her laughter a little tinny?")

"You could always pay a pretty compliment, Gilbert. You know" ... with an arch glance around the circle ... "Dr. Blythe was an old flame of mine in those days he is pretending to think were of yesterday. And Anne Shirley! You haven't changed as much as I've been told ... though I don't think I'd have known you if we'd just happened to meet on the street. Your hair is a little darker than it used to be, isn't it? Isn't it divine to meet again like this? I was so afraid your lumbago wouldn't let you come."

"My lumbago!"

"Why, yes; aren't you subject to it? I thought you were ..."

“I must have got things twisted,” said Mrs. Fowler apologetically. “Somebody told me you were down with a very severe attack of lumbago... .”

“That is Mrs. Dr. Parker of Lowbridge. I have never had lumbago in my life,” said Anne in a flat voice.

“How very nice that you haven’t got it,” said Christine, with something faintly insolent in her tone. “It’s such a wretched thing. I have an aunt who is a perfect martyr to it.”

Her air seemed to relegate Anne to the generation of aunts. Anne managed a smile with her lips, not her eyes. If she could only think of something clever to say! She knew that at three o’clock that night she would probably think of a brilliant retort she might have made but that did not help her now.

“They tell me you have seven children,” said Christine, speaking to Anne but looking at Gilbert.

“Only six living,” said Anne, wincing. Even yet she could never think of little white Joyce without pain.

“What a family!” said Christine.

Instantly it seemed a disgraceful and absurd thing to have a large family.

“You, I think, have none,” said Anne.

“I never cared for children, you know.” Christine shrugged her remarkably fine shoulders but her voice was a little hard. “I’m afraid I’m not the maternal type. I really never thought that it was woman’s sole mission to bring children into an already overcrowded world.”

They went in to dinner then. Gilbert took Christine, Dr. Murray took Mrs. Fowler, and Dr. Fowler, a rotund little man, who could not talk to anybody except another doctor, took Anne.

Anne felt that the room was rather stifling. There was a mysterious sickly scent in it. Probably Mrs. Fowler had been burning incense. The menu was good and Anne went through the motions of eating without any appetite and smiled until she felt she was beginning to look like a Cheshire cat. She could not keep her eyes off Christine, who was smiling at Gilbert continuously. Her teeth were beautiful ... almost too beautiful. They looked like a toothpaste advertisement. Christine made very effective play with her hands as she talked. She had lovely hands ... rather large, though.

She was talking to Gilbert about rhythmic speeds for living. What on earth did she mean? Did she know, herself? Then they switched to the Passion Play.

“Have you ever been to Oberammergau?” Christine asked Anne.

When she knew perfectly well Anne hadn’t! Why did the simplest question sound insolent when Christine asked it?

“Of course a family ties you down terribly,” said Christine. “Oh, whom do you think I saw last month when I was in Halifax? That little friend of yours ... the one who married the ugly minister ... what was his name?”

“Jonas Blake,” said Anne. “Philippa Gordon married him. And I never thought he was ugly.”

“Didn’t you? Of course tastes differ. Well, anyway I met them. Poor Philippa!”

Christine’s use of “poor” was very effective.

“Why poor?” asked Anne. “I think she and Jonas have been very happy.”

“Happy! My dear, if you could see the place they live in! A wretched little fishing village where it was an excitement if the pigs broke into the garden! I was told that the Jonas-man had had a good church in Kingsport and had given it up because he thought it his ‘duty’ to go to the fishermen who ‘needed’ him. I have no use for such fanatics. ‘How can you live in

such an isolated, out-of-the-way place as this?’ I asked Philippa. Do you know what she said?”

Christine threw out her beringed hands expressively.

“Perhaps what I would say of Glen St. Mary,” said Anne. “That it was the only place in the world to live in.”

“Fancy you being contented there,” smiled Christine. (“That terrible mouthful of teeth!”) “Do you really never feel that you want a broader life? You used to be quite ambitious, if I remember aright. Didn’t you write some rather clever little things when you were at Redmond? A bit fantastic and whimsical, of course, but still ...”

“I wrote them for the people who still believe in fairyland. There is a surprising lot of them, you know, and they like to get news from that country.”

“And you’ve quite given it up?”

“Not altogether ... but I’m writing living epistles now,” said Anne, thinking of Jem and Co.

Christine stared, not recognizing the quotation. What did Anne Shirley mean? But then, of course, she had been noted at Redmond for her mysterious speeches. She had kept her looks astonishingly but probably she was one of those women who got married and stopped thinking. Poor Gilbert! She had hooked him before he came to Redmond. He had never had the least chance to escape her.

“Does anybody ever eat philopenas now?” asked Dr. Murray, who had just cracked a twin almond. Christine turned to Gilbert.

“Do you remember that philopena we ate once?” she asked.

(“Did a significant look pass between them?”)

“Do you suppose I could forget it?” asked Gilbert.

They plunged into a spate of “do-you-remembers,” while Anne stared at the picture of fish and oranges hanging over the sideboard. She had never thought that Gilbert and Christine had had so many memories in common. “Do you remember our picnic up the Arm? ... Do you remember the night we went to the negro church? ... Do you remember the night we went to the masquerade? ... you were a Spanish lady in a black velvet dress with a lace mantilla and fan.”

Gilbert apparently remembered them all in detail. But he had forgotten his wedding anniversary!

When they went back to the drawing-room Christine glanced out of the window at an eastern sky that was showing pale silver behind the dark poplars.

“Gilbert, let us take a stroll in the garden. I want to learn again the meaning of moonrise in September.”

(“Does moonrise mean anything in September that it doesn’t mean in any other month? And what does she mean by ‘again.’ Did she ever learn it before ... with him?”)

Out they went. Anne felt that she had been very neatly and sweetly brushed aside. She sat down on a chair that commanded a view of the garden ... though she would not admit even to herself that she selected it for that reason. She could see Christine and Gilbert walking down the path. What were they saying to each other? Christine seemed to be doing most of the talking. Perhaps Gilbert was too dumb with emotion to speak. Was he smiling out there in the moonrise over memories in which she had no share? She recalled nights she and Gilbert had walked in moonlit gardens of Avonlea. Had he forgotten?

Christine was looking up at the sky. Of course she knew she was showing off that fine, full white throat of hers when she lifted her face like that. Did ever a moon take so long in rising?

Other guests were dropping in when they finally came back. There was talk, laughter, music. Christine sang ... very well. She had always been

“musical.” She sang at Gilbert ... “the dear dead days beyond recall.” Gilbert leaned back in an easy-chair and was uncommonly silent. Was he looking back wistfully to those dear dead days? Was he picturing what his life would have been if he had married Christine? (“I’ve always known what Gilbert was thinking of before. My head is beginning to ache. If we don’t get away soon I’ll be throwing up my head and howling. Thank heaven our train leaves early.”)

When Anne came downstairs Christine was standing in the porch with Gilbert. She reached up and picked a leaf from his shoulder; the gesture was like a caress.

“Are you really well, Gilbert? You look frightfully tired. I know you’re overdoing it.”

A wave of horror swept over Annie. Gilbert did look tired ... frightfully tired ... and she hadn’t seen it until Christine pointed it out! Never would she forget the humiliation of that moment. (“I’ve been taking Gilbert too much for granted and blaming him for doing the same thing.”)

Christine turned to her.

“It’s been so nice to meet you again, Anne. Quite like old times.”

“Quite,” said Anne.

“But I’ve just been telling Gilbert he looked a little tired. You ought to take better care of him, Anne. There was a time, you know, when I really had quite a fancy for this husband of yours. I believe he really was the nicest beau I ever had. But you must forgive me since I didn’t take him from you.”

Anne froze up again.

“Perhaps he is pitying himself that you didn’t,” she said, with a certain “queenishness” not unknown to Christine in Redmond days, as she stepped into Dr. Fowler’s carriage for the drive to the station.

“You dear funny thing!” said Christine, with a shrug of her beautiful shoulders. She was looking after them as if something amused her hugely.

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“Had a nice evening?” asked Gilbert, more absently than ever as he helped her on the train.

“Oh, lovely,” said Anne ... who felt that she had, in Jane Welsh Carlyle’s splendid phrase, “spent the evening under a harrow.”

“What made you do your hair that way?” said Gilbert still absently.

“It’s the new fashion.”

“Well, it doesn’t suit you. It may be all right for some hair but not for yours.”

“Oh, it is too bad my hair is red,” said Anne icily.

Gilbert thought he was wise in dropping a dangerous subject. Anne, he reflected, had always been a bit sensitive about her hair. He was too tired to talk, anyway. He leaned his head back on the car seat and shut his eyes. For the first time Anne noticed little glints of grey in the hair above his ears. But she hardened her heart.

They walked silently home from the Glen station by the short-cut to Ingleside. The air was filled with the breath of spruce and spice fern. The moon was shining over dew-wet fields. They passed an old deserted house with sad and broken windows that had once danced with light. “Just like my life,” thought Anne. Everything seemed to have for her some dreary meaning now. The dim white moth that fluttered past them on the lawn was, she thought sadly, like a ghost of faded love. Then she caught her foot in a croquet hoop and nearly fell headlong into a clump of phlox. What on earth did the children mean by leaving it there? She would tell them what she thought about it tomorrow!

Gilbert only said, “O-o-o-ps!” and steadied her with a hand. Would he have been so casual about it if it had been Christine who had tripped while they were puzzling out the meaning of moonrises?

Gilbert rushed off to his office the moment they were inside the house and Anne went silently up to their room, where the moonlight was lying on the floor, still and silver and cold. She went to the open window and looked out. It was evidently the Carter Flaggs’ dog’s night to howl and he was putting his heart into it. The lombardy leaves glistened like silver in the moonlight. The house about her seemed whispering tonight ... whispering sinisterly, as if it were no longer her friend.

Anne felt sick and cold and empty. The gold of life had turned to withered leaves. Nothing had any meaning any longer. Everything seemed remote and unreal.

Far down the tide was keeping its world-old tryst with the shore. She could ... now that Norman Douglas had cut down his spruce bush ... see her little House of Dreams. How happy they had been there ... when it was enough just to be together in their own home, with their visions, their caresses, their silences! All the colour of the morning in their lives ... Gilbert looking at her with that smile in his eyes he kept for her alone ... finding every day a new way of saying, “I love you” ... sharing laughter as they shared sorrow.

And now ... Gilbert had grown tired of her. Men had always been like that ... always would be. She had thought Gilbert was an exception but now she knew the truth. And how was she going to adjust her life to it?

“There are the children, of course,” she thought dully. “I must go on living for them. And nobody must know ... nobody. I will not be pitied.”

What was that? Somebody was coming up the stairs, three steps at a time, as Gilbert used to do long ago in the House of Dreams ... as he had not done for a long time now. It couldn’t be Gilbert ... it was!

He burst into the room ... he flung a little packet on the table ... he caught Anne by the waist and waltzed her round and round the room like a crazy

schoolboy, coming to rest at last breathlessly in a silver pool of moonlight.

“I was right, Anne ... thank God, I was right! Mrs. Garrow is going to be all right ... the specialist has said so.”

“Mrs. Garrow? Gilbert, have you gone crazy?”

“Didn’t I tell you? Surely I told you ... well, I suppose it’s been such a sore subject I just couldn’t talk of it. I’ve been worried to death about it for the past two weeks ... couldn’t think of anything else, waking or sleeping. Mrs. Garrow lives in Lowbridge and was Parker’s patient. He asked me in for a consultation ... I diagnosed her case differently from him ... we almost fought ... I was sure I was right ... I insisted there was a chance ... we sent her to Montreal ... Parker said she’d never come back alive ... her husband was ready to shoot me on sight. When she was gone I went to bits ... perhaps I was mistaken ... perhaps I’d tortured her needlessly. I found the letter in my office when I went in ... I was right ... they’ve operated ... she has an excellent chance of living. Anne girl, I could jump over the moon! I’ve shed twenty years.”

Anne had either to laugh or cry ... so she began to laugh. It was lovely to be able to laugh again ... lovely to feel like laughing. Everything was suddenly all right.

“I suppose that is why you forgot this was our anniversary?” she taunted him.

Gilbert released her long enough to pounce on the little packet he had dropped on the table.

“I didn’t forget it. Two weeks ago I sent to Toronto for this. And it didn’t come till tonight. I felt so small this morning when I hadn’t a thing to give you that I didn’t mention the day ... thought you’d forgotten it, too ... hoped you had. When I went into the office there was my present along with Parker’s letter. See how you like it.”

It was a little diamond pendant. Even in the moonlight it sparkled like a living thing.

“Gilbert ... and I ...”

“Try it on. I wish it had come this morning ... then you’d have had something to wear to the dinner besides that old enamel heart. Though it did look rather nice snuggling in that pretty white hollow in your throat, darling. Why didn’t you leave on that green dress, Anne? I liked it ... it reminded me of that dress with the rosebuds on it you used to wear at Redmond.”

(“So he had noticed the dress! So he still remembered the old Redmond one he had admired so much!”)

Anne felt like a released bird ... she was flying again. Gilbert’s arms were around her ... his eyes were looking into hers in the moonlight.

“You do love me, Gilbert? I’m not just a habit with you? You haven’t said you loved me for so long.”

“My dear, dear love! I didn’t think you needed words to know that. I couldn’t live without you. Always you give me strength. There’s a verse somewhere in the Bible that is meant for you ... ‘She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.’”

Life which had seemed so grey and foolish a few moments before was golden and rose and splendidly rainbowed again. The diamond pendant slipped to the floor, unheeded for the moment. It was beautiful ... but there were so many things lovelier ... confidence and peace and delightful work ... laughter and kindness ... that old safe feeling of a sure love.

“Oh, if we could keep this moment for ever, Gilbert!”

“We’re going to have some moments. It’s time we had a second honeymoon. Anne, there’s going to be a big medical congress in London next February. We’re going to it ... and after it we’ll see a bit of the Old World. There’s a holiday coming to us. We’ll be nothing but lovers again ... it will be just like being married over again. You haven’t been like yourself for a long time. (“So he had noticed.”) You’re tired and overworked ... you need a change. (“You too, dearest. I’ve been so

horribly blind.”) I’m not going to have it cast up to me that doctors’ wives never get a pill. We’ll come back rested and fresh, with our sense of humour completely restored. Well, try your pendant on and let’s get to bed. I’m half dead for sleep ... haven’t had a decent night’s sleep for weeks, what with twins and worry over Mrs. Garrow.”

“What on earth were you and Christine talking about so long in the garden tonight?” asked Anne, peacocking before the mirror with her diamonds.

Gilbert yawned.

“Oh, I don’t know. Christine just gabbled on. But here is one fact she presented me with. A flea can jump two hundred times its own length. Did you know that, Anne?”

(“They were talking of fleas when I was writhing with jealousy. What an idiot I’ve been!”)

“How on earth did you come to be talking of fleas?”

“I can’t remember ... perhaps it was Dobermann pinschers suggested it.”

“Dobermann pinschers! What are Dobermann pinschers?”

“A new kind of dog. Christine seems to be a dog connoisseur. I was so obsessed with Mrs. Garrow that I didn’t pay much attention to what she was saying. Now and then I caught a word about complexes and repressions ... that new psychology that’s coming up ... and art ... and gout and politics ... and frogs.”

“Frogs!”

“Some experiments a Winnipeg research man is making. Christine was never very entertaining, but she’s a worse bore than ever. And malicious! She never used to be malicious.”

“What did she say that was so malicious?” asked Anne innocently.

“Didn’t you notice? Oh, I suppose you wouldn’t catch on ... you’re so free from that sort of thing yourself. Well, it doesn’t matter. That laugh of hers got on my nerves a bit. And she’s got fat. Thank goodness, you haven’t got fat, Anne-girl.”

“Oh, I don’t think she is so very fat,” said Anne charitably. “And she certainly is a very handsome woman.”

“So-so. But her face has got hard ... she’s the same age as you but she looks ten years older.”

“And you talking to her about immortal youth!”

Gilbert grinned guiltily.

“One has to say something civil. Civilization can’t exist without a little hypocrisy. Oh, well, Christine isn’t a bad old scout, even if she doesn’t belong to the race of Joseph. It’s not her fault that the pinch of salt was left out of her. What’s this?”

“My anniversary remembrance for you. And I want a cent for it ... I’m not taking any risks. Such tortures as I’ve endured this evening! I was eaten up with jealousy of Christine.”

Gilbert looked genuinely astonished. It had never occurred to him that Anne could be jealous of anybody.

“Why, Anne-girl, I never thought you had it in you.”

“Oh, but I have. Why, years ago I was madly jealous of your correspondence with Ruby Gillis.”

“Did I ever correspond with Ruby Gillis? I’d forgotten. Poor Ruby! But what about Roy Gardner? The pot mustn’t call the kettle black.”

“Roy Gardner? Philippa wrote me not long ago that she’d seen him and he’d got positively corpulent. Gilbert, Dr. Murray may be a very eminent man in his profession but he looks just like a lath and Dr. Fowler looked like a doughnut. You looked so handsome ... and finished ... beside them.”

“Oh, thanks ... thanks. That’s something like a wife should say. By way of returning the compliment I thought you looked unusually well tonight, Anne, in spite of that dress. You had a little colour and your eyes were gorgeous. Ah-h-h, that’s good! No place like bed when you’re all in. There’s another verse in the Bible ... queer how those old verses you learn in Sunday School come back to you through life! ... ‘I will lay me down in peace and sleep.’ In peace ... and sleep ... goo’night.”

Gilbert was asleep almost before he finished the word. Dearest tired Gilbert! Babies might come and babies might go but none should disturb his rest that night. The telephone might ring its head off.

Anne was not sleepy. She was too happy to sleep just yet. She moved softly about the room, putting things away, braiding her hair, looking like a beloved woman. Finally she slipped on a negligee and went across the hall to the boys’ room. Walter and Jem in their bed and Shirley in his cot were all sound asleep. The Shrimp, who had outlived generations of pert kittens and become a family habit, was curled up at Shirley’s feet. Jem had fallen asleep while reading “The Life Book of Captain Jim” ... it was open on the spread. Why, how long Jem looked lying under the bedclothes! He would soon be grown up. What a sturdy reliable little chap he was! Walter was smiling in his sleep as someone who knew a charming secret. The moon was shining on his pillow through the bars of the leaded window ... casting the shadow of a clearly defined cross on the wall above his head. In long after years Annie was to remember that and wonder if it were an omen of Courcelette ... of a cross-marked grave “somewhere in France.” But tonight it was only a shadow ... nothing more. The rash had quite gone from Shirley’s neck. Gilbert had been right. He was always right.

Nan and Diana and Rilla were in the next room ... Diana with darling little damp red curls all over her head and one little sunburned hand under her cheek, and Nan with long fans of lashes brushing hers. The eyes behind those blue-veined lids were hazel like her father’s. And Rilla was sleeping on her stomach. Anne turned her right side up but her buttoned eyes never opened.

They were all growing so fast. In just a few short years they would be all young men and women ... youth tiptoe ... expectant ... a-star with its

sweet wild dreams ... little ships sailing out of safe harbour to unknown ports. The boys would go away to their life work and the girls ... ah, the mist-veiled forms of beautiful brides might be seen coming down the old stairs at Ingleside. But they would be still hers for a few years yet ... hers to love and guide ... to sing the songs that so many mothers had sung. Hers ... and Gilbert's.

She went out and down the hall to the oriel window. All her suspicions and jealousies and resentments had gone where old moons go. She felt confident and gay and blithe.

"Blythe! I feel Blythe," she said, laughing at the foolish little pun. "I feel exactly as I did that morning Pacifique told me Gilbert had 'got de turn.'"

Below her was the mystery and loveliness of a garden at night. The faraway hills, dusted with moonlight, were a poem. Before many months she would be seeing moonlight on the far dim hills of Scotland ... over Melrose ... over ruined Kenilworth ... over the church by the Avon where Shakespeare slept ... perhaps even over the Colosseum ... over the Acropolis ... over sorrowful rivers flowing by dead empires.

The night was cool; soon the sharper, cooler nights of autumn would come; then the deep snow ... the deep white snow ... the deep cold snow of winter ... nights wild with wind and storm. But who would care? There would be the magic of firelight in gracious rooms ... hadn't Gilbert spoken not long ago of apple logs he was getting to burn in the fireplace? They would glorify the grey days that were bound to come. What would matter drifted snow and biting wind when love burned clear and bright, with spring beyond? And all the little sweetnesses of life sprinkling the road.

She turned away from the window. In her white gown, with her hair in its two long braids, she looked like the Anne of Green Gables days ... of Redmond days ... of the House of Dreams days. That inward glow was still shining through her. Through the open doorway came the soft sound of children breathing. Gilbert, who seldom snored, was indubitably snoring now. Anne grinned. She thought of something Christine had said. Poor childless Christine, shooting her little arrows of mockery.

“What a family!” Anne repeated exultantly.

THE END

RAINBOW VALL EY (1919)

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CHAPTER I.

HOME AGAIN

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It was a clear, apple-green evening in May, and Four Winds Harbour was mirroring back the clouds of the golden west between its softly dark shores. The sea moaned eerily on the sandbar, sorrowful even in spring, but a sly, jovial wind came piping down the red harbour road along which Miss Cornelia's comfortable, matronly figure was making its way towards the village of Glen St. Mary. Miss Cornelia was rightfully Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and had been Mrs. Marshall Elliott for thirteen years, but even yet more people referred to her as Miss Cornelia than as Mrs. Elliott. The old name was dear to her old friends, only one of them contemptuously dropped it. Susan Baker, the gray and grim and faithful handmaiden of the Blythe family at Ingleside, never lost an opportunity of calling her "Mrs. Marshall Elliott," with the most killing and pointed emphasis, as if to say "You wanted to be Mrs. and Mrs. you shall be with a vengeance as far as I am concerned."

Miss Cornelia was going up to Ingleside to see Dr. and Mrs. Blythe, who were just home from Europe. They had been away for three months, having left in February to attend a famous medical congress in London; and certain things, which Miss Cornelia was anxious to discuss, had taken place in the Glen during their absence. For one thing, there was a new family in the manse. And such a family! Miss Cornelia shook her head over them several times as she walked briskly along.

Susan Baker and the Anne Shirley of other days saw her coming, as they sat on the big veranda at Ingleside, enjoying the charm of the cat's light, the sweetness of sleepy robins whistling among the twilit maples, and the dance of a gusty group of daffodils blowing against the old, mellow, red brick wall of the lawn.

Anne was sitting on the steps, her hands clasped over her knee, looking, in the kind dusk, as girlish as a mother of many has any right to be; and the beautiful gray-green eyes, gazing down the harbour road, were as full of unquenchable sparkle and dream as ever. Behind her, in the hammock, Rilla Blythe was curled up, a fat, roly-poly little creature of six years, the youngest of the Ingleside children. She had curly red hair and hazel eyes that were now buttoned up after the funny, wrinkled fashion in which Rilla always went to sleep.

Shirley, “the little brown boy,” as he was known in the family “Who’s Who,” was asleep in Susan’s arms. He was brown-haired, brown-eyed and brown-skinned, with very rosy cheeks, and he was Susan’s especial love. After his birth Anne had been very ill for a long time, and Susan “mothered” the baby with a passionate tenderness which none of the other children, dear as they were to her, had ever called out. Dr. Blythe had said that but for her he would never have lived.

“I gave him life just as much as you did, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan was wont to say. “He is just as much my baby as he is yours.” And, indeed, it was always to Susan that Shirley ran, to be kissed for bumps, and rocked to sleep, and protected from well-deserved spankings. Susan had conscientiously spanked all the other Blythe children when she thought they needed it for their souls’ good, but she would not spank Shirley nor allow his mother to do it. Once, Dr. Blythe had spanked him and Susan had been stormily indignant.

“That man would spank an angel, Mrs. Dr. dear, that he would,” she had declared bitterly; and she would not make the poor doctor a pie for weeks.

She had taken Shirley with her to her brother’s home during his parents’ absence, while all the other children had gone to Avonlea, and she had three blessed months of him all to herself. Nevertheless, Susan was very glad to find herself back at Ingleside, with all her darlings around her again. Ingleside was her world and in it she reigned supreme. Even Anne seldom questioned her decisions, much to the disgust of Mrs. Rachel Lynde of Green Gables, who gloomily told Anne, whenever she visited Four Winds, that she was letting Susan get to be entirely too much of a boss and would live to rue it.

“Here is Cornelia Bryant coming up the harbour road, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “She will be coming up to unload three months’ gossip on us.”

“I hope so,” said Anne, hugging her knees. “I’m starving for Glen St. Mary gossip, Susan. I hope Miss Cornelia can tell me everything that has happened while we’ve been away — EVERYTHING — who has got born, or married, or drunk; who has died, or gone away, or come, or fought, or lost a cow, or found a beau. It’s so delightful to be home again with all the dear Glen folks, and I want to know all about them. Why, I remember wondering, as I walked through Westminster Abbey which of her two especial beaux Millicent Drew would finally marry. Do you know, Susan, I have a dreadful suspicion that I love gossip.”

“Well, of course, Mrs. Dr. dear,” admitted Susan, “every proper woman likes to hear the news. I am rather interested in Millicent Drew’s case myself. I never had a beau, much less two, and I do not mind now, for being an old maid does not hurt when you get used to it. Millicent’s hair always looks to me as if she had swept it up with a broom. But the men do not seem to mind that.”

“They see only her pretty, piquant, mocking, little face, Susan.”

“That may very well be, Mrs. Dr. dear. The Good Book says that favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but I should not have minded finding that out for myself, if it had been so ordained. I have no doubt we will all be beautiful when we are angels, but what good will it do us then? Speaking of gossip, however, they do say that poor Mrs. Harrison Miller over harbour tried to hang herself last week.”

“Oh, Susan!”

“Calm yourself, Mrs. Dr. dear. She did not succeed. But I really do not blame her for trying, for her husband is a terrible man. But she was very foolish to think of hanging herself and leaving the way clear for him to marry some other woman. If I had been in her shoes, Mrs. Dr. dear, I would have gone to work to worry him so that he would try to hang himself instead of me. Not that I hold with people hanging themselves under any circumstances, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“What is the matter with Harrison Miller, anyway?” said Anne impatiently. “He is always driving some one to extremes.”

“Well, some people call it religion and some call it cussedness, begging your pardon, Mrs. Dr. dear, for using such a word. It seems they cannot make out which it is in Harrison’s case. There are days when he growls at everybody because he thinks he is foreordained to eternal punishment. And then there are days when he says he does not care and goes and gets drunk. My own opinion is that he is not sound in his intellect, for none of that branch of the Millers were. His grandfather went out of his mind. He thought he was surrounded by big black spiders. They crawled over him and floated in the air about him. I hope I shall never go insane, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I do not think I will, because it is not a habit of the Bakers. But, if an all-wise Providence should decree it, I hope it will not take the form of big black spiders, for I loathe the animals. As for Mrs. Miller, I do not know whether she really deserves pity or not. There are some who say she just married Harrison to spite Richard Taylor, which seems to me a very peculiar reason for getting married. But then, of course, I am no judge of things matrimonial, Mrs. Dr. dear. And there is Cornelia Bryant at the gate, so I will put this blessed brown baby on his bed and get my knitting.”

CHAPTER II.

SHEER GOSSIP

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“Where are the other children?” asked Miss Cornelia, when the first greetings — cordial on her side, rapturous on Anne’s, and dignified on Susan’s — were over.

“Shirley is in bed and Jem and Walter and the twins are down in their beloved Rainbow Valley,” said Anne. “They just came home this afternoon, you know, and they could hardly wait until supper was over before rushing down to the valley. They love it above every spot on earth. Even the maple grove doesn’t rival it in their affections.”

“I am afraid they love it too well,” said Susan gloomily. “Little Jem said once he would rather go to Rainbow Valley than to heaven when he died, and that was not a proper remark.”

“I suppose they had a great time in Avonlea?” said Miss Cornelia.

“Enormous. Marilla does spoil them terribly. Jem, in particular, can do no wrong in her eyes.”

“Miss Cuthbert must be an old lady now,” said Miss Cornelia, getting out her knitting, so that she could hold her own with Susan. Miss Cornelia held that the woman whose hands were employed always had the advantage over the woman whose hands were not.

“Marilla is eighty-five,” said Anne with a sigh. “Her hair is snow-white. But, strange to say, her eyesight is better than it was when she was sixty.”

“Well, dearie, I’m real glad you’re all back. I’ve been dreadful lonesome. But we haven’t been dull in the Glen, believe ME. There hasn’t been such

an exciting spring in my time, as far as church matters go. We've got settled with a minister at last, Anne dearie."

"The Reverend John Knox Meredith, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan, resolved not to let Miss Cornelia tell all the news.

"Is he nice?" asked Anne interestedly.

Miss Cornelia sighed and Susan groaned.

"Yes, he's nice enough if that were all," said the former. "He is VERY nice — and very learned — and very spiritual. But, oh Anne dearie, he has no common sense!

"How was it you called him, then?"

"Well, there's no doubt he is by far the best preacher we ever had in Glen St. Mary church," said Miss Cornelia, veering a tack or two. "I suppose it is because he is so moony and absentminded that he never got a town call. His trial sermon was simply wonderful, believe ME. Every one went mad about it — and his looks."

"He is VERY comely, Mrs. Dr. dear, and when all is said and done, I DO like to see a well-looking man in the pulpit," broke in Susan, thinking it was time she asserted herself again.

"Besides," said Miss Cornelia, "we were anxious to get settled. And Mr. Meredith was the first candidate we were all agreed on. Somebody had some objection to all the others. There was some talk of calling Mr. Folsom. He was a good preacher, too, but somehow people didn't care for his appearance. He was too dark and sleek."

"He looked exactly like a great black tomcat, that he did, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan. "I never could abide such a man in the pulpit every Sunday."

"Then Mr. Rogers came and he was like a chip in porridge — neither harm nor good," resumed Miss Cornelia. "But if he had preached like Peter and Paul it would have profited him nothing, for that was the day old Caleb

Ramsay's sheep strayed into church and gave a loud 'ba-a-a' just as he announced his text. Everybody laughed, and poor Rogers had no chance after that. Some thought we ought to call Mr. Stewart, because he was so well educated. He could read the New Testament in five languages."

"But I do not think he was any surer than other men of getting to heaven because of that," interjected Susan.

"Most of us didn't like his delivery," said Miss Cornelia, ignoring Susan. "He talked in grunts, so to speak. And Mr. Arnett couldn't preach AT ALL. And he picked about the worst candidating text there is in the Bible —'Curse ye Meroz.'"

"Whenever he got stuck for an idea, he would bang the Bible and shout very bitterly, 'Curse ye Meroz.' Poor Meroz got thoroughly cursed that day, whoever he was, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan.

"The minister who is candidating can't be too careful what text he chooses," said Miss Cornelia solemnly. "I believe Mr. Pierson would have got the call if he had picked a different text. But when he announced 'I will lift my eyes to the hills' HE was done for. Every one grinned, for every one knew that those two Hill girls from the Harbour Head have been setting their caps for every single minister who came to the Glen for the last fifteen years. And Mr. Newman had too large a family."

"He stayed with my brotherin-law, James Clow," said Susan. "'How many children have you got?' I asked him. 'Nine boys and a sister for each of them,' he said. 'Eighteen!' said I. 'Dear me, what a family!' And then he laughed and laughed. But I do not know why, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I am certain that eighteen children would be too many for any manse."

"He had only ten children, Susan," explained Miss Cornelia, with contemptuous patience. "And ten good children would not be much worse for the manse and congregation than the four who are there now. Though I wouldn't say, Anne dearie, that they are so bad, either. I like them — everybody likes them. It's impossible to help liking them. They would be real nice little souls if there was anyone to look after their manners and

teach them what is right and proper. For instance, at school the teacher says they are model children. But at home they simply run wild.”

“What about Mrs. Meredith?” asked Anne.

“There’s NO Mrs. Meredith. That is just the trouble. Mr. Meredith is a widower. His wife died four years ago. If we had known that I don’t suppose we would have called him, for a widower is even worse in a congregation than a single man. But he was heard to speak of his children and we all supposed there was a mother, too. And when they came there was nobody but old Aunt Martha, as they call her. She’s a cousin of Mr. Meredith’s mother, I believe, and he took her in to save her from the poorhouse. She is seventy-five years old, half blind, and very deaf and very cranky.”

“And a very poor cook, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“The worst possible manager for a manse,” said Miss Cornelia bitterly. “Mr. Meredith won’t get any other housekeeper because he says it would hurt Aunt Martha’s feelings. Anne dearie, believe me, the state of that manse is something terrible. Everything is thick with dust and nothing is ever in its place. And we had painted and papered it all so nice before they came.”

“There are four children, you say?” asked Anne, beginning to mother them already in her heart.

“Yes. They run up just like the steps of a stair. Gerald’s the oldest. He’s twelve and they call him Jerry. He’s a clever boy. Faith is eleven. She is a regular tomboy but pretty as a picture, I must say.”

“She looks like an angel but she is a holy terror for mischief, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan solemnly. “I was at the manse one night last week and Mrs. James Millison was there, too. She had brought them up a dozen eggs and a little pail of milk — a VERY little pail, Mrs. Dr. dear. Faith took them and whisked down the cellar with them. Near the bottom of the stairs she caught her toe and fell the rest of the way, milk and eggs and all. You can imagine the result, Mrs. Dr. dear. But that child came up laughing. ‘I

don't know whether I'm myself or a custard pie,' she said. And Mrs. James Millison was very angry. She said she would never take another thing to the manse if it was to be wasted and destroyed in that fashion."

"Maria Millison never hurt herself taking things to the manse," sniffed Miss Cornelia. "She just took them that night as an excuse for curiosity. But poor Faith is always getting into scrapes. She is so heedless and impulsive."

"Just like me. I'm going to like your Faith," said Anne decidedly.

"She is full of spunk — and I do like spunk, Mrs. Dr. dear," admitted Susan.

"There's something taking about her," conceded Miss Cornelia. "You never see her but she's laughing, and somehow it always makes you want to laugh too. She can't even keep a straight face in church. Una is ten — she's a sweet little thing — not pretty, but sweet. And Thomas Carlyle is nine. They call him Carl, and he has a regular mania for collecting toads and bugs and frogs and bringing them into the house."

"I suppose he was responsible for the dead rat that was lying on a chair in the parlour the afternoon Mrs. Grant called. It gave her a turn," said Susan, "and I do not wonder, for manse parlours are no places for dead rats. To be sure it may have been the cat who left it, there. HE is as full of the old Nick as he can be stuffed, Mrs. Dr. dear. A manse cat should at least LOOK respectable, in my opinion, whatever he really is. But I never saw such a rakish-looking beast. And he walks along the ridgepole of the manse almost every evening at sunset, Mrs. Dr. dear, and waves his tail, and that is not becoming."

"The worst of it is, they are NEVER decently dressed," sighed Miss Cornelia. "And since the snow went they go to school barefooted. Now, you know Anne dearie, that isn't the right thing for manse children — especially when the Methodist minister's little girl always wears such nice buttoned boots. And I DO wish they wouldn't play in the old Methodist graveyard."

“It’s very tempting, when it’s right beside the manse,” said Anne. “I’ve always thought graveyards must be delightful places to play in.”

“Oh, no, you did not, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said loyal Susan, determined to protect Anne from herself. “You have too much good sense and decorum.”

“Why did they ever build that manse beside the graveyard in the first place?” asked Anne. “Their lawn is so small there is no place for them to play except in the graveyard.”

“It WAS a mistake,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “But they got the lot cheap. And no other manse children ever thought of playing there. Mr. Meredith shouldn’t allow it. But he has always got his nose buried in a book, when he is home. He reads and reads, or walks about in his study in a daydream. So far he hasn’t forgotten to be in church on Sundays, but twice he has forgotten about the prayer-meeting and one of the elders had to go over to the manse and remind him. And he forgot about Fanny Cooper’s wedding. They rang him up on the ‘phone and then he rushed right over, just as he was, carpet slippers and all. One wouldn’t mind if the Methodists didn’t laugh so about it. But there’s one comfort — they can’t criticize his sermons. He wakes up when he’s in the pulpit, believe ME. And the Methodist minister can’t preach at all — so they tell me. I have never heard him, thank goodness.”

Miss Cornelia’s scorn of men had abated somewhat since her marriage, but her scorn of Methodists remained untinged of charity. Susan smiled slyly.

“They do say, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that the Methodists and Presbyterians are talking of uniting,” she said.

“Well, all I hope is that I’ll be under the sod if that ever comes to pass,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “I shall never have truck or trade with Methodists, and Mr. Meredith will find that he’d better steer clear of them, too. He is entirely too sociable with them, believe ME. Why, he went to the Jacob Drews’ silver-wedding supper and got into a nice scrape as a result.”

“What was it?”

“Mrs. Drew asked him to carve the roast goose — for Jacob Drew never did or could carve. Well, Mr. Meredith tackled it, and in the process he knocked it clean off the platter into Mrs. Reese’s lap, who was sitting next him. And he just said dreamily. ‘Mrs. Reese, will you kindly return me that goose?’ Mrs. Reese ‘returned’ it, as meek as Moses, but she must have been furious, for she had on her new silk dress. The worst of it is, she was a Methodist.”

“But I think that is better than if she was a Presbyterian,” interjected Susan. “If she had been a Presbyterian she would mostly likely have left the church and we cannot afford to lose our members. And Mrs. Reese is not liked in her own church, because she gives herself such great airs, so that the Methodists would be rather pleased that Mr. Meredith spoiled her dress.”

“The point is, he made himself ridiculous, and I, for one, do not like to see my minister made ridiculous in the eyes of the Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia stiffly. “If he had had a wife it would not have happened.”

“I do not see if he had a dozen wives how they could have prevented Mrs. Drew from using up her tough old gander for the wedding-feast,” said Susan stubbornly.

“They say that was her husband’s doing,” said Miss Cornelia.
“Jacob Drew is a conceited, stingy, domineering creature.”

“And they do say he and his wife detest each other — which does not seem to me the proper way for married folks to get along. But then, of course, I have had no experience along that line,” said Susan, tossing her head.
“And I am not one to blame everything on the men. Mrs. Drew is mean enough herself. They say that the only thing she was ever known to give away was a crock of butter made out of cream a rat had fell into. She contributed it to a church social. Nobody found out about the rat until afterwards.”

“Fortunately, all the people the Merediths have offended so far are Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia. “That Jerry went to the Methodist prayer-meeting one night about a fortnight ago and sat beside old William

Marsh who got up as usual and testified with fearful groans. ‘Do you feel any better now?’ whispered Jerry when William sat down. Poor Jerry meant to be sympathetic, but Mr. Marsh thought he was impertinent and is furious at him. Of course, Jerry had no business to be in a Methodist prayer-meeting at all. But they go where they like.”

“I hope they will not offend Mrs. Alec Davis of the Harbour Head,” said Susan. “She is a very touchy woman, I understand, but she is very well off and pays the most of any one to the salary. I have heard that she says the Merediths are the worst brought up children she ever saw.”

“Every word you say convinces me more and more that the Merediths belong to the race that knows Joseph,” said Mistress Anne decidedly.

“When all is said and done, they DO,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “And that balances everything. Anyway, we’ve got them now and we must just do the best we can by them and stick up for them to the Methodists. Well, I suppose I must be getting down harbour. Marshall will soon be home — he went over-harbour to-day — and wanting his super, manlike. I’m sorry I haven’t seen the other children. And where’s the doctor?”

“Up at the Harbour Head. We’ve only been home three days and in that time he has spent three hours in his own bed and eaten two meals in his own house.”

“Well, everybody who has been sick for the last six weeks has been waiting for him to come home — and I don’t blame them. When that over-harbour doctor married the undertaker’s daughter at Lowbridge people felt suspicious of him. It didn’t look well. You and the doctor must come down soon and tell us all about your trip. I suppose you’ve had a splendid time.”

“We had,” agreed Anne. “It was the fulfilment of years of dreams. The old world is very lovely and very wonderful. But we have come back very well satisfied with our own land. Canada is the finest country in the world, Miss Cornelia.”

“Nobody ever doubted that,” said Miss Cornelia, complacently.

“And old P.E.I. is the loveliest province in it and Four Winds the loveliest spot in P.E.I.,” laughed Anne, looking adoringly out over the sunset splendour of glen and harbour and gulf. She waved her hand at it. “I saw nothing more beautiful than that in Europe, Miss Cornelia. Must you go? The children will be sorry to have missed you.”

“They must come and see me soon. Tell them the doughnut jar is always full.”

“Oh, at supper they were planning a descent on you. They’ll go soon; but they must settle down to school again now. And the twins are going to take music lessons.”

“Not from the Methodist minister’s wife, I hope?” said Miss Cornelia anxiously.

“No — from Rosemary West. I was up last evening to arrange it with her. What a pretty girl she is!”

“Rosemary holds her own well. She isn’t as young as she once was.”

“I thought her very charming. I’ve never had any real acquaintance with her, you know. Their house is so out of the way, and I’ve seldom ever seen her except at church.”

“People always have liked Rosemary West, though they don’t understand her,” said Miss Cornelia, quite unconscious of the high tribute she was paying to Rosemary’s charm. “Ellen has always kept her down, so to speak. She has tyrannized over her, and yet she has always indulged her in a good many ways. Rosemary was engaged once, you know — to young Martin Crawford. His ship was wrecked on the Magdalens and all the crew were drowned. Rosemary was just a child — only seventeen. But she was never the same afterwards. She and Ellen have stayed very close at home since their mother’s death. They don’t often get to their own church at Lowbridge and I understand Ellen doesn’t approve of going too often to a Presbyterian church. To the Methodist she NEVER goes, I’ll say that much for her. That family of Wests have always been strong Episcopalians. Rosemary and Ellen are pretty well off. Rosemary doesn’t really need to

give music lessons. She does it because she likes to. They are distantly related to Leslie, you know. Are the Fords coming to the harbour this summer?"

"No. They are going on a trip to Japan and will probably be away for a year. Owen's new novel is to have a Japanese setting. This will be the first summer that the dear old House of Dreams will be empty since we left it."

"I should think Owen Ford might find enough to write about in Canada without dragging his wife and his innocent children off to a heathen country like Japan," grumbled Miss Cornelia. "The Life Book was the best book he's ever written and he got the material for that right here in Four Winds."

"Captain Jim gave him the most of that, you know. And he collected it all over the world. But Owen's books are all delightful, I think."

"Oh, they're well enough as far as they go. I make it a point to read every one he writes, though I've always held, Anne dearie, that reading novels is a sinful waste of time. I shall write and tell him my opinion of this Japanese business, believe ME. Does he want Kenneth and Persis to be converted into pagans?"

With which unanswerable conundrum Miss Cornelia took her departure. Susan proceeded to put Rilla in bed and Anne sat on the veranda steps under the early stars and dreamed her incorrigible dreams and learned all over again for the hundredth happy time what a moonrise splendour and sheen could be on Four Winds Harbour.

CHAPTER III.

THE INGLESIDE CHILDREN

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In daytime the Blythe children liked very well to play in the rich, soft greens and glooms of the big maple grove between Ingleside and the Glen St. Mary pond; but for evening revels there was no place like the little valley behind the maple grove. It was a fairy realm of romance to them. Once, looking from the attic windows of Ingleside, through the mist and aftermath of a summer thunderstorm, they had seen the beloved spot arched by a glorious rainbow, one end of which seemed to dip straight down to where a corner of the pond ran up into the lower end of the valley.

“Let us call it Rainbow Valley,” said Walter delightedly, and Rainbow Valley thenceforth it was.

Outside of Rainbow Valley the wind might be rollicking and boisterous. Here it always went gently. Little, winding, fairy paths ran here and there over spruce roots cushioned with moss. Wild cherry trees, that in blossom time would be misty white, were scattered all over the valley, mingling with the dark spruces. A little brook with amber waters ran through it from the Glen village. The houses of the village were comfortably far away; only at the upper end of the valley was a little tumbledown, deserted cottage, referred to as “the old Bailey house.” It had not been occupied for many years, but a grass-grown dyke surrounded it and inside was an ancient garden where the Ingleside children could find violets and daisies and June lilies still blooming in season. For the rest, the garden was overgrown with caraway that swayed and foamed in the moonshine of summer eves like seas of silver.

To the south lay the pond and beyond it the ripened distance lost itself in purple woods, save where, on a high hill, a solitary old gray homestead looked down on glen and harbour. There was a certain wild woodsiness

and solitude about Rainbow Valley, in spite of its nearness to the village, which endeared it to the children of Ingleside.

The valley was full of dear, friendly hollows and the largest of these was their favourite stamping ground. Here they were assembled on this particular evening. There was a grove of young spruces in this hollow, with a tiny, grassy glade in its heart, opening on the bank of the brook. By the brook grew a silver birch-tree, a young, incredibly straight thing which Walter had named the "White Lady." In this glade, too, were the "Tree Lovers," as Walter called a spruce and maple which grew so closely together that their boughs were inextricably intertwined. Jem had hung an old string of sleighbells, given him by the Glen blacksmith, on the Tree Lovers, and every visitant breeze called out sudden fairy tinkles from it.

"How nice it is to be back!" said Nan. "After all, none of the Avonlea places are quite as nice as Rainbow Valley."

But they were very fond of the Avonlea places for all that. A visit to Green Gables was always considered a great treat. Aunt Marilla was very good to them, and so was Mrs. Rachel Lynde, who was spending the leisure of her old age in knitting cotton-warp quilts against the day when Anne's daughters should need a "setting-out." There were jolly playmates there, too—"Uncle" Davy's children and "Aunt" Diana's children. They knew all the spots their mother had loved so well in her girlhood at old Green Gables — the long Lover's Lane, that was pink-hedged in wildrose time, the always neat yard, with its willows and poplars, the Dryad's Bubble, lucent and lovely as of yore, the Lake of Shining Waters, and Willowmere. The twins had their mother's old porch-gable room, and Aunt Marilla used to come in at night, when she thought they were asleep, to gloat over them. But they all knew she loved Jem the best.

Jem was at present busily occupied in frying a mess of small trout which he had just caught in the pond. His stove consisted of a circle of red stones, with a fire kindled in it, and his culinary utensils were an old tin can, hammered out flat, and a fork with only one tine left. Nevertheless, ripping good meals had before now been thus prepared.

Jem was the child of the House of Dreams. All the others had been born at Ingleside. He had curly red hair, like his mother's, and frank hazel eyes, like his father's; he had his mother's fine nose and his father's steady, humorous mouth. And he was the only one of the family who had ears nice enough to please Susan. But he had a standing feud with Susan because she would not give up calling him Little Jem. It was outrageous, thought thirteen-year-old Jem. Mother had more sense.

"I'm NOT little any more, Mother," he had cried indignantly, on his eighth birthday. "I'm AWFUL big."

Mother had sighed and laughed and sighed again; and she never called him Little Jem again — in his hearing at least.

He was and always had been a sturdy, reliable little chap. He never broke a promise. He was not a great talker. His teachers did not think him brilliant, but he was a good, all-round student. He never took things on faith; he always liked to investigate the truth of a statement for himself. Once Susan had told him that if he touched his tongue to a frosty latch all the skin would tear off it. Jem had promptly done it, "just to see if it was so." He found it was "so," at the cost of a very sore tongue for several days. But Jem did not grudge suffering in the interests of science. By constant experiment and observation he learned a great deal and his brothers and sisters thought his extensive knowledge of their little world quite wonderful. Jem always knew where the first and ripest berries grew, where the first pale violets shyly awakened from their winter's sleep, and how many blue eggs were in a given robin's nest in the maple grove. He could tell fortunes from daisy petals and suck honey from red clovers, and grub up all sorts of edible roots on the banks of the pond, while Susan went in daily fear that they would all be poisoned. He knew where the finest spruce-gum was to be found, in pale amber knots on the lichened bark, he knew where the nuts grew thickest in the beechwoods around the Harbour Head, and where the best trouting places up the brooks were. He could mimic the call of any wild bird or beast in Four Winds and he knew the haunt of every wild flower from spring to autumn.

Walter Blythe was sitting under the White Lady, with a volume of poems lying beside him, but he was not reading. He was gazing now at the

emerald-misted willows by the pond, and now at a flock of clouds, like little silver sheep, herded by the wind, that were drifting over Rainbow Valley, with rapture in his wide splendid eyes. Walter's eyes were very wonderful. All the joy and sorrow and laughter and loyalty and aspiration of many generations lying under the sod looked out of their dark gray depths.

Walter was a "hop out of kin," as far as looks went. He did not resemble any known relative. He was quite the handsomest of the Ingleside children, with straight black hair and finely modelled features. But he had all his mother's vivid imagination and passionate love of beauty. Frost of winter, invitation of spring, dream of summer and glamour of autumn, all meant much to Walter.

In school, where Jem was a chieftain, Walter was not thought highly of. He was supposed to be "girly" and milk-soppish, because he never fought and seldom joined in the school sports, preferring to herd by himself in out of the way corners and read books — especially "po'try books." Walter loved the poets and pored over their pages from the time he could first read. Their music was woven into his growing soul — the music of the immortals. Walter cherished the ambition to be a poet himself some day. The thing could be done. A certain Uncle Paul — so called out of courtesy — who lived now in that mysterious realm called "the States," was Walter's model. Uncle Paul had once been a little school boy in Avonlea and now his poetry was read everywhere. But the Glen schoolboys did not know of Walter's dreams and would not have been greatly impressed if they had. In spite of his lack of physical prowess, however, he commanded a certain unwilling respect because of his power of "talking book talk." Nobody in Glen St. Mary school could talk like him. He "sounded like a preacher," one boy said; and for this reason he was generally left alone and not persecuted, as most boys were who were suspected of disliking or fearing fisticuffs.

The ten year old Ingleside twins violated twin tradition by not looking in the least alike. Anne, who was always called Nan, was very pretty, with velvety nut-brown eyes and silky nut-brown hair. She was a very blithe and dainty little maiden — Blythe by name and blithe by nature, one of

her teachers had said. Her complexion was quite faultless, much to her mother's satisfaction.

"I'm so glad I have one daughter who can wear pink," Mrs. Blythe was wont to say jubilantly.

Diana Blythe, known as Di, was very like her mother, with gray-green eyes that always shone with a peculiar lustre and brilliancy in the dusk, and red hair. Perhaps this was why she was her father's favourite. She and Walter were especial chums; Di was the only one to whom he would ever read the verses he wrote himself — the only one who knew that he was secretly hard at work on an epic, strikingly resembling "Marmion" in some things, if not in others. She kept all his secrets, even from Nan, and told him all hers.

"Won't you soon have those fish ready, Jem?" said Nan, sniffing with her dainty nose. "The smell makes me awfully hungry."

"They're nearly ready," said Jem, giving one a dexterous turn.

"Get out the bread and the plates, girls. Walter, wake up."

"How the air shines tonight," said Walter dreamily. Not that he despised fried trout either, by any means; but with Walter food for the soul always took first place. "The flower angel has been walking over the world to-day, calling to the flowers. I can see his blue wings on that hill by the woods."

"Any angels' wings I ever saw were white," said Nan.

"The flower angel's aren't. They are a pale misty blue, just like the haze in the valley. Oh, how I wish I could fly. It must be glorious."

"One does fly in dreams sometimes," said Di.

"I never dream that I'm flying exactly," said Walter. "But I often dream that I just rise up from the ground and float over the fences and the trees. It's delightful — and I always think, 'This ISN'T a dream like it's always been before. THIS is real' — and then I wake up after all, and it's heartbreaking."

“Hurry up, Nan,” ordered Jem.

Nan had produced the banquet-board — a board literally as well as figuratively — from which many a feast, seasoned as no viands were elsewhere, had been eaten in Rainbow Valley. It was converted into a table by propping it on two large, mossy stones. Newspapers served as tablecloth, and broken plates and handleless cups from Susan’s discard furnished the dishes. From a tin box secreted at the root of a spruce tree Nan brought forth bread and salt. The brook gave Adam’s ale of unsurpassed crystal. For the rest, there was a certain sauce, compounded of fresh air and appetite of youth, which gave to everything a divine flavour. To sit in Rainbow Valley, steeped in a twilight half gold, half amethyst, rife with the odours of balsam-fir and woodsy growing things in their springtime prime, with the pale stars of wild strawberry blossoms all around you, and with the sough of the wind and tinkle of bells in the shaking tree tops, and eat fried trout and dry bread, was something which the mighty of earth might have envied them.

“Sit in,” invited Nan, as Jem placed his sizzling tin platter of trout on the table. “It’s your turn to say grace, Jem.”

“I’ve done my part frying the trout,” protested Jem, who hated saying grace. “Let Walter say it. He LIKES saying grace. And cut it short, too, Walt. I’m starving.”

But Walter said no grace, short or long, just then. An interruption occurred.

“Who’s coming down from the manse hill?” said Di.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MANSE CHILDREN

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Aunt Martha might be, and was, a very poor housekeeper; the Rev. John Knox Meredith might be, and was, a very absentminded, indulgent man. But it could not be denied that there was something very homelike and lovable about the Glen St. Mary manse in spite of its untidiness. Even the critical housewives of the Glen felt it, and were unconsciously mellowed in judgment because of it. Perhaps its charm was in part due to accidental circumstances — the luxuriant vines clustering over its gray, clap-boarded walls, the friendly acacias and balm-of-gileads that crowded about it with the freedom of old acquaintance, and the beautiful views of harbour and sand-dunes from its front windows. But these things had been there in the reign of Mr. Meredith's predecessor, when the manse had been the primmest, neatest, and dreariest house in the Glen. So much of the credit must be given to the personality of its new inmates. There was an atmosphere of laughter and comradeship about it; the doors were always open; and inner and outer worlds joined hands. Love was the only law in Glen St. Mary manse.

The people of his congregation said that Mr. Meredith spoiled his children. Very likely he did. It is certain that he could not bear to scold them. "They have no mother," he used to say to himself, with a sigh, when some unusually glaring peccadillo forced itself upon his notice. But he did not know the half of their goings-on. He belonged to the sect of dreamers. The windows of his study looked out on the graveyard but, as he paced up and down the room, reflecting deeply on the immortality of the soul, he was quite unaware that Jerry and Carl were playing leap-frog hilariously over the flat stones in that abode of dead Methodists. Mr. Meredith had occasional acute realizations that his children were not so well looked after, physically or morally, as they had been before his wife died, and he had always a dim subconsciousness that house and meals were very

different under Aunt Martha's management from what they had been under Cecilia's. For the rest, he lived in a world of books and abstractions; and, therefore, although his clothes were seldom brushed, and although the Glen housewives concluded, from the ivory-like pallor of his clear-cut features and slender hands, that he never got enough to eat, he was not an unhappy man.

If ever a graveyard could be called a cheerful place, the old Methodist graveyard at Glen St. Mary might be so called. The new graveyard, at the other side of the Methodist church, was a neat and proper and doleful spot; but the old one had been left so long to Nature's kindly and gracious ministries that it had become very pleasant.

It was surrounded on three sides by a dyke of stones and sod, topped by a gray and uncertain paling. Outside the dyke grew a row of tall fir trees with thick, balsamic boughs. The dyke, which had been built by the first settlers of the Glen, was old enough to be beautiful, with mosses and green things growing out of its crevices, violets purpling at its base in the early spring days, and asters and goldenrod making an autumnal glory in its corners. Little ferns clustered companionably between its stones, and here and there a big bracken grew.

On the eastern side there was neither fence nor dyke. The graveyard there straggled off into a young fir plantation, ever pushing nearer to the graves and deepening eastward into a thick wood. The air was always full of the harp-like voices of the sea, and the music of gray old trees, and in the spring mornings the choruses of birds in the elms around the two churches sang of life and not of death. The Meredith children loved the old graveyard.

Blue-eyed ivy, "garden-spruce," and mint ran riot over the sunken graves. Blueberry bushes grew lavishly in the sandy corner next to the fir wood. The varying fashions of tombstones for three generations were to be found there, from the flat, oblong, red sandstone slabs of old settlers, down through the days of weeping willows and clasped hands, to the latest monstrosities of tall "monuments" and draped urns. One of the latter, the biggest and ugliest in the graveyard, was sacred to the memory of a certain Alec Davis who had been born a Methodist but had taken to himself a

Presbyterian bride of the Douglas clan. She had made him turn Presbyterian and kept him toeing the Presbyterian mark all his life. But when he died she did not dare to doom him to a lonely grave in the Presbyterian graveyard over-harbour. His people were all buried in the Methodist cemetery; so Alec Davis went back to his own in death and his widow consoled herself by erecting a monument which cost more than any of the Methodists could afford. The Meredith children hated it, without just knowing why, but they loved the old, flat, bench-like stones with the tall grasses growing rankly about them. They made jolly seats for one thing. They were all sitting on one now. Jerry, tired of leap frog, was playing on a jew's-harp. Carl was lovingly poring over a strange beetle he had found; Una was trying to make a doll's dress, and Faith, leaning back on her slender brown wrists, was swinging her bare feet in lively time to the jew's-harp.

Jerry had his father's black hair and large black eyes, but in him the latter were flashing instead of dreamy. Faith, who came next to him, wore her beauty like a rose, careless and glowing. She had golden-brown eyes, golden-brown curls and crimson cheeks. She laughed too much to please her father's congregation and had shocked old Mrs. Taylor, the disconsolate spouse of several departed husbands, by saucily declaring — in the church-porch at that—"The world ISN'T a vale of tears, Mrs. Taylor. It's a world of laughter."

Little dreamy Una was not given to laughter. Her braids of straight, dead-black hair betrayed no lawless kinks, and her almond-shaped, dark-blue eyes had something wistful and sorrowful in them. Her mouth had a trick of falling open over her tiny white teeth, and a shy, meditative smile occasionally crept over her small face. She was much more sensitive to public opinion than Faith, and had an uneasy consciousness that there was something askew in their way of living. She longed to put it right, but did not know how. Now and then she dusted the furniture — but it was so seldom she could find the duster because it was never in the same place twice. And when the clothes-brush was to be found she tried to brush her father's best suit on Saturdays, and once sewed on a missing button with coarse white thread. When Mr. Meredith went to church next day every

female eye saw that button and the peace of the Ladies' Aid was upset for weeks.

Carl had the clear, bright, dark-blue eyes, fearless and direct, of his dead mother, and her brown hair with its glints of gold. He knew the secrets of bugs and had a sort of freemasonry with bees and beetles. Una never liked to sit near him because she never knew what uncanny creature might be secreted about him. Jerry refused to sleep with him because Carl had once taken a young garter snake to bed with him; so Carl slept in his old cot, which was so short that he could never stretch out, and had strange bedfellows. Perhaps it was just as well that Aunt Martha was half blind when she made that bed. Altogether they were a jolly, lovable little crew, and Cecilia Meredith's heart must have ached bitterly when she faced the knowledge that she must leave them.

"Where would you like to be buried if you were a Methodist?" asked Faith cheerfully.

This opened up an interesting field of speculation.

"There isn't much choice. The place is full," said Jerry. "I'd like that corner near the road, I guess. I could hear the teams going past and the people talking."

"I'd like that little hollow under the weeping birch," said Una. "That birch is such a place for birds and they sing like mad in the mornings."

"I'd take the Porter lot where there's so many children buried. I like lots of company," said Faith. "Carl, where'd you?"

"I'd rather not be buried at all," said Carl, "but if I had to be I'd like the ant-bed. Ants are AWF'LY int'resting."

"How very good all the people who are buried here must have been," said Una, who had been reading the laudatory old epitaphs. "There doesn't seem to be a single bad person in the whole graveyard. Methodists must be better than Presbyterians after all."

“Maybe the Methodists bury their bad people just like they do cats,” suggested Carl. “Maybe they don’t bother bringing them to the graveyard at all.”

“Nonsense,” said Faith. “The people that are buried here weren’t any better than other folks, Una. But when anyone is dead you mustn’t say anything of him but good or he’ll come back and ha’nt you. Aunt Martha told me that. I asked father if it was true and he just looked through me and muttered, ‘True? True? What is truth? What IS truth, O jesting Pilate?’ I concluded from that it must be true.”

“I wonder if Mr. Alec Davis would come back and ha’nt me if I threw a stone at the urn on top of his tombstone,” said Jerry.

“Mrs. Davis would,” giggled Faith. “She just watches us in church like a cat watching mice. Last Sunday I made a face at her nephew and he made one back at me and you should have seen her glare. I’ll bet she boxed HIS ears when they got out. Mrs. Marshall Elliott told me we mustn’t offend her on any account or I’d have made a face at her, too!”

“They say Jem Blythe stuck out his tongue at her once and she would never have his father again, even when her husband was dying,” said Jerry. “I wonder what the Blythe gang will be like.”

“I liked their looks,” said Faith. The manse children had been at the station that afternoon when the Blythe small fry had arrived. “I liked Jem’s looks ESPECIALLY.”

“They say in school that Walter’s a sissy,” said Jerry.

“I don’t believe it,” said Una, who had thought Walter very handsome.

“Well, he writes poetry, anyhow. He won the prize the teacher offered last year for writing a poem, Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me. Bertie’s mother thought HE should have got the prize because of his name, but Bertie said he couldn’t write poetry to save his soul, name or no name.”

“I suppose we’ll get acquainted with them as soon as they begin going to school,” mused Faith. “I hope the girls are nice. I don’t like most of the girls round here. Even the nice ones are poky. But the Blythe twins look jolly. I thought twins always looked alike, but they don’t. I think the redhaired one is the nicest.”

“I liked their mother’s looks,” said Una with a little sigh. Una envied all children their mothers. She had been only six when her mother died, but she had some very precious memories, treasured in her soul like jewels, of twilight cuddlings and morning frolics, of loving eyes, a tender voice, and the sweetest, gayest laugh.

“They say she isn’t like other people,” said Jerry.

“Mrs. Elliot says that is because she never really grew up,” said Faith.

“She’s taller than Mrs. Elliott.”

“Yes, yes, but it is inside — Mrs. Elliot says Mrs. Blythe just stayed a little girl inside.”

“What do I smell?” interrupted Carl, sniffing.

They all smelled it now. A most delectable odour came floating up on the still evening air from the direction of the little woodsy dell below the manse hill.

“That makes me hungry,” said Jerry.

“We had only bread and molasses for supper and cold ditto for dinner,” said Una plaintively.

Aunt Martha’s habit was to boil a large slab of mutton early in the week and serve it up every day, cold and greasy, as long as it lasted. To this Faith, in a moment of inspiration, had give the name of “ditto”, and by this it was invariably known at the manse.

“Let’s go and see where that smell is coming from,” said Jerry.

They all sprang up, frolicked over the lawn with the abandon of young puppies, climbed a fence, and tore down the mossy slope, guided by the savory lure that ever grew stronger. A few minutes later they arrived breathlessly in the sanctum sanctorum of Rainbow Valley where the Blythe children were just about to give thanks and eat.

They halted shyly. Una wished they had not been so precipitate: but Di Blythe was equal to that on any occasion. She stepped forward, with a comrade's smile.

"I guess I know who you are," she said. "You belong to the manse, don't you?"

Faith nodded, her face creased by dimples.

"We smelled your trout cooking and wondered what it was."

"You must sit down and help us eat them," said Di.

"Maybe you haven't more than you want yourselves," said Jerry, looking hungrily at the tin platter.

"We've heaps — three apiece," said Jem. "Sit down."

No more ceremony was necessary. Down they all sat on mossy stones. Merry was that feast and long. Nan and Di would probably have died of horror had they known what Faith and Una knew perfectly well — that Carl had two young mice in his jacket pocket. But they never knew it, so it never hurt them. Where can folks get better acquainted than over a meal table? When the last trout had vanished, the manse children and the Ingleside children were sworn friends and allies. They had always known each other and always would. The race of Joseph recognized its own.

They poured out the history of their little pasts. The manse children heard of Avonlea and Green Gables, of Rainbow Valley traditions, and of the little house by the harbour shore where Jem had been born. The Ingleside children heard of Maywater, where the Merediths had lived before coming to the Glen, of Una's beloved, one-eyed doll and Faith's pet rooster.

Faith was inclined to resent the fact that people laughed at her for petting a rooster. She liked the Blythes because they accepted it without question.

“A handsome rooster like Adam is just as nice a pet as a dog or cat, I think,” she said. “If he was a canary nobody would wonder. And I brought him up from a little, wee, yellow chicken. Mrs. Johnson at Maywater gave him to me. A weasel had killed all his brothers and sisters. I called him after her husband. I never liked dolls or cats. Cats are too sneaky and dolls are DEAD.”

“Who lives in that house away up there?” asked Jerry.

“The Miss Wests — Rosemary and Ellen,” answered Nan. “Di and I are going to take music lessons from Miss Rosemary this summer.”

Una gazed at the lucky twins with eyes whose longing was too gentle for envy. Oh, if she could only have music lessons! It was one of the dreams of her little hidden life. But nobody ever thought of such a thing.

“Miss Rosemary is so sweet and she always dresses so pretty,” said Di. “Her hair is just the colour of new molasses taffy,” she added wistfully — for Di, like her mother before her, was not resigned to her own ruddy tresses.

“I like Miss Ellen, too,” said Nan. “She always used to give me candies when she came to church. But Di is afraid of her.”

“Her brows are so black and she has such a great deep voice,” said Di. “Oh, how scared of her Kenneth Ford used to be when he was little! Mother says the first Sunday Mrs. Ford brought him to church Miss Ellen happened to be there, sitting right behind them. And the minute Kenneth saw her he just screamed and screamed until Mrs. Ford had to carry him out.”

“Who is Mrs. Ford?” asked Una wonderingly.

“Oh, the Fords don’t live here. They only come here in the summer. And they’re not coming this summer. They live in that little house ‘way, ‘way

down on the harbour shore where father and mother used to lie. I wish you could see Persis Ford. She is just like a picture.”

“I’ve heard of Mrs. Ford,” broke in Faith. “Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me about her. She was married fourteen years to a dead man and then he came to life.”

“Nonsense,” said Nan. “That isn’t the way it goes at all. Bertie Shakespeare can never get anything straight. I know the whole story and I’ll tell it to you some time, but not now, for it’s too long and it’s time for us to go home. Mother doesn’t like us to be out late these damp evenings.”

Nobody cared whether the manse children were out in the damp or not. Aunt Martha was already in bed and the minister was still too deeply lost in speculations concerning the immortality of the soul to remember the mortality of the body. But they went home, too, with visions of good times coming in their heads.

“I think Rainbow Valley is even nicer than the graveyard,” said Una. “And I just love those dear Blythes. It’s SO nice when you can love people because so often you CAN’T. Father said in his sermon last Sunday that we should love everybody. But how can we? How could we love Mrs. Alec Davis?”

“Oh, father only said that in the pulpit,” said Faith airily.
“He has more sense than to really think it outside.”

The Blythe children went up to Ingleside, except Jem, who slipped away for a few moments on a solitary expedition to a remote corner of Rainbow Valley. Mayflowers grew there and Jem never forgot to take his mother a bouquet as long as they lasted.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVENT OF MARY VANCE

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“This is just the sort of day you feel as if things might happen,” said Faith, responsive to the lure of crystal air and blue hills. She hugged herself with delight and danced a hornpipe on old Hezekiah Pollock’s bench tombstone, much to the horror of two ancient maidens who happened to be driving past just as Faith hopped on one foot around the stone, waving the other and her arms in the air.

“And that,” groaned one ancient maiden, “is our minister’s daughter.”

“What else could you expect of a widower’s family?” groaned the other ancient maiden. And then they both shook their heads.

It was early on Saturday morning and the Merediths were out in the dew-drenched world with a delightful consciousness of the holiday. They had never had anything to do on a holiday. Even Nan and Di Blythe had certain household tasks for Saturday mornings, but the daughters of the manse were free to roam from blushing morn to dewy eve if so it pleased them. It DID please Faith, but Una felt a secret, bitter humiliation because they never learned to do anything. The other girls in her class at school could cook and sew and knit; she only was a little ignoramus.

Jerry suggested that they go exploring; so they went lingeringly through the fir grove, picking up Carl on the way, who was on his knees in the dripping grass studying his darling ants. Beyond the grove they came out in Mr. Taylor’s pasture field, sprinkled over with the white ghosts of dandelions; in a remote corner was an old tumbledown barn, where Mr. Taylor sometimes stored his surplus hay crop but which was never used for any other purpose. Thither the Meredith children trooped, and prowled about the ground floor for several minutes.

“What was that?” whispered Una suddenly.

They all listened. There was a faint but distinct rustle in the hayloft above. The Merediths looked at each other.

“There’s something up there,” breathed Faith.

“I’m going up to see what it is,” said Jerry resolutely.

“Oh, don’t,” begged Una, catching his arm.

“I’m going.”

“We’ll all go, too, then,” said Faith.

The whole four climbed the shaky ladder, Jerry and Faith quite dauntless, Una pale from fright, and Carl rather absentmindedly speculating on the possibility of finding a bat up in the loft. He longed to see a bat in daylight.

When they stepped off the ladder they saw what had made the rustle and the sight struck them dumb for a few moments.

In a little nest in the hay a girl was curled up, looking as if she had just wakened from sleep. When she saw them she stood up, rather shakily, as it seemed, and in the bright sunlight that streamed through the cobwebbed window behind her, they saw that her thin, sunburned face was very pale under its tan. She had two braids of lank, thick, tow-coloured hair and very odd eyes—“white eyes,” the manse children thought, as she stared at them half defiantly, half piteously. They were really of so pale a blue that they did seem almost white, especially when contrasted with the narrow black ring that circled the iris. She was barefooted and bareheaded, and was clad in a faded, ragged, old plaid dress, much too short and tight for her. As for years, she might have been almost any age, judging from her wizened little face, but her height seemed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of twelve.

“Who are you?” asked Jerry.

The girl looked about her as if seeking a way of escape. Then she seemed to give in with a little shiver of despair.

“I’m Mary Vance,” she said.

“Where’d you come from?” pursued Jerry.

Mary, instead of replying, suddenly sat, or fell, down on the hay and began to cry. Instantly Faith had flung herself down beside her and put her arm around the thin, shaking shoulders.

“You stop bothering her,” she commanded Jerry. Then she hugged the waif. “Don’t cry, dear. Just tell us what’s the matter. WE’RE friends.”

“I’m so — so — hungry,” wailed Mary. “I — I hain’t had a thing to eat since Thursday morning, ‘cept a little water from the brook out there.”

The manse children gazed at each other in horror. Faith sprang up.

“You come right up to the manse and get something to eat before you say another word.”

Mary shrank.

“Oh — I can’t. What will your pa and ma say? Besides, they’d send me back.”

“We’ve no mother, and father won’t bother about you. Neither will Aunt Martha. Come, I say.” Faith stamped her foot impatiently. Was this queer girl going to insist on starving to death almost at their very door?

Mary yielded. She was so weak that she could hardly climb down the ladder, but somehow they got her down and over the field and into the manse kitchen. Aunt Martha, muddling through her Saturday cooking, took no notice of her. Faith and Una flew to the pantry and ransacked it for such eatables as it contained — some “ditto,” bread, butter, milk and a doubtful pie. Mary Vance attacked the food ravenously and uncritically, while the manse children stood around and watched her. Jerry noticed that she had a pretty mouth and very nice, even, white teeth. Faith decided,

with secret horror, that Mary had not one stitch on her except that ragged, faded dress. Una was full of pure pity, Carl of amused wonder, and all of them of curiosity.

“Now come out to the graveyard and tell us about yourself,” ordered Faith, when Mary’s appetite showed signs of failing her. Mary was now nothing loath. Food had restored her natural vivacity and unloosed her by no means reluctant tongue.

“You won’t tell your pa or anybody if I tell you?” she stipulated, when she was enthroned on Mr. Pollock’s tombstone. Opposite her the manse children lined up on another. Here was spice and mystery and adventure. Something HAD happened.

“No, we won’t.”

“Cross your hearts?”

“Cross our hearts.”

“Well, I’ve run away. I was living with Mrs. Wiley over-harbour. Do you know Mrs. Wiley?”

“No.”

“Well, you don’t want to know her. She’s an awful woman. My, how I hate her! She worked me to death and wouldn’t give me half enough to eat, and she used to larrup me ‘most every day. Look a-here.”

Mary rolled up her ragged sleeves, and held up her scrawny arms and thin hands, chapped almost to rawness. They were black with bruises. The manse children shivered. Faith flushed crimson with indignation. Una’s blue eyes filled with tears.

“She licked me Wednesday night with a stick,” said Mary, indifferently. “It was ‘cause I let the cow kick over a pail of milk. How’d I know the darn old cow was going to kick?”

A not unpleasant thrill ran over her listeners. They would never dream of using such dubious words, but it was rather titivating to hear someone else use them — and a girl, at that. Certainly this Mary Vance was an interesting creature.

“I don’t blame you for running away,” said Faith.

“Oh, I didn’t run away ‘cause she licked me. A licking was all in the day’s work with me. I was darn well used to it. Nope, I’d meant to run away for a week ‘cause I’d found out that Mrs. Wiley was going to rent her farm and go to Lowbridge to live and give me to a cousin of hers up Charlottetown way. I wasn’t going to stand for THAT. She was a worse sort than Mrs. Wiley even. Mrs. Wiley lent me to her for a month last summer and I’d rather live with the devil himself.”

Sensation number two. But Una looked doubtful.

“So I made up my mind I’d beat it. I had seventy cents saved up that Mrs. John Crawford give me in the spring for planting potatoes for her. Mrs. Wiley didn’t know about it. She was away visiting her cousin when I planted them. I thought I’d sneak up here to the Glen and buy a ticket to Charlottetown and try to get work there. I’m a hustler, let me tell you. There ain’t a lazy bone in MY body. So I lit out Thursday morning ‘fore Mrs. Wiley was up and walked to the Glen — six miles. And when I got to the station I found I’d lost my money. Dunno how — dunno where. Anyhow, it was gone. I didn’t know what to do. If I went back to old Lady Wiley she’d take the hide off me. So I went and hid in that old barn.”

“And what will you do now?” asked Jerry.

“Dunno. I s’pose I’ll have to go back and take my medicine. Now that I’ve got some grub in my stomach I guess I can stand it.”

But there was fear behind the bravado in Mary’s eyes. Una suddenly slipped from the one tombstone to the other and put her arm about Mary.

“Don’t go back. Just stay here with us.”

“Oh, Mrs. Wiley’ll hunt me up,” said Mary. “It’s likely she’s on my trail before this. I might stay here till she finds me, I s’pose, if your folks don’t mind. I was a darn fool ever to think of skipping out. She’d run a weasel to earth. But I was so misrebul.”

Mary’s voice quivered, but she was ashamed of showing her weakness.

“I hain’t had the life of a dog for these four years,” she explained defiantly.

“You’ve been four years with Mrs. Wiley?”

“Yip. She took me out of the asylum over in Hopetown when I was eight.”

“That’s the same place Mrs. Blythe came from,” exclaimed Faith.

“I was two years in the asylum. I was put there when I was six. My ma had hung herself and my pa had cut his throat.”

“Holy cats! Why?” said Jerry.

“Booze,” said Mary laconically.

“And you’ve no relations?”

“Not a darn one that I know of. Must have had some once, though. I was called after half a dozen of them. My full name is Mary Martha Lucilla Moore Ball Vance. Can you beat that? My grandfather was a rich man. I’ll bet he was richer than YOUR grandfather. But pa drunk it all up and ma, she did her part. THEY used to beat me, too. Laws, I’ve been licked so much I kind of like it.”

Mary tossed her head. She divined that the manse children were pitying her for her many stripes and she did not want pity. She wanted to be envied. She looked gaily about her. Her strange eyes, now that the dullness of famine was removed from them, were brilliant. She would show these youngsters what a personage she was.

“I’ve been sick an awful lot,” she said proudly. “There’s not many kids could have come through what I have. I’ve had scarlet fever and measles and ersipelas and mumps and whooping cough and pewmonia.”

“Were you ever fatally sick?” asked Una.

“I don’t know,” said Mary doubtfully.

“Of course she wasn’t,” scoffed Jerry. “If you’re fatally sick you die.”

“Oh, well, I never died exactly,” said Mary, “but I come blamed near it once. They thought I was dead and they were getting ready to lay me out when I up and come to.”

“What is it like to be half dead?” asked Jerry curiously.

“Like nothing. I didn’t know it for days afterwards. It was when I had the pewmonia. Mrs. Wiley wouldn’t have the doctor — said she wasn’t going to no such expense for a home girl. Old Aunt Christina MacAllister nursed me with poultices. She brung me round. But sometimes I wish I’d just died the other half and done with it. I’d been better off.”

“If you went to heaven I s’pose you would,” said Faith, rather doubtfully.

“Well, what other place is there to go to?” demanded Mary in a puzzled voice.

“There’s hell, you know,” said Una, dropping her voice and hugging Mary to lessen the awfulness of the suggestion.

“Hell? What’s that?”

“Why, it’s where the devil lives,” said Jerry. “You’ve heard of him — you spoke about him.”

“Oh, yes, but I didn’t know he lived anywhere. I thought he just roamed round. Mr. Wiley used to mention hell when he was alive. He was always telling folks to go there. I thought it was some place over in New Brunswick where he come from.”

“Hell is an awful place,” said Faith, with the dramatic enjoyment that is born of telling dreadful things. “Bad people go there when they die and burn in fire for ever and ever and ever.”

“Who told you that?” demanded Mary incredulously.

“It’s in the Bible. And Mr. Isaac Crothers at Maywater told us, too, in Sunday School. He was an elder and a pillar in the church and knew all about it. But you needn’t worry. If you’re good you’ll go to heaven and if you’re bad I guess you’d rather go to hell.”

“I wouldn’t,” said Mary positively. “No matter how bad I was I wouldn’t want to be burned and burned. I know what it’s like. I picked up a red hot poker once by accident. What must you do to be good?”

“You must go to church and Sunday School and read your Bible and pray every night and give to missions,” said Una.

“It sounds like a large order,” said Mary. “Anything else?”

“You must ask God to forgive the sins you’ve committed.

“But I’ve never com — committed any,” said Mary. “What’s a sin any way?”

“Oh, Mary, you must have. Everybody does. Did you never tell a lie?”

“Heaps of ‘em,” said Mary.

“That’s a dreadful sin,” said Una solemnly.

“Do you mean to tell me,” demanded Mary, “that I’d be sent to hell for telling a lie now and then? Why, I HAD to. Mr. Wiley would have broken every bone in my body one time if I hadn’t told him a lie. Lies have saved me many a whack, I can tell you.”

Una sighed. Here were too many difficulties for her to solve. She shuddered as she thought of being cruelly whipped. Very likely she would have lied too. She squeezed Mary’s little calloused hand.

“Is that the only dress you’ve got?” asked Faith, whose joyous nature refused to dwell on disagreeable subjects.

“I just put on this dress because it was no good,” cried Mary flushing. “Mrs. Wiley’d bought my clothes and I wasn’t going to be beholden to her for anything. And I’m honest. If I was going to run away I wasn’t going to take what belong to HER that was worth anything. When I grow up I’m going to have a blue sating dress. Your own clothes don’t look so stylish. I thought ministers’ children were always dressed up.”

It was plain that Mary had a temper and was sensitive on some points. But there was a queer, wild charm about her which captivated them all. She was taken to Rainbow Valley that afternoon and introduced to the Blythes as “a friend of ours from over-harbour who is visiting us.” The Blythes accepted her unquestioningly, perhaps because she was fairly respectable now. After dinner — through which Aunt Martha had mumbled and Mr. Meredith had been in a state of semi-unconsciousness while brooding his Sunday sermon — Faith had prevailed on Mary to put on one of her dresses, as well as certain other articles of clothing. With her hair neatly braided Mary passed muster tolerably well. She was an acceptable playmate, for she knew several new and exciting games, and her conversation lacked not spice. In fact, some of her expressions made Nan and Di look at her rather askance. They were not quite sure what their mother would have thought of her, but they knew quite well what Susan would. However, she was a visitor at the manse, so she must be all right.

When bedtime came there was the problem of where Mary should sleep.

“We can’t put her in the spare room, you know,” said Faith perplexedly to Una.

“I haven’t got anything in my head,” cried Mary in an injured tone.

“Oh, I didn’t mean THAT,” protested Faith. “The spare room is all torn up. The mice have gnawed a big hole in the feather tick and made a nest in it. We never found it out till Aunt Martha put the Rev. Mr. Fisher from Charlottetown there to sleep last week. HE soon found it out. Then father had to give him his bed and sleep on the study lounge. Aunt Martha hasn’t

had time to fix the spare room bed up yet, so she says; so NOBODY can sleep there, no matter how clean their heads are. And our room is so small, and the bed so small you can't sleep with us."

"I can go back to the hay in the old barn for the night if you'll lend me a quilt," said Mary philosophically. "It was kind of chilly last night, but 'cept for that I've had worse beds."

"Oh, no, no, you mustn't do that," said Una. "I've thought of a plan, Faith. You know that little trestle bed in the garret room, with the old mattress on it, that the last minister left there? Let's take up the spare room bedclothes and make Mary a bed there. You won't mind sleeping in the garret, will you, Mary? It's just above our room."

"Any place'll do me. Laws, I never had a decent place to sleep in my life. I slept in the loft over the kitchen at Mrs. Wiley's. The roof leaked rain in the summer and the snow druv in in winter. My bed was a straw tick on the floor. You won't find me a mite huffy about where I sleep."

The manse garret was a long, low, shadowy place, with one gable end partitioned off. Here a bed was made up for Mary of the dainty hemstitched sheets and embroidered spread which Cecilia Meredith had once so proudly made for her spare-room, and which still survived Aunt Martha's uncertain washings. The good nights were said and silence fell over the manse. Una was just falling asleep when she heard a sound in the room just above that made her sit up suddenly.

"Listen, Faith — Mary's crying," she whispered. Faith replied not, being already asleep. Una slipped out of bed, and made her way in her little white gown down the hall and up the garret stairs. The creaking floor gave ample notice of her coming, and when she reached the corner room all was moonlit silence and the trestle bed showed only a hump in the middle.

"Mary," whispered Una.

There was no response.

Una crept close to the bed and pulled at the spread. “Mary, I know you are crying. I heard you. Are you lonesome?”

Mary suddenly appeared to view but said nothing.

“Let me in beside you. I’m cold,” said Una shivering in the chilly air, for the little garret window was open and the keen breath of the north shore at night blew in.

Mary moved over and Una snuggled down beside her.

“NOW you won’t be lonesome. We shouldn’t have left you here alone the first night.”

“I wasn’t lonesome,” sniffed Mary.

“What were you crying for then?”

“Oh, I just got to thinking of things when I was here alone. I thought of having to go back to Mrs. Wiley — and of being licked for running away — and — and — and of going to hell for telling lies. It all worried me something scandalous.”

“Oh, Mary,” said poor Una in distress. “I don’t believe God will send you to hell for telling lies when you didn’t know it was wrong. He COULDN’T. Why, He’s kind and good. Of course, you mustn’t tell any more now that you know it’s wrong.”

“If I can’t tell lies what’s to become of me?” said Mary with a sob. “YOU don’t understand. You don’t know anything about it. You’ve got a home and a kind father — though it does seem to me that he isn’t more’n about half there. But anyway he doesn’t lick you, and you get enough to eat such as it is — though that old aunt of yours doesn’t know ANYTHING about cooking. Why, this is the first day I ever remember of feeling ‘sif I’d enough to eat. I’ve been knocked about all of my life, ‘cept for the two years I was at the asylum. They didn’t lick me there and it wasn’t too bad, though the matron was cross. She always looked ready to bite my head off

a nail. But Mrs. Wiley is a holy terror, that's what SHE is, and I'm just scared stiff when I think of going back to her."

"Perhaps you won't have to. Perhaps we'll be able to think of a way out. Let's both ask God to keep you from having to go back to Mrs. Wiley. You say your prayers, don't you Mary?"

"Oh, yes, I always go over an old rhyme 'fore I get into bed," said Mary indifferently. "I never thought of asking for anything in particular though. Nobody in this world ever bothered themselves about me so I didn't s'pose God would. He MIGHT take more trouble for you, seeing you're a minister's daughter."

"He'd take every bit as much trouble for you, Mary, I'm sure," said Una. "It doesn't matter whose child you are. You just ask Him — and I will, too."

"All right," agreed Mary. "It won't do any harm if it doesn't do much good. If you knew Mrs. Wiley as well as I do you wouldn't think God would want to meddle with her. Anyhow, I won't cry any more about it. This is a big sight better'n last night down in that old barn, with the mice running about. Look at the Four Winds light. Ain't it pretty?"

"This is the only window we can see it from," said Una. "I love to watch it."

"Do you? So do I. I could see it from the Wiley loft and it was the only comfort I had. When I was all sore from being licked I'd watch it and forget about the places that hurt. I'd think of the ships sailing away and away from it and wish I was on one of them sailing far away too — away from everything. On winter nights when it didn't shine, I just felt real lonesome. Say, Una, what makes all you folks so kind to me when I'm just a stranger?"

"Because it's right to be. The bible tells us to be kind to everybody."

"Does it? Well, I guess most folks don't mind it much then. I never remember of any one being kind to me before — true's you live I don't.

Say, Una, ain't them shadows on the walls pretty? They look just like a flock of little dancing birds. And say, Una, I like all you folks and them Blythe boys and Di, but I don't like that Nan. She's a proud one."

"Oh, no, Mary, she isn't a bit proud," said Una eagerly. "Not a single bit."

"Don't tell me. Any one that holds her head like that IS proud. I don't like her."

"WE all like her very much."

"Oh, I s'pose you like her better'n me?" said Mary jealously.
"Do you?"

"Why, Mary — we've known her for weeks and we've only known you a few hours," stammered Una.

"So you do like her better then?" said Mary in a rage. "All right! Like her all you want to. I don't care. I can get along without you."

She flung herself over against the wall of the garret with a slam.

"Oh, Mary," said Una, pushing a tender arm over Mary's uncompromising back, "don't talk like that. I DO like you ever so much. And you make me feel so bad."

No answer. Presently Una gave a sob. Instantly Mary squirmed around again and engulfed Una in a bear's hug.

"Hush up," she ordered. "Don't go crying over what I said. I was as mean as the devil to talk that way. I orter to be skinned alive — and you all so good to me. I should think you WOULD like any one better'n me. I deserve every licking I ever got. Hush, now. If you cry any more I'll go and walk right down to the harbour in this nightdress and drown myself."

This terrible threat made Una choke back her sobs. Her tears were wiped away by Mary with the lace frill of the spare-room pillow and forgiver and forgiven cuddled down together again, harmony restored, to watch the shadows of the vine leaves on the moonlit wall until they fell asleep.

And in the study below Rev. John Meredith walked the floor with rapt face and shining eyes, thinking out his message of the morrow, and knew not that under his own roof there was a little forlorn soul, stumbling in darkness and ignorance, beset by terror and compassed about with difficulties too great for it to grapple in its unequal struggle with a big indifferent world.

CHAPTER VI.

MARY STAYS AT THE MANSE

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The manse children took Mary Vance to church with them the next day. At first Mary objected to the idea.

“Didn’t you go to church over-harbour?” asked Una.

“You bet. Mrs. Wiley never troubled church much, but I went every Sunday I could get off. I was mighty thankful to go to some place where I could sit down for a spell. But I can’t go to church in this old ragged dress.”

This difficulty was removed by Faith offering the loan of her second best dress.

“It’s faded a little and two of the buttons are off, but I guess it’ll do.”

“I’ll sew the buttons on in a jiffy,” said Mary.

“Not on Sunday,” said Una, shocked.

“Sure. The better the day the better the deed. You just gimme a needle and thread and look the other way if you’re squeamish.”

Faith’s school boots, and an old black velvet cap that had once been Cecilia Meredith’s, completed Mary’s costume, and to church she went. Her behaviour was quite conventional, and though some wondered who the shabby little girl with the manse children was she did not attract much attention. She listened to the sermon with outward decorum and joined lustily in the singing. She had, it appeared, a clear, strong voice and a good ear.

“His blood can make the VIOLETS clean,” carolled Mary blithely. Mrs. Jimmy Milgrave, whose pew was just in front of the manse pew, turned suddenly and looked the child over from top to toe. Mary, in a mere superfluity of naughtiness, stuck out her tongue at Mrs. Milgrave, much to Una’s horror.

“I couldn’t help it,” she declared after church. “What’d she want to stare at me like that for? Such manners! I’m GLAD stuck my tongue out at her. I wish I’d stuck it farther out. Say, I saw Rob MacAllister from over-harbour there. Wonder if he’ll tell Mrs. Wiley on me.”

No Mrs. Wiley appeared, however, and in a few day the children forgot to look for her. Mary was apparently a fixture at the manse. But she refused to go to school with the others.

“Nope. I’ve finished my education,” she said, when Faith urged her to go. “I went to school four winters since I come to Mrs. Wiley’s and I’ve had all I want of THAT. I’m sick and tired of being everlastingly jawed at ‘cause I didn’t get my home-lessons done. I’D no time to do home-lessons.”

“Our teacher won’t jaw you. He is awfully nice,” said Faith.

“Well, I ain’t going. I can read and write and cipher up to fractions. That’s all I want. You fellows go and I’ll stay home. You needn’t be scared I’ll steal anything. I swear I’m honest.”

Mary employed herself while the others were at school in cleaning up the manse. In a few days it was a different place. Floors were swept, furniture dusted, everything straightened out. She mended the spare-room bedtick, she sewed on missing buttons, she patched clothes neatly, she even invaded the study with broom and dustpan and ordered Mr. Meredith out while she put it to rights. But there was one department with which Aunt Martha refused to let her interfere. Aunt Martha might be deaf and half blind and very childish, but she was resolved to keep the commissariat in her own hands, in spite of all Mary’s wiles and stratagems.

“I can tell you if old Martha’d let ME cook you’d have some decent meals,” she told the manse children indignantly. “There’d be no more ‘ditto’ — and no more lumpy porridge and blue milk either. What DOES she do with all the cream?”

“She gives it to the cat. He’s hers, you know,” said Faith.

“I’d like to CAT her,” exclaimed Mary bitterly. “I’ve no use for cats anyhow. They belong to the old Nick. You can tell that by their eyes. Well, if old Martha won’t, she won’t, I s’pose. But it gits on my nerves to see good vittles spoiled.”

When school came out they always went to Rainbow Valley. Mary refused to play in the graveyard. She declared she was afraid of ghosts.

“There’s no such thing as ghosts,” declared Jem Blythe.

“Oh, ain’t there?”

“Did you ever see any?”

“Hundreds of ‘em,” said Mary promptly.

“What are they like?” said Carl.

“Awful-looking. Dressed all in white with skellington hands and heads,” said Mary.

“What did you do?” asked Una.

“Run like the devil,” said Mary. Then she caught Walter’s eyes and blushed. Mary was a good deal in awe of Walter. She declared to the manse girls that his eyes made her nervous.

“I think of all the lies I’ve ever told when I look into them,” she said, “and I wish I hadn’t.”

Jem was Mary’s favourite. When he took her to the attic at Ingleside and showed her the museum of curios that Captain Jim Boyd had bequeathed

to him she was immensely pleased and flattered. She also won Carl's heart entirely by her interest in his beetles and ants. It could not be denied that Mary got on rather better with the boys than with the girls. She quarrelled bitterly with Nan Blythe the second day.

"Your mother is a witch," she told Nan scornfully. "Redhaired women are always witches." Then she and Faith fell out about the rooster. Mary said its tail was too short. Faith angrily retorted that she guessed God know what length to make a rooster's tail. They did not "speak" for a day over this. Mary treated Una's hairless, one-eyed doll with consideration; but when Una showed her other prized treasure — a picture of an angel carrying a baby, presumably to heaven, Mary declared that it looked too much like a ghost for her. Una crept away to her room and cried over this, but Mary hunted her out, hugged her repentantly and implored forgiveness. No one could keep up a quarrel long with Mary — not even Nan, who was rather prone to hold grudges and never quite forgave the insult to her mother. Mary was jolly. She could and did tell the most thrilling ghost stories. Rainbow Valley seances were undeniably more exciting after Mary came. She learned to play on the jew's-harp and soon eclipsed Jerry.

"Never struck anything yet I couldn't do if I put my mind to it," she declared. Mary seldom lost a chance of tooting her own horn. She taught them how to make "blow-bags" out of the thick leaves of the "live-forever" that flourished in the old Bailey garden, she initiated them into the toothsome qualities of the "sours" that grew in the niches of the graveyard dyke, and she could make the most wonderful shadow pictures on the walls with her long, flexible fingers. And when they all went picking gum in Rainbow Valley Mary always got "the biggest chew" and bragged about it. There were times when they hated her and times when they loved her. But at all times they found her interesting. So they submitted quite meekly to her bossing, and by the end of a fortnight had come to feel that she must always have been with them.

"It's the queerest thing that Mrs. Wiley hain't been after me," said Mary. "I can't understand it."

"Maybe she isn't going to bother about you at all," said Una.

"Then you can just go on staying here."

“This house ain’t hardly big enough for me and old Martha,” said Mary darkly. “It’s a very fine thing to have enough to eat — I’ve often wondered what it would be like — but I’m p’ticler about my cooking. And Mrs. Wiley’ll be here yet. SHE’S got a rod in pickle for me all right. I don’t think about it so much in daytime but say, girls, up there in that garret at night I git to thinking and thinking of it, till I just almost wish she’d come and have it over with. I dunno’s one real good whipping would be much worse’n all the dozen I’ve lived through in my mind ever since I run away. Were any of you ever licked?”

“No, of course not,” said Faith indignantly. “Father would never do such a thing.”

“You don’t know you’re alive,” said Mary with a sigh half of envy, half of superiority. “You don’t know what I’ve come through. And I s’pose the Blythes were never licked either?”

“No-o-o, I guess not. But I THINK they were sometimes spanked when they were small.”

“A spanking doesn’t amount to anything,” said Mary contemptuously. “If my folks had just spanked me I’d have thought they were petting me. Well, it ain’t a fair world. I wouldn’t mind taking my share of wallopings but I’ve had a darn sight too many.”

“It isn’t right to say that word, Mary,” said Una reproachfully.
“You promised me you wouldn’t say it.”

“G’way,” responded Mary. “If you knew some of the words I COULD say if I liked you wouldn’t make such a fuss over darn. And you know very well I hain’t ever told any lies since I come here.”

“What about all those ghosts you said you saw?” asked Faith.

Mary blushed.

“That was diff’runt,” she said defiantly. “I knew you wouldn’t believe them yarns and I didn’t intend you to. And I really did see something

queer one night when I was passing the over-harbour graveyard, true's you live. I dunno whether 'twas a ghost or Sandy Crawford's old white nag, but it looked blamed queer and I tell you I scooted at the rate of no man's business."

CHAPTER VII.

A FISHY EPISODE

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Rilla Blythe walked proudly, and perhaps a little primly, through the main “street” of the Glen and up the manse hill, carefully carrying a small basketful of early strawberries, which Susan had coaxed into lusciousness in one of the sunny nooks of Ingleside. Susan had charged Rilla to give the basket to nobody except Aunt Martha or Mr. Meredith, and Rilla, very proud of being entrusted with such an errand, was resolved to carry out her instructions to the letter.

Susan had dressed her daintily in a white, starched, and embroidered dress, with sash of blue and beaded slippers. Her long ruddy curls were sleek and round, and Susan had let her put on her best hat, out of compliment to the manse. It was a somewhat elaborate affair, wherein Susan’s taste had had more to say than Anne’s, and Rilla’s small soul gloried in its splendours of silk and lace and flowers. She was very conscious of her hat, and I am afraid she strutted up the manse hill. The strut, or the hat, or both, got on the nerves of Mary Vance, who was swinging on the lawn gate. Mary’s temper was somewhat ruffled just then, into the bargain. Aunt Martha had refused to let her peel the potatoes and had ordered her out of the kitchen.

“Yah! You’ll bring the potatoes to the table with strips of skin hanging to them and half boiled as usual! My, but it’ll be nice to go to your funeral,” shrieked Mary. She went out of the kitchen, giving the door such a bang that even Aunt Martha heard it, and Mr. Meredith in his study felt the vibration and thought absently that there must have been a slight earthquake shock. Then he went on with his sermon.

Mary slipped from the gate and confronted the spick-and-span damsel of Ingleside.

“What you got there?” she demanded, trying to take the basket.

Rilla resisted. “It’th for Mithter Meredith,” she lisped.

“Give it to me. I’LL give it to him,” said Mary.

“No. Thuthan thaid that I wathn’t to give it to anybody but Mithter Mer’dith or Aunt Martha,” insisted Rilla.

Mary eyed her sourly.

“You think you’re something, don’t you, all dressed up like a doll! Look at me. My dress is all rags and I don’t care! I’d rather be ragged than a doll baby. Go home and tell them to put you in a glass case. Look at me — look at me — look at me!”

Mary executed a wild dance around the dismayed and bewildered Rilla, flirting her ragged skirt and vociferating “Look at me — look at me” until poor Rilla was dizzy. But as the latter tried to edge away towards the gate Mary pounced on her again.

“You give me that basket,” she ordered with a grimace. Mary was past mistress in the art of “making faces.” She could give her countenance a most grotesque and unearthly appearance out of which her strange, brilliant, white eyes gleamed with weird effect.

“I won’t,” gasped Rilla, frightened but staunch. “You let me go, Mary Vanth.”

Mary let go for a minute and looked around here. Just inside the gate was a small “flake,” on which a half a dozen large codfish were drying. One of Mr. Meredith’s parishioners had presented him with them one day, perhaps in lieu of the subscription he was supposed to pay to the stipend and never did. Mr. Meredith had thanked him and then forgotten all about the fish, which would have promptly spoiled had not the indefatigable Mary prepared them for drying and rigged up the “flake” herself on which to dry them.

Mary had a diabolical inspiration. She flew to the “flake” and seized the largest fish there — a huge, flat thing, nearly as big as herself. With a whoop she swooped down on the terrified Rilla, brandishing her weird missile. Rilla’s courage gave way. To be lambasted with a dried codfish was such an unheard-of thing that Rilla could not face it. With a shriek she dropped her basket and fled. The beautiful berries, which Susan had so tenderly selected for the minister, rolled in a rosy torrent over the dusty road and were trodden on by the flying feet of pursuer and pursued. The basket and contents were no longer in Mary’s mind. She thought only of the delight of giving Rilla Blythe the scare of her life. She would teach HER to come giving herself airs because of her fine clothes.

Rilla flew down the hill and along the street. Terror lent wings to her feet, and she just managed to keep ahead of Mary, who was somewhat hampered by her own laughter, but who had breath enough to give occasional bloodcurdling whoops as she ran, flourishing her codfish in the air. Through the Glen street they swept, while everybody ran to the windows and gates to see them. Mary felt she was making a tremendous sensation and enjoyed it. Rilla, blind with terror and spent of breath, felt that she could run no longer. In another instant that terrible girl would be on her with the codfish. At this point the poor mite stumbled and fell into the mud-puddle at the end of the street just as Miss Cornelia came out of Carter Flagg’s store.

Miss Cornelia took the whole situation in at a glance. So did Mary. The latter stopped short in her mad career and before Miss Cornelia could speak she had whirled around and was running up as fast as she had run down. Miss Cornelia’s lips tightened ominously, but she knew it was no use to think of chasing her. So she picked up poor, sobbing, dishevelled Rilla instead and took her home. Rilla was heartbroken. Her dress and slippers and hat were ruined and her six year old pride had received terrible bruises.

Susan, white with indignation, heard Miss Cornelia’s story of Mary Vance’s exploit.

“Oh, the hussy — oh, the littly hussy!” she said, as she carried Rilla away for purification and comfort.

“This thing has gone far enough, Anne dearie,” said Miss Cornelia resolutely. “Something must be done. WHO is this creature who is staying at the manse and where does she come from?”

“I understood she was a little girl from over-harbour who was visiting at the manse,” answered Anne, who saw the comical side of the codfish chase and secretly thought Rilla was rather vain and needed a lesson or two.

“I know all the over-harbour families who come to our church and that imp doesn’t belong to any of them,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “She is almost in rags and when she goes to church she wears Faith Meredith’s old clothes. There’s some mystery here, and I’m going to investigate it, since it seems nobody else will. I believe she was at the bottom of their goings-on in Warren Mead’s spruce bush the other day. Did you hear of their frightening his mother into a fit?”

“No. I knew Gilbert had been called to see her, but I did not hear what the trouble was.”

“Well, you know she has a weak heart. And one day last week, when she was all alone on the veranda, she heard the most awful shrieks of ‘murder’ and ‘help’ coming from the bush — positively frightful sounds, Anne dearie. Her heart gave out at once. Warren heard them himself at the barn, and went straight to the bush to investigate, and there he found all the manse children sitting on a fallen tree and screaming ‘murder’ at the top of their lungs. They told him they were only in fun and didn’t think anyone would hear them. They were just playing Indian ambush. Warren went back to the house and found his poor mother unconscious on the veranda.”

Susan, who had returned, sniffed contemptuously.

“I think she was very far from being unconscious, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and that you may tie to. I have been hearing of Amelia Warren’s weak heart for forty years. She had it when she was twenty. She enjoys making a fuss and having the doctor, and any excuse will do.”

“I don’t think Gilbert thought her attack very serious,” said Anne.

“Oh, that may very well be,” said Miss Cornelia. “But the matter has made an awful lot of talk and the Meads being Methodists makes it that much worse. What is going to become of those children? Sometimes I can’t sleep at nights for thinking about them, Anne dearie. I really do question if they get enough to eat, even, for their father is so lost in dreams that he doesn’t often remember he has a stomach, and that lazy old woman doesn’t bother cooking what she ought. They are just running wild and now that school is closing they’ll be worse than ever.”

“They do have jolly times,” said Anne, laughing over the recollections of some Rainbow Valley happenings that had come to her ears. “And they are all brave and frank and loyal and truthful.”

“That’s a true word, Anne dearie, and when you come to think of all the trouble in the church those two tattling, deceitful youngsters of the last minister’s made, I’m inclined to overlook a good deal in the Merediths.”

“When all is said and done, Mrs. Dr. dear, they are very nice children,” said Susan. “They have got plenty of original sin in them and that I will admit, but maybe it is just as well, for if they had not they might spoil from over-sweetness. Only I do think it is not proper for them to play in a graveyard and that I will maintain.”

“But they really play quite quietly there,” excused Anne. “They don’t run and yell as they do elsewhere. Such howls as drift up here from Rainbow Valley sometimes! Though I fancy my own small fry bear a valiant part in them. They had a sham battle there last night and had to ‘roar’ themselves,

because they had no artillery to do it, so Jem says. Jem is passing through the stage where all boys hanker to be soldiers.”

“Well, thank goodness, he’ll never be a soldier,” said Miss Cornelia. “I never approved of our boys going to that South African fracas. But it’s over, and not likely anything of the kind will ever happen again. I think the world is getting more sensible. As for the Merediths, I’ve said many a time and I say it again, if Mr. Meredith had a wife all would be well.”

“He called twice at the Kirks’ last week, so I am told,” said Susan.

“Well,” said Miss Cornelia thoughtfully, “as a rule, I don’t approve of a minister marrying in his congregation. It generally spoils him. But in this case it would do no harm, for every one likes Elizabeth Kirk and nobody else is hankering for the job of stepmothering those youngsters. Even the Hill girls balk at that. They haven’t been found laying traps for Mr. Meredith. Elizabeth would make him a good wife if he only thought so. But the trouble is, she really is homely and, Anne dearie, Mr. Meredith, abstracted as he is, has an eye for a goodlooking woman, manlike. He isn’t SO other-worldly when it comes to that, believe ME.”

“Elizabeth Kirk is a very nice person, but they do say that people have nearly frozen to death in her mother’s spare-room bed before now, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan darkly. “If I felt I had any right to express an opinion concerning such a solemn matter as a minister’s marriage I would say that I think Elizabeth’s cousin Sarah, over-harbour, would make Mr. Meredith a better wife.”

“Why, Sarah Kirk is a Methodist,” said Miss Cornelia, much as if Susan had suggested a Hottentot as a manse bride.

“She would likely turn Presbyterian if she married Mr. Meredith,” retorted Susan.

Miss Cornelia shook her head. Evidently with her it was, once a Methodist, always a Methodist.

“Sarah Kirk is entirely out of the question,” she said positively. “And so is Emmeline Drew — though the Drews are all trying to make the match. They are literally throwing poor Emmeline at his head, and he hasn’t the least idea of it.”

“Emmeline Drew has no gumption, I must allow,” said Susan. “She is the kind of woman, Mrs. Dr. dear, who would put a hot-water bottle in your bed on a dog-night and then have her feelings hurt because you were not grateful. And her mother was a very poor housekeeper. Did you ever hear the story of her dishcloth? She lost her dishcloth one day. But the next day she found it. Oh, yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, she found it, in the goose at the dinnertable, mixed up with the stuffing. Do you think a woman like that would do for a minister’s mother-in-law? I do not. But no doubt I would be better employed in mending little Jem’s trousers than in talking gossip about my neighbours. He tore them something scandalous last night in Rainbow Valley.”

“Where is Walter?” asked Anne.

“He is up to no good, I fear, Mrs. Dr. dear. He is in the attic writing something in an exercise book. And he has not done as well in arithmetic this term as he should, so the teacher tells me. Too well I know the reason why. He has been writing silly rhymes when he should have been doing his sums. I am afraid that boy is going to be a poet, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“He is a poet now, Susan.”

“Well, you take it real calm, Mrs. Dr. dear. I suppose it is the best way, when a person has the strength. I had an uncle who began by being a poet and ended up by being a tramp. Our family were dreadfully ashamed of him.”

“You don’t seem to think very highly of poets, Susan,” said Anne, laughing.

“Who does, Mrs. Dr. dear?” asked Susan in genuine astonishment.

“What about Milton and Shakespeare? And the poets of the Bible?”

“They tell me Milton could not get along with his wife, and Shakespeare was no more than respectable by times. As for the Bible, of course things were different in those sacred days — although I never had a high opinion of King David, say what you will. I never knew any good to come of writing poetry, and I hope and pray that blessed boy will outgrow the tendency. If he does not — we must see what emulsion of cod-liver oil will do.”

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS CORNELIA INTERVENES

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Miss Cornelia descended upon the manse the next day and cross-questioned Mary, who, being a young person of considerable discernment and astuteness, told her story simple and truthfully, with an entire absence of complaint or bravado. Miss Cornelia was more favourably impressed than she had expected to be, but deemed it her duty to be severe.

“Do you think,” she said sternly, “that you showed your gratitude to this family, who have been far too kind to you, by insulting and chasing one of their little friends as you did yesterday?”

“Say, it was rotten mean of me,” admitted Mary easily. “I dunno what possessed me. That old codfish seemed to come in so blamed handy. But I was awful sorry — I cried last night after I went to bed about it, honest I did. You ask Una if I didn’t. I wouldn’t tell her what for ‘cause I was ashamed of it, and then she cried, too, because she was afraid someone had hurt my feelings. Laws, I ain’t got any feelings to hurt worth speaking of. What worries me is why Mrs. Wiley hain’t been hunting for me. It ain’t like her.”

Miss Cornelia herself thought it rather peculiar, but she merely admonished Mary sharply not to take any further liberties with the minister’s codfish, and went to report progress at Ingleside.

“If the child’s story is true the matter ought to be looked into,” she said. “I know something about that Wiley woman, believe ME. Marshall used to be well acquainted with her when he lived over-harbour. I heard him say something last summer about her and a home child she had — likely this very Mary-creature. He said some one told him she was working the child to death and not half feeding and clothing it. You know, Anne dearie, it has

always been my habit neither to make nor meddle with those over-harbour folks. But I shall send Marshall over tomorrow to find out the rights of this if he can. And THEN I'll speak to the minister. Mind you, Anne dearie, the Merediths found this girl literally starving in James Taylor's old hay barn. She had been there all night, cold and hungry and alone. And us sleeping warm in our beds after good suppers."

"The poor little thing," said Anne, picturing one of her own dear babies, cold and hungry and alone in such circumstances. "If she has been illused, Miss Cornelia, she mustn't be taken back to such a place. I was an orphan once in a very similar situation."

"We'll have to consult the Hopetown asylum folks," said Miss Cornelia. "Anyway, she can't be left at the manse. Dear knows what those poor children might learn from her. I understand that she has been known to swear. But just think of her being there two whole weeks and Mr Meredith never waking up to it! What business has a man like that to have a family? Why, Anne dearie, he ought to be a monk."

Two evenings later Miss Cornelia was back at Ingleside.

"It's the most amazing thing!" she said. "Mrs. Wiley was found dead in her bed the very morning after this Mary-creature ran away. She has had a bad heart for years and the doctor had warned her it might happen at any time. She had sent away her hired man and there was nobody in the house. Some neighbours found her the next day. They missed the child, it seems, but supposed Mrs. Wiley had sent her to her cousin near Charlottetown as she had said she was going to do. The cousin didn't come to the funeral and so nobody ever knew that Mary wasn't with her. The people Marshall talked to told him some things about the way Mrs. Wiley used this Mary that made his blood boil, so he declares. You know, it puts Marshall in a regular fury to hear of a child being illused. They said she whipped her mercilessly for every little fault or mistake. Some folks talked of writing to the asylum authorities but everybody's business is nobody's business and it was never done."

"I am sorry that Wiley person is dead," said Susan fiercely. "I should like to go over-harbour and give her a piece of my mind. Starving and beating a

child, Mrs. Dr. dear! As you know, I hold with lawful spanking, but I go no further. And what is to become of this poor child now, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?”

“I suppose she must be sent back to Hopetown,” said Miss Cornelia. “I think every one hereabouts who wants a home child has one. I’ll see Mr. Meredith tomorrow and tell him my opinion of the whole affair.”

“And no doubt she will, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, after Miss Cornelia had gone. “She would stick at nothing, not even at shingling the church spire if she took it into her head. But I cannot understand how even Cornelia Bryant can talk to a minister as she does. You would think he was just any common person.”

When Miss Cornelia had gone, Nan Blythe uncurled herself from the hammock where she had been studying her lessons and slipped away to Rainbow Valley. The others were already there. Jem and Jerry were playing quoits with old horseshoes borrowed from the Glen blacksmith. Carl was stalking ants on a sunny hillock. Walter, lying on his stomach among the fern, was reading aloud to Mary and Di and Faith and Una from a wonderful book of myths wherein were fascinating accounts of Prester John and the Wandering Jew, divining rods and tailed men, of Schamir, the worm that split rocks and opened the way to golden treasure, of Fortunate Isles and swan-maidens. It was a great shock to Walter to learn that William Tell and Gelert were myths also; and the story of Bishop Hatto was to keep him awake all that night; but best of all he loved the stories of the Pied Piper and the San Greal. He read them thrillingly, while the bells on the Tree Lovers tinkled in the summer wind and the coolness of the evening shadows crept across the valley.

“Say, ain’t them in’resting lies?” said Mary admiringly when Walter had closed the book.

“They aren’t lies,” said Di indignantly.

“You don’t mean they’re true?” asked Mary incredulously.

“No — not exactly. They’re like those ghost-stories of yours. They weren’t true — but you didn’t expect us to believe them, so they weren’t lies.”

“That yarn about the divining rod is no lie, anyhow,” said Mary. “Old Jake Crawford over-harbour can work it. They send for him from everywhere when they want to dig a well. And I believe I know the Wandering Jew.”

“Oh, Mary,” said Una, awe-struck.

“I do — true’s you’re alive. There was an old man at Mrs. Wiley’s one day last fall. He looked old enough to be ANYTHING. She was asking him about cedar posts, if he thought they’d last well. And he said, ‘Last well? They’ll last a thousand years. I know, for I’ve tried them twice.’ Now, if he was two thousand years old who was he but your Wandering Jew?”

“I don’t believe the Wandering Jew would associate with a person like Mrs. Wiley,” said Faith decidedly.

“I love the Pied Piper story,” said Di, “and so does mother. I always feel so sorry for the poor little lame boy who couldn’t keep up with the others and got shut out of the mountain. He must have been so disappointed. I think all the rest of his life he’d be wondering what wonderful thing he had missed and wishing he could have got in with the others.”

“But how glad his mother must have been,” said Una softly. “I think she had been sorry all her life that he was lame. Perhaps she even used to cry about it. But she would never be sorry again — never. She would be glad he was lame because that was why she hadn’t lost him.”

“Some day,” said Walter dreamily, looking afar into the sky, “the Pied Piper will come over the hill up there and down Rainbow Valley, piping merrily and sweetly. And I will follow him — follow him down to the shore — down to the sea — away from you all. I don’t think I’ll want to go — Jem will want to go — it will be such an adventure — but I won’t. Only I’ll HAVE to — the music will call and call and call me until I MUST follow.”

“We’ll all go,” cried Di, catching fire at the flame of Walter’s fancy, and half-believing she could see the mocking, retreating figure of the mystic piper in the far, dim end of the valley.

“No. You’ll sit here and wait,” said Walter, his great, splendid eyes full of strange glamour. “You’ll wait for us to come back. And we may not come — for we cannot come as long as the Piper plays. He may pipe us round the world. And still you’ll sit here and wait — and WAIT.”

“Oh, dry up,” said Mary, shivering. “Don’t look like that, Walter Blythe. You give me the creeps. Do you want to set me bawling? I could just see that horrid old Piper going away on, and you boys following him, and us girls sitting here waiting all alone. I dunno why it is — I never was one of the blubbering kind — but as soon as you start your spieling I always want to cry.”

Walter smiled in triumph. He liked to exercise this power of his over his companions — to play on their feelings, waken their fears, thrill their souls. It satisfied some dramatic instinct in him. But under his triumph was a queer little chill of some mysterious dread. The Pied Piper had seemed very real to him — as if the fluttering veil that hid the future had for a moment been blown aside in the starlit dusk of Rainbow Valley and some dim glimpse of coming years granted to him.

Carl, coming up to their group with a report of the doings in ant-land, brought them all back to the realm of facts.

“Ants ARE darned in’resting,” exclaimed Mary, glad to escape the shadowy Piper’s thrall. “Carl and me watched that bed in the graveyard all Saturday afternoon. I never thought there was so much in bugs. Say, but they’re quarrelsome little cusses — some of ‘em like to start a fight ‘thout any reason, far’s we could see. And some of ‘em are cowards. They got so scared they just doubled themselves up into a ball and let the other fellows bang ‘em. They wouldn’t put up a fight at all. Some of ‘em are lazy and won’t work. We watched ‘em shirking. And there was one ant died of grief ‘cause another ant got killed — wouldn’t work — wouldn’t eat — just died — it did, honest to Go — oodness.”

A shocked silence prevailed. Every one knew that Mary had not started out to say “goodness.” Faith and Di exchanged glances that would have done credit to Miss Cornelia herself. Walter and Carl looked uncomfortable and Una’s lip trembled.

Mary squirmed uncomfortably.

“That slipped out ‘fore I thought — it did, honest to — I mean, true’s you live, and I swallowed half of it. You folks over here are mighty squeamish seems to me. Wish you could have heard the Wileys when they had a fight.”

“Ladies don’t say such things,” said Faith, very primly for her.

“It isn’t right,” whispered Una.

“I ain’t a lady,” said Mary. “What chance’ve I ever had of being a lady? But I won’t say that again if I can help it. I promise you.”

“Besides,” said Una, “you can’t expect God to answer your prayers if you take His name in vain, Mary.”

“I don’t expect Him to answer ‘em anyhow,” said Mary of little faith. “I’ve been asking Him for a week to clear up this Wiley affair and He hasn’t done a thing. I’m going to give up.”

At this juncture Nan arrived breathless.

“Oh, Mary, I’ve news for you. Mrs. Elliott has been over-harbour and what do you think she found out? Mrs. Wiley is dead — she was found dead in bed the morning after you ran away. So you’ll never have to go back to her.”

“Dead!” said Mary stupefied. Then she shivered.

“Do you s’pose my praying had anything to do with that?” she cried imploringly to Una. “If it had I’ll never pray again as long as I live. Why, she may come back and ha’nt me.”

“No, no, Mary,” said Una comfortingly, “it hadn’t. Why, Mrs. Wiley died long before you ever began to pray about it at all.”

“That’s so,” said Mary recovering from her panic. “But I tell you it gave me a start. I wouldn’t like to think I’d prayed anybody to death. I never thought of such a thing as her dying when I was praying. She didn’t seem much like the dying kind. Did Mrs. Elliott say anything about me?”

“She said you would likely have to go back to the asylum.”

“I thought as much,” said Mary drearily. “And then they’ll give me out again — likely to some one just like Mrs. Wiley. Well, I s’pose I can stand it. I’m tough.”

“I’m going to pray that you won’t have to go back,” whispered Una, as she and Mary walked home to the manse.

“You can do as you like,” said Mary decidedly, “but I vow I won’t. I’m good and scared of this praying business. See what’s come of it. If Mrs. Wiley HAD died after I started praying it would have been my doings.”

“Oh, no, it wouldn’t,” said Una. “I wish I could explain things better — father could, I know, if you’d talk to him, Mary.”

“Catch me! I don’t know what to make of your father, that’s the long and short of it. He goes by me and never sees me in broad daylight. I ain’t proud — but I ain’t a doormat, neither!”

“Oh, Mary, it’s just father’s way. Most of the time he never sees us, either. He is thinking deeply, that is all. And I AM going to pray that God will keep you in Four Winds — because I like you, Mary.”

“All right. Only don’t let me hear of any more people dying on account of it,” said Mary. “I’d like to stay in Four Winds fine. I like it and I like the harbour and the light house — and you and the Blythes. You’re the only friends I ever had and I’d hate to leave you.”

CHAPTER IX.

UNA INTERVENES

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Miss Cornelia had an interview with Mr. Meredith which proved something of a shock to that abstracted gentleman. She pointed out to him, none too respectfully, his dereliction of duty in allowing a waif like Mary Vance to come into his family and associate with his children without knowing or learning anything about her.

“I don’t say there is much harm done, of course,” she concluded. “This Mary-creature isn’t what you might call bad, when all is said and done. I’ve been questioning your children and the Blythes, and from what I can make out there’s nothing much to be said against the child except that she’s slangy and doesn’t use very refined language. But think what might have happened if she’d been like some of those home children we know of. You know yourself what that poor little creature the Jim Flaggs’ had, taught and told the Flagg children.”

Mr. Meredith did know and was honestly shocked over his own carelessness in the matter.

“But what is to be done, Mrs. Elliott?” he asked helplessly. “We can’t turn the poor child out. She must be cared for.”

“Of course. We’d better write to the Hopetown authorities at once. Meanwhile, I suppose she might as well stay here for a few more days till we hear from them. But keep your eyes and ears open, Mr. Meredith.”

Susan would have died of horror on the spot if she had heard Miss Cornelia so admonishing a minister. But Miss Cornelia departed in a warm glow of satisfaction over duty done, and that night Mr. Meredith asked Mary to come into his study with him. Mary obeyed, looking literally

ghastly with fright. But she got the surprise of her poor, battered little life. This man, of whom she had stood so terribly in awe, was the kindest, gentlest soul she had ever met. Before she knew what happened Mary found herself pouring all her troubles into his ear and receiving in return such sympathy and tender understanding as it had never occurred to her to imagine. Mary left the study with her face and eyes so softened that Una hardly knew her.

“Your father’s all right, when he does wake up,” she said with a sniff that just escaped being a sob. “It’s a pity he doesn’t wake up oftener. He said I wasn’t to blame for Mrs. Wiley dying, but that I must try to think of her good points and not of her bad ones. I dunno what good points she had, unless it was keeping her house clean and making first-class butter. I know I ‘most wore my arms out scrubbing her old kitchen floor with the knots in it. But anything your father says goes with me after this.”

Mary proved a rather dull companion in the following days, however. She confided to Una that the more she thought of going back to the asylum the more she hated it. Una racked her small brains for some way of averting it, but it was Nan Blythe who came to the rescue with a somewhat startling suggestion.

“Mrs. Elliott might take Mary herself. She has a great big house and Mr. Elliott is always wanting her to have help. It would be just a splendid place for Mary. Only she’d have to behave herself.”

“Oh, Nan, do you think Mrs. Elliott would take her?”

“It wouldn’t do any harm if you asked her,” said Nan. At first Una did not think she could. She was so shy that to ask a favour of anybody was agony to her. And she was very much in awe of the bustling, energetic Mrs. Elliott. She liked her very much and always enjoyed a visit to her house; but to go and ask her to adopt Mary Vance seemed such a height of presumption that Una’s timid spirit quailed.

When the Hometown authorities wrote to Mr. Meredith to send Mary to them without delay Mary cried herself to sleep in the manse attic that night and Una found a desperate courage. The next evening she slipped

away from the manse to the harbour road. Far down in Rainbow Valley she heard joyous laughter but her way lay not there. She was terribly pale and terribly in earnest — so much so that she took no notice of the people she met — and old Mrs. Stanley Flagg was quite huffed and said Una Meredith would be as absentminded as her father when she grew up.

Miss Cornelia lived half way between the Glen and Four Winds Point, in a house whose original glaring green hue had mellowed down to an agreeable greenish gray. Marshall Elliott had planted trees about it and set out a rose garden and a spruce hedge. It was quite a different place from what it had been in years ago. The manse children and the Ingleside children liked to go there. It was a beautiful walk down the old harbour road, and there was always a well-filled cooky jar at the end.

The misty sea was lapping softly far down on the sands. Three big boats were skimming down the harbour like great white sea-birds. A schooner was coming up the channel. The world of Four Winds was steeped in glowing colour, and subtle music, and strange glamour, and everybody should have been happy in it. But when Una turned in at Miss Cornelia's gate her very legs had almost refused to carry her.

Miss Cornelia was alone on the veranda. Una had hoped Mr. Elliott would be there. He was so big and hearty and twinkly that there would be encouragement in his presence. She sat on the little stool Miss Cornelia brought out and tried to eat the doughnut Miss Cornelia gave her. It stuck in her throat, but she swallowed desperately lest Miss Cornelia be offended. She could not talk; she was still pale; and her big, dark-blue eyes looked so piteous that Miss Cornelia concluded the child was in some trouble.

"What's on your mind, dearie?" she asked. "There's something, that's plain to be seen."

Una swallowed the last twist of doughnut with a desperate gulp.

"Mrs. Elliott, won't you take Mary Vance?" she said beseechingly.

Miss Cornelia stared blankly.

“Me! Take Mary Vance! Do you mean keep her?”

“Yes — keep her — adopt her,” said Una eagerly, gaining courage now that the ice was broken. “Oh, Mrs. Elliott, PLEASE do. She doesn’t want to go back to the asylum — she cries every night about it. She’s so afraid of being sent to another hard place. And she’s SO smart — there isn’t anything she can’t do. I know you wouldn’t be sorry if you took her.”

“I never thought of such a thing,” said Miss Cornelia rather helplessly.

“WON’T you think of it?” implored Una.

“But, dearie, I don’t want help. I’m quite able to do all the work here. And I never thought I’d like to have a home girl if I did need help.”

The light went out of Una’s eyes. Her lips trembled. She sat down on her stool again, a pathetic little figure of disappointment, and began to cry.

“Don’t — dearie — don’t,” exclaimed Miss Cornelia in distress. She could never bear to hurt a child. “I don’t say I WON’T take her — but the idea is so new it has just kerflummuxed me. I must think it over.”

“Mary is SO smart,” said Una again.

“Humph! So I’ve heard. I’ve heard she swears, too. Is that true?”

“I’ve never heard her swear EXACTLY,” faltered Una uncomfortably.
“But I’m afraid she COULD.”

“I believe you! Does she always tell the truth?”

“I think she does, except when she’s afraid of a whipping.”

“And yet you want me to take her!”

“SOME ONE has to take her,” sobbed Una. “SOME ONE has to look after her, Mrs. Elliott.”

“That’s true. Perhaps it IS my duty to do it,” said Miss Cornelia with a sigh. “Well, I’ll have to talk it over with Mr. Elliott. So don’t say anything about it just yet. Take another doughnut, dearie.”

Una took it and ate it with a better appetite.

“I’m very fond of doughnuts,” she confessed “Aunt Martha never makes any. But Miss Susan at Ingleside does, and sometimes she lets us have a plateful in Rainbow Valley. Do you know what I do when I’m hungry for doughnuts and can’t get any, Mrs. Elliott?”

“No, dearie. What?”

“I get out mother’s old cook book and read the doughnut recipe — and the other recipes. They sound SO nice. I always do that when I’m hungry — especially after we’ve had ditto for dinner. THEN I read the fried chicken and the roast goose recipes. Mother could make all those nice things.”

“Those manse children will starve to death yet if Mr. Meredith doesn’t get married,” Miss Cornelia told her husband indignantly after Una had gone. “And he won’t — and what’s to be done? And SHALL we take this Mary-creature, Marshall?”

“Yes, take her,” said Marshall laconically.

“Just like a man,” said his wife, despairingly. “Take her’ — as if that was all. There are a hundred things to be considered, believe ME.”

“Take her — and we’ll consider them afterwards, Cornelia,” said her husband.

In the end Miss Cornelia did take her and went up to announce her decision to the Ingleside people first.

“Splendid!” said Anne delightedly. “I’ve been hoping you would do that very thing, Miss Cornelia. I want that poor child to get a good home. I was a homeless little orphan just like her once.”

“I don’t think this Mary-creature is or ever will be much like you,” retorted Miss Cornelia gloomily. “She’s a cat of another colour. But she’s also a human being with an immortal soul to save. I’ve got a shorter catechism and a small tooth comb and I’m going to do my duty by her, now that I’ve set my hand to the plough, believe me.”

Mary received the news with chastened satisfaction.

“It’s better luck than I expected,” she said.

“You’ll have to mind your p’s and q’s with Mrs. Elliott,” said Nan.

“Well, I can do that,” flashed Mary. “I know how to behave when I want to just as well as you, Nan Blythe.”

“You mustn’t use bad words, you know, Mary,” said Una anxiously.

“I s’pose she’d die of horror if I did,” grinned Mary, her white eyes shining with unholy glee over the idea. “But you needn’t worry, Una. Butter won’t melt in my mouth after this. I’ll be all prunes and prisms.”

“Nor tell lies,” added Faith.

“Not even to get off from a whipping?” pleaded Mary.

“Mrs. Elliott will NEVER whip you — NEVER,” exclaimed Di.

“Won’t she?” said Mary skeptically. “If I ever find myself in a place where I ain’t licked I’ll think it’s heaven all right. No fear of me telling lies then. I ain’t fond of telling ‘em — I’d rather not, if it comes to that.”

The day before Mary’s departure from the manse they had a picnic in her honour in Rainbow Valley, and that evening all the manse children gave her something from their scanty store of treasured things for a keepsake. Carl gave her his Noah’s ark and Jerry his second best jew’s-harp. Faith gave her a little hairbrush with a mirror in the back of it, which Mary had always considered very wonderful. Una hesitated between an old beaded purse and a gay picture of Daniel in the lion’s den, and finally offered

Mary her choice. Mary really hankered after the beaded purse, but she knew Una loved it, so she said,

“Give me Daniel. I’d rather have it ‘cause I’m partial to lions. Only I wish they’d let Daniel up. It would have been more exciting.”

At bedtime Mary coaxed Una to sleep with her.

“It’s for the last time,” she said, “and it’s raining tonight, and I hate sleeping up there alone when it’s raining on account of that graveyard. I don’t mind it on fine nights, but a night like this I can’t see anything but the rain pouring down on them old white stones, and the wind round the window sounds as if them dead people were trying to get in and crying ‘cause they couldn’t.”

“I like rainy nights,” said Una, when they were cuddled down together in the little attic room, “and so do the Blythe girls.”

“I don’t mind ‘em when I’m not handy to graveyards,” said Mary. “If I was alone here I’d cry my eyes out I’d be so lonesome. I feel awful bad to be leaving you all.”

“Mrs. Elliott will let you come up and play in Rainbow Valley quite often I’m sure,” said Una. “And you WILL be a good girl, won’t you, Mary?”

“Oh, I’ll try,” sighed Mary. “But it won’t be as easy for me to be good — inside, I mean, as well as outside — as it is for you. You hadn’t such scalawags of relations as I had.”

“But your people must have had some good qualities as well as bad ones,” argued Una. “You must live up to them and never mind their bad ones.”

“I don’t believe they had any good qualities,” said Mary gloomily. “I never heard of any. My grandfather had money, but they say he was a rascal. No, I’ll just have to start out on my own hook and do the best I can.”

“And God will help you, you know, Mary, if you ask Him.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“Oh, Mary. You know we asked God to get a home for you and He did.”

“I don’t see what He had to do with it,” retorted Mary. “It was you put it into Mrs. Elliott’s head.”

“But God put it into her HEART to take you. All my putting it into her HEAD wouldn’t have done any good if He hadn’t.”

“Well, there may be something in that,” admitted Mary. “Mind you, I haven’t got anything against God, Una. I’m willing to give Him a chance. But, honest, I think He’s an awful lot like your father — just absentminded and never taking any notice of a body most of the time, but sometimes waking up all of a sudden and being awful good and kind and sensible.”

“Oh, Mary, no!” exclaimed horrified Una. “God isn’t a bit like father — I mean He’s a thousand times better and kinder.”

“If He’s as good as your father He’ll do for me,” said Mary. “When your father was talking to me I felt as if I never could be bad any more.”

“I wish you’d talk to father about Him,” sighed Una. “He can explain it all so much better than I can.”

“Why, so I will, next time he wakes up,” promised Mary. “That night he talked to me in the study he showed me real clear that my praying didn’t kill Mrs. Wiley. My mind’s been easy since, but I’m real cautious about praying. I guess the old rhyme is the safest. Say, Una, it seems to me if one has to pray to anybody it’d be better to pray to the devil than to God. God’s good, anyhow so you say, so He won’t do you any harm, but from all I can make out the devil needs to be pacified. I think the sensible way would be to say to HIM, ‘Good devil, please don’t tempt me. Just leave me alone, please.’ Now, don’t you?”

“Oh, no, no, Mary. I’m sure it couldn’t be right to pray to the devil. And it wouldn’t do any good because he’s bad. It might aggravate him and he’d be worse than ever.”

“Well, as to this God-matter,” said Mary stubbornly, “since you and I can’t settle it, there ain’t no use in talking more about it until we’ve a chanct to find out the rights of it. I’ll do the best I can alone till then.”

“If mother was alive she could tell us everything,” said Una with a sigh.

“I wisht she was alive,” said Mary. “I don’t know what’s going to become of you youngsters when I’m gone. Anyhow, DO try and keep the house a little tidy. The way people talks about it is scandalous. And the first thing you know your father will be getting married again and then your noses will be out of joint.”

Una was startled. The idea of her father marrying again had never presented itself to her before. She did not like it and she lay silent under the chill of it.

“Stepmothers are AWFUL creatures,” Mary went on. “I could make your blood run cold if I was to tell you all I know about ‘em. The Wilson kids across the road from Wiley’s had a stepmother. She was just as bad to ‘em as Mrs. Wiley was to me. It’ll be awful if you get a stepmother.”

“I’m sure we won’t,” said Una tremulously. “Father won’t marry anybody else.”

“He’ll be hounded into it, I expect,” said Mary darkly. “All the old maids in the settlement are after him. There’s no being up to them. And the worst of stepmothers is, they always set your father against you. He’d never care anything about you again. He’d always take her part and her children’s part. You see, she’d make him believe you were all bad.”

“I wish you hadn’t told me this, Mary,” cried Una. “It makes me feel so unhappy.”

“I only wanted to warn you,” said Mary, rather repentantly. “Of course, your father’s so absentminded he mightn’t happen to think of getting married again. But it’s better to be prepared.”

Long after Mary slept serenely little Una lay awake, her eyes smarting with tears. On, how dreadful it would be if her father should marry somebody who would make him hate her and Jerry and Faith and Carl! She couldn't bear it — she couldn't!

Mary had not instilled any poison of the kind Miss Cornelia had feared into the manse children's minds. Yet she had certainly contrived to do a little mischief with the best of intentions. But she slept dreamlessly, while Una lay awake and the rain fell and the wind wailed around the old gray manse. And the Rev. John Meredith forgot to go to bed at all because he was absorbed in reading a life of St. Augustine. It was gray dawn when he finished it and went upstairs, wrestling with the problems of two thousand years ago. The door of the girls' room was open and he saw Faith lying asleep, rosy and beautiful. He wondered where Una was. Perhaps she had gone over to "stay all night" with the Blythe girls. She did this occasionally, deeming it a great treat. John Meredith sighed. He felt that Una's whereabouts ought not to be a mystery to him. Cecelia would have looked after her better than that.

If only Cecelia were still with him! How pretty and gay she had been! How the old manse up at Maywater had echoed to her songs! And she had gone away so suddenly, taking her laughter and music and leaving silence — so suddenly that he had never quite got over his feeling of amazement. How could SHE, the beautiful and vivid, have died?

The idea of a second marriage had never presented itself seriously to John Meredith. He had loved his wife so deeply that he believed he could never care for any woman again. He had a vague idea that before very long Faith would be old enough to take her mother's place. Until then, he must do the best he could alone. He sighed and went to his room, where the bed was still unmade. Aunt Martha had forgotten it, and Mary had not dared to make it because Aunt Martha had forbidden her to meddle with anything in the minister's room. But Mr. Meredith did not notice that it was unmade. His last thoughts were of St. Augustine.

CHAPTER X.

THE MANSE GIRLS CLEAN HOUSE

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“Ugh,” said Faith, sitting up in bed with a shiver. “It’s raining. I do hate a rainy Sunday. Sunday is dull enough even when it’s fine.”

“We oughtn’t to find Sunday dull,” said Una sleepily, trying to pull her drowsy wits together with an uneasy conviction that they had overslept.

“But we DO, you know,” said Faith candidly. “Mary Vance says most Sundays are so dull she could hang herself.”

“We ought to like Sunday better than Mary Vance,” said Una remorsefully. “We’re the minister’s children.”

“I wish we were a blacksmith’s children,” protested Faith angrily, hunting for her stockings. “THEN people wouldn’t expect us to be better than other children. JUST look at the holes in my heels. Mary darned them all up before she went away, but they’re as bad as ever now. Una, get up. I can’t get the breakfast alone. Oh, dear. I wish father and Jerry were home. You wouldn’t think we’d miss father much — we don’t see much of him when he is home. And yet EVERYTHING seems gone. I must run in and see how Aunt Martha is.”

“Is she any better?” asked Una, when Faith returned.

“No, she isn’t. She’s groaning with the misery still. Maybe we ought to tell Dr. Blythe. But she says not — she never had a doctor in her life and she isn’t going to begin now. She says doctors just live by poisoning people. Do you suppose they do?”

“No, of course not,” said Una indignantly. “I’m sure Dr. Blythe wouldn’t poison anybody.”

“Well, we’ll have to rub Aunt Martha’s back again after breakfast. We’d better not make the flannels as hot as we did yesterday.”

Faith giggled over the remembrance. They had nearly scalded the skin off poor Aunt Martha’s back. Una sighed. Mary Vance would have known just what the precise temperature of flannels for a misery back should be. Mary knew everything. They knew nothing. And how could they learn, save by bitter experience for which, in this instance, unfortunate Aunt Martha had paid?

The preceding Monday Mr. Meredith had left for Nova Scotia to spend his short vacation, taking Jerry with him. On Wednesday Aunt Martha was suddenly seized with a recurring and mysterious ailment which she always called “the misery,” and which was tolerably certain to attack her at the most inconvenient times. She could not rise from her bed, any movement causing agony. A doctor she flatly refused to have. Faith and Una cooked the meals and waited on her. The less said about the meals the better — yet they were not much worse than Aunt Martha’s had been. There were many women in the village who would have been glad to come and help, but Aunt Martha refused to let her plight be known.

“You must worry on till I kin git around,” she groaned. “Thank goodness, John isn’t here. There’s a plenty o’ cold biled meat and bread and you kin try your hand at making porridge.”

The girls had tried their hand, but so far without much success. The first day it had been too thin. The next day so thick that you could cut it in slices. And both days it had been burned.

“I hate porridge,” said Faith viciously. “When I have a house of my own I’m NEVER going to have a single bit of porridge in it.”

“What’ll your children do then?” asked Una. “Children have to have porridge or they won’t grow. Everybody says so.”

“They’ll have to get along without it or stay runts,” retorted Faith stubbornly. “Here, Una, you stir it while I set the table. If I leave it for a minute the horrid stuff will burn. It’s half past nine. We’ll be late for Sunday School.”

“I haven’t seen anyone going past yet,” said Una. “There won’t likely be many out. Just see how it’s pouring. And when there’s no preaching the folks won’t come from a distance to bring the children.”

“Go and call Carl,” said Faith.

Carl, it appeared, had a sore throat, induced by getting wet in the Rainbow Valley marsh the previous evening while pursuing dragonflies. He had come home with dripping stockings and boots and had sat out the evening in them. He could not eat any breakfast and Faith made him go back to bed again. She and Una left the table as it was and went to Sunday School. There was no one in the school room when they got there and no one came. They waited until eleven and then went home.

“There doesn’t seem to be anybody at the Methodist Sunday School either,” said Una.

“I’m GLAD,” said Faith. “I’d hate to think the Methodists were better at going to Sunday School on rainy Sundays than the Presbyterians. But there’s no preaching in their Church to-day, either, so likely their Sunday School is in the afternoon.”

Una washed the dishes, doing them quite nicely, for so much had she learned from Mary Vance. Faith swept the floor after a fashion and peeled the potatoes for dinner, cutting her finger in the process.

“I wish we had something for dinner besides ditto,” sighed Una. “I’m so tired of it. The Blythe children don’t know what ditto is. And we NEVER have any pudding. Nan says Susan would faint if they had no pudding on Sundays. Why aren’t we like other people, Faith?”

“I don’t want to be like other people,” laughed Faith, tying up her bleeding finger. “I like being myself. It’s more interesting. Jessie Drew is as good a

housekeeper as her mother, but would you want to be as stupid as she is?"

"But our house isn't right. Mary Vance says so. She says people talk about it being so untidy."

Faith had an inspiration.

"We'll clean it all up," she cried. "We'll go right to work tomorrow. It's a real good chance when Aunt Martha is laid up and can't interfere with us. We'll have it all lovely and clean when father comes home, just like it was when Mary went away. ANY ONE can sweep and dust and wash windows. People won't be able to talk about us any more. Jem Blythe says it's only old cats that talk, but their talk hurts just as much as anybody's."

"I hope it will be fine tomorrow," said Una, fired with enthusiasm. "Oh, Faith, it will be splendid to be all cleaned up and like other people."

"I hope Aunt Martha's misery will last over tomorrow," said Faith. "If it doesn't we won't get a single thing done."

Faith's amiable wish was fulfilled. The next day found Aunt Martha still unable to rise. Carl, too, was still sick and easily prevailed on to stay in bed. Neither Faith nor Una had any idea how sick the boy really was; a watchful mother would have had a doctor without delay; but there was no mother, and poor little Carl, with his sore throat and aching head and crimson cheeks, rolled himself up in his twisted bedclothes and suffered alone, somewhat comforted by the companionship of a small green lizard in the pocket of his ragged nightgown.

The world was full of summer sunshine after the rain. It was a peerless day for housecleaning and Faith and Una went gaily to work.

"We'll clean the dining-room and the parlour," said Faith. "It wouldn't do to meddle with the study, and it doesn't matter much about the upstairs. The first thing is to take everything out."

Accordingly, everything was taken out. The furniture was piled on the veranda and lawn and the Methodist graveyard fence was gaily draped

with rugs. An orgy of sweeping followed, with an attempt at dusting on Una's part, while Faith washed the windows of the dining-room, breaking one pane and cracking two in the process. Una surveyed the streaked result dubiously.

"They don't look right, somehow," she said. "Mrs. Elliott's and Susan's windows just shine and sparkle."

"Never mind. They let the sunshine through just as well," said Faith cheerfully. "They MUST be clean after all the soap and water I've used, and that's the main thing. Now, it's past eleven, so I'll wipe up this mess on the floor and we'll go outside. You dust the furniture and I'll shake the rugs. I'm going to do it in the graveyard. I don't want to send dust flying all over the lawn."

Faith enjoyed the rug shaking. To stand on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone, flapping and shaking rugs, was real fun. To be sure, Elder Abraham Clow and his wife, driving past in their capacious double-seated buggy, seemed to gaze at her in grim disapproval.

"Isn't that a terrible sight?" said Elder Abraham solemnly.

"I would never have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes," said Mrs. Elder Abraham, more solemnly still.

Faith waved a door mat cheerily at the Clow party. It did not worry her that the elder and his wife did not return her greeting. Everybody knew that Elder Abraham had never been known to smile since he had been appointed Superintendent of the Sunday School fourteen years previously. But it hurt her that Minnie and Adella Clow did not wave back. Faith liked Minnie and Adella. Next to the Blythes, they were her best friends in school and she always helped Adella with her sums. This was gratitude for you. Her friends cut her because she was shaking rugs in an old graveyard where, as Mary Vance said, not a living soul had been buried for years. Faith flounced around to the veranda, where she found Una grieved in spirit because the Clow girls had not waved to her, either.

“I suppose they’re mad over something,” said Faith. “Perhaps they’re jealous because we play so much in Rainbow Valley with the Blythes. Well, just wait till school opens and Adella wants me to show her how to do her sums! We’ll get square then. Come on, let’s put the things back in. I’m tired to death and I don’t believe the rooms will look much better than before we started — though I shook out pecks of dust in the graveyard. I HATE housecleaning.”

It was two o’clock before the tired girls finished the two rooms. They got a dreary bite in the kitchen and intended to wash the dishes at once. But Faith happened to pick up a new storybook Di Blythe had lent her and was lost to the world until sunset. Una took a cup of rank tea up to Carl but found him asleep; so she curled herself up on Jerry’s bed and went to sleep too. Meanwhile, a weird story flew through Glen St. Mary and folks asked each other seriously what was to be done with those manse youngsters.

“That is past laughing at, believe ME,” said Miss Cornelia to her husband, with a heavy sigh. “I couldn’t believe it at first. Miranda Drew brought the story home from the Methodist Sunday School this afternoon and I simply scoffed at it. But Mrs. Elder Abraham says she and the Elder saw it with their own eyes.”

“Saw what?” asked Marshall.

“Faith and Una Meredith stayed home from Sunday School this morning and CLEANED HOUSE,” said Miss Cornelia, in accents of despair. “When Elder Abraham went home from the church — he had stayed behind to straighten out the library books — he saw them shaking rugs in the Methodist graveyard. I can never look a Methodist in the face again. Just think what a scandal it will make!”

A scandal it assuredly did make, growing more scandalous as it spread, until the over-harbour people heard that the manse children had not only cleaned house and put out a washing on Sunday, but had wound up with an afternoon picnic in the graveyard while the Methodist Sunday School was going on. The only household which remained in blissful ignorance of the terrible thing was the manse itself; on what Faith and Una fondly believed to be Tuesday it rained again; for the next three days it rained; nobody

came near the manse; the manse folk went nowhere; they might have waded through the misty Rainbow Valley up to Ingleside, but all the Blythe family, save Susan and the doctor, were away on a visit to Avonlea.

“This is the last of our bread,” said Faith, “and the ditto is done. If Aunt Martha doesn’t get better soon WHAT will we do?”

“We can buy some bread in the village and there’s the codfish Mary dried,” said Una. “But we don’t know how to cook it.”

“Oh, that’s easy,” laughed Faith. “You just boil it.”

Boil it they did; but as it did not occur to them to soak it beforehand it was too salty to eat. That night they were very hungry; but by the following day their troubles were over. Sunshine returned to the world; Carl was well and Aunt Martha’s misery left her as suddenly as it had come; the butcher called at the manse and chased famine away. To crown all, the Blythes returned home, and that evening they and the manse children and Mary Vance kept sunset tryst once more in Rainbow Valley, where the daisies were floating upon the grass like spirits of the dew and the bells on the Tree Lovers rang like fairy chimes in the scented twilight.

CHAPTER XI.

A DREADFUL DISCOVERY

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“Well, you kids have gone and done it now,” was Mary’s greeting, as she joined them in the Valley. Miss Cornelia was up at Ingleside, holding agonized conclave with Anne and Susan, and Mary hoped that the session might be a long one, for it was all of two weeks since she had been allowed to revel with her chums in the dear valley of rainbows.

“Done what?” demanded everybody but Walter, who was daydreaming as usual.

“It’s you manse young ones, I mean,” said Mary. “It was just awful of you. I wouldn’t have done such a thing for the world, and I weren’t brought up in a manse — weren’t brought up ANYWHERE — just COME up.”

“What have WE done?” asked Faith blankly.

“Done! You’d BETTER ask! The talk is something terrible. I expect it’s ruined your father in this congregation. He’ll never be able to live it down, poor man! Everybody blames him for it, and that isn’t fair. But nothing IS fair in this world. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.”

“What HAVE we done?” asked Una again, despairingly. Faith said nothing, but her eyes flashed golden-brown scorn at Mary.

“Oh, don’t pretend innocence,” said Mary, witheringly.

“Everybody knows what you have done.”

“I don’t,” interjected Jem Blythe indignantly. “Don’t let me catch you making Una cry, Mary Vance. What are you talking about?”

“I s’pose you don’t know, since you’re just back from up west,” said Mary, somewhat subdued. Jem could always manage her. “But everybody else knows, you’d better believe.”

“Knows what?”

“That Faith and Una stayed home from Sunday School last Sunday and CLEANED HOUSE.”

“We didn’t,” cried Faith and Una, in passionate denial.

Mary looked haughtily at them.

“I didn’t suppose you’d deny it, after the way you’ve combed ME down for lying,” she said. “What’s the good of saying you didn’t? Everybody knows you DID. Elder Clow and his wife saw you. Some people say it will break up the church, but I don’t go that far. You ARE nice ones.”

Nan Blythe stood up and put her arms around the dazed Faith and Una.

“They were nice enough to take you in and feed you and clothe you when you were starving in Mr. Taylor’s barn, Mary Vance,” she said. “You are VERY grateful, I must say.”

“I AM grateful,” retorted Mary. “You’d know it if you’d heard me standing up for Mr. Meredith through thick and thin. I’ve blistered my tongue talking for him this week. I’ve said again and again that he isn’t to blame if his young ones did clean house on Sunday. He was away — and they knew better.”

“But we didn’t,” protested Una. “It was MONDAY we cleaned house. Wasn’t it, Faith?”

“Of course it was,” said Faith, with flashing eyes. “We went to Sunday School in spite of the rain — and no one came — not even Elder Abraham, for all his talk about fair-weather Christians.”

“It was Saturday it rained,” said Mary. “Sunday was as fine as silk. I wasn’t at Sunday School because I had toothache, but every one else was and they saw all your stuff out on the lawn. And Elder Abraham and Mrs. Elder Abraham saw you shaking rugs in the graveyard.”

Una sat down among the daisies and began to cry.

“Look here,” said Jem resolutely, “this thing must be cleared up. SOMEBODY has made a mistake. Sunday WAS fine, Faith. How could you have thought Saturday was Sunday?”

“Prayer-meeting was Thursday night,” cried Faith, “and Adam flew into the soup-pot on Friday when Aunt Martha’s cat chased him, and spoiled our dinner; and Saturday there was a snake in the cellar and Carl caught it with a forked stick and carried it out, and Sunday it rained. So there!”

“Prayer-meeting was Wednesday night,” said Mary. “Elder Baxter was to lead and he couldn’t go Thursday night and it was changed to Wednesday. You were just a day out, Faith Meredith, and you DID work on Sunday.”

Suddenly Faith burst into a peal of laughter.

“I suppose we did. What a joke!”

“It isn’t much of a joke for your father,” said Mary sourly.

“It’ll be all right when people find out it was just a mistake,” said Faith carelessly. “We’ll explain.”

“You can explain till you’re black in the face,” said Mary, “but a lie like that’ll travel faster’n further than you ever will. I’VE seen more of the world than you and I know. Besides, there are plenty of folks won’t believe it was a mistake.”

“They will if I tell them,” said Faith.

“You can’t tell everybody,” said Mary. “No, I tell you you’ve disgraced your father.”

Una's evening was spoiled by this dire reflection, but Faith refused to be made uncomfortable. Besides, she had a plan that would put everything right. So she put the past with its mistake behind her and gave herself over to enjoyment of the present. Jem went away to fish and Walter came out of his reverie and proceeded to describe the woods of heaven. Mary pricked up her ears and listened respectfully. Despite her awe of Walter she revelled in his "book talk." It always gave her a delightful sensation. Walter had been reading his Coleridge that day, and he pictured a heaven where

"There were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense bearing tree,
And there were forests ancient as the hills
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery."

"I didn't know there was any woods in heaven," said Mary, with a long breath. "I thought it was all streets — and streets — AND streets."

"Of course there are woods," said Nan. "Mother can't live without trees and I can't, so what would be the use of going to heaven if there weren't any trees?"

"There are cities, too," said the young dreamer, "splendid cities — coloured just like the sunset, with sapphire towers and rainbow domes. They are built of gold and diamonds — whole streets of diamonds, flashing like the sun. In the squares there are crystal fountains kissed by the light, and everywhere the asphodel blooms — the flower of heaven."

"Fancy!" said Mary. "I saw the main street in Charlottetown once and I thought it was real grand, but I s'pose it's nothing to heaven. Well, it all sounds gorgeous the way you tell it, but won't it be kind of dull, too?"

"Oh, I guess we can have some fun when the angels' backs are turned," said Faith comfortably.

"Heaven is ALL fun," declared Di.

“The Bible doesn’t say so,” cried Mary, who had read so much of the Bible on Sunday afternoons under Miss Cornelia’s eye that she now considered herself quite an authority on it.

“Mother says the Bible language is figurative,” said Nan.

“Does that mean that it isn’t true?” asked Mary hopefully.

“No — not exactly — but I think it means that heaven will be just like what you’d like it to be.”

“I’d like it to be just like Rainbow Valley,” said Mary, “with all you kids to gas and play with. THAT’S good enough for me. Anyhow, we can’t go to heaven till we’re dead and maybe not then, so what’s the use of worrying? Here’s Jem with a string of trout and it’s my turn to fry them.”

“We ought to know more about heaven than Walter does when we’re the minister’s family,” said Una, as they walked home that night.

“We KNOW just as much, but Walter can IMAGINE,” said Faith.

“Mrs. Elliott says he gets it from his mother.”

“I do wish we hadn’t made that mistake about Sunday,” sighed Una.

“Don’t worry over that. I’ve thought of a great plan to explain so that everybody will know,” said Faith. “Just wait till tomorrow night.”

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPLANATION AND A DARE

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The Rev. Dr. Cooper preached in Glen St. Mary the next evening and the Presbyterian Church was crowded with people from near and far. The Reverend Doctor was reputed to be a very eloquent speaker; and, bearing in mind the old dictum that a minister should take his best clothes to the city and his best sermons to the country, he delivered a very scholarly and impressive discourse. But when the folks went home that night it was not of Dr. Cooper's sermon they talked. They had completely forgotten all about it.

Dr. Cooper had concluded with a fervent appeal, had wiped the perspiration from his massive brow, had said "Let us pray" as he was famed for saying it, and had duly prayed. There was a slight pause. In Glen St. Mary church the old fashion of taking the collection after the sermon instead of before still held — mainly because the Methodists had adopted the new fashion first, and Miss Cornelia and Elder Clow would not hear of following where Methodists had led. Charles Baxter and Thomas Douglas, whose duty it was to pass the plates, were on the point of rising to their feet. The organist had got out the music of her anthem and the choir had cleared its throat. Suddenly Faith Meredith rose in the manse pew, walked up to the pulpit platform, and faced the amazed audience.

Miss Cornelia half rose in her seat and then sat down again. Her pew was far back and it occurred to her that whatever Faith meant to do or say would be half done or said before she could reach her. There was no use making the exhibition worse than it had to be. With an anguished glance at Mrs. Dr. Blythe, and another at Deacon Warren of the Methodist Church, Miss Cornelia resigned herself to another scandal.

"If the child was only dressed decently itself," she groaned in spirit.

Faith, having spilled ink on her good dress, had serenely put on an old one of faded pink print. A caticorned rent in the skirt had been darned with scarlet tracing cotton and the hem had been let down, showing a bright strip of unfaded pink around the skirt. But Faith was not thinking of her clothes at all. She was feeling suddenly nervous. What had seemed easy in imagination was rather hard in reality. Confronted by all those staring questioning eyes Faith's courage almost failed her. The lights were so bright, the silence so awesome. She thought she could not speak after all. But she MUST — her father MUST be cleared of suspicion. Only — the words would NOT come.

Una's little pearl-pure face gleamed up at her beseechingly from the manse pew. The Blythe children were lost in amazement. Back under the gallery Faith saw the sweet graciousness of Miss Rosemary West's smile and the amusement of Miss Ellen's. But none of these helped her. It was Bertie Shakespeare Drew who saved the situation. Bertie Shakespeare sat in the front seat of the gallery and he made a derisive face at Faith. Faith promptly made a dreadful one back at him, and, in her anger over being grimaced at by Bertie Shakespeare, forgot her stage fright. She found her voice and spoke out clearly and bravely.

"I want to explain something," she said, "and I want to do it now because everybody will hear it that heard the other. People are saying that Una and I stayed home last Sunday and cleaned house instead of going to Sunday School. Well, we did — but we didn't mean to. We got mixed up in the days of the week. It was all Elder Baxter's fault" — sensation in Baxter's pew—"because he went and changed the prayer-meeting to Wednesday night and then we thought Thursday was Friday and so on till we thought Saturday was Sunday. Carl was laid up sick and so was Aunt Martha, so they couldn't put us right. We went to Sunday School in all that rain on Saturday and nobody came. And then we thought we'd clean house on Monday and stop old cats from talking about how dirty the manse was" — general sensation all over the church—"and we did. I shook the rugs in the Methodist graveyard because it was such a convenient place and not because I meant to be disrespectful of the dead. It isn't the dead folks who have made the fuss over this — it's the living folks. And it isn't right for any of you to blame my father for this, because he was away and didn't

know, and anyhow we thought it was Monday. He's just the best father that ever lived in the world and we love him with all our hearts."

Faith's bravado ebbed out in a sob. She ran down the steps and flashed out of the side door of the church. There the friendly starlit, summer night comforted her and the ache went out of her eyes and throat. She felt very happy. The dreadful explanation was over and everybody knew now that her father wasn't to blame and that she and Una were not so wicked as to have cleaned house knowingly on Sunday.

Inside the church people gazed blankly at each other, but Thomas Douglas rose and walked up the aisle with a set face. HIS duty was clear; the collection must be taken if the skies fell. Taken it was; the choir sang the anthem, with a dismal conviction that it fell terribly flat, and Dr. Cooper gave out the concluding hymn and pronounced the benediction with considerably less unction than usual. The Reverend Doctor had a sense of humour and Faith's performance tickled him. Besides, John Meredith was well known in Presbyterian circles.

Mr. Meredith returned home the next afternoon, but before his coming Faith contrived to scandalize Glen St. Mary again. In the reaction from Sunday evening's intensity and strain she was especially full of what Miss Cornelia would have called "devilment" on Monday. This led her to dare Walter Blythe to ride through Main Street on a pig, while she rode another one.

The pigs in question were two tall, lank animals, supposed to belong to Bertie Shakespeare Drew's father, which had been haunting the roadside by the manse for a couple of weeks. Walter did not want to ride a pig through Glen St. Mary, but whatever Faith Meredith dared him to do must be done. They tore down the hill and through the village, Faith bent double with laughter over her terrified courser, Walter crimson with shame. They tore past the minister himself, just coming home from the station; he, being a little less dreamy and abstracted than usual — owing to having had a talk on the train with Miss Cornelia who always wakened him up temporarily — noticed them, and thought he really must speak to Faith about it and tell her that such conduct was not seemly. But he had forgotten the trifling incident by the time he reached home. They passed

Mrs. Alec Davis, who shrieked in horror, and they passed Miss Rosemary West who laughed and sighed. Finally, just before the pigs swooped into Bertie Shakespeare Drew's back yard, never to emerge therefrom again, so great had been the shock to their nerves — Faith and Walter jumped off, as Dr. and Mrs. Blythe drove swiftly by.

“So that is how you bring up your boys,” said Gilbert with mock severity.

“Perhaps I do spoil them a little,” said Anne contritely, “but, oh, Gilbert, when I think of my own childhood before I came to Green Gables I haven't the heart to be very strict. How hungry for love and fun I was — an unloved little drudge with never a chance to play! They do have such good times with the manse children.”

“What about the poor pigs?” asked Gilbert.

Anne tried to look sober and failed.

“Do you really think it hurt them?” she said. “I don't think anything could hurt those animals. They've been the plague of the neighbourhood this summer and the Drews WON'T shut them up. But I'll talk to Walter — if I can keep from laughing when I do it.”

Miss Cornelia came up to Ingleside that evening to relieve her feelings over Sunday night. To her surprise she found that Anne did not view Faith's performance in quite the same light as she did.

“I thought there was something brave and pathetic in her getting up there before that churchful of people, to confess,” she said. “You could see she was frightened to death — yet she was bound to clear her father. I loved her for it.”

“Oh, of course, the poor child meant well,” sighed Miss Cornelia, “but just the same it was a terrible thing to do, and is making more talk than the housecleaning on Sunday. THAT had begun to die away, and this has started it all up again. Rosemary West is like you — she said last night as she left the church that it was a plucky thing for Faith to do, but it made her feel sorry for the child, too. Miss Ellen thought it all a good joke, and

said she hadn't had as much fun in church for years. Of course THEY don't care — they are Episcopalians. But we Presbyterians feel it. And there were so many hotel people there that night and scores of Methodists. Mrs. Leander Crawford cried, she felt so bad. And Mrs. Alec Davis said the little hussy ought to be spanked."

"Mrs. Leander Crawford is always crying in church," said Susan contemptuously. "She cries over every affecting thing the minister says. But you do not often see her name on a subscription list, Mrs. Dr. dear. Tears come cheaper. She tried to talk to me one day about Aunt Martha being such a dirty housekeeper; and I wanted to say, 'Every one knows that YOU have been seen mixing up cakes in the kitchen wash-pan, Mrs. Leander Crawford!' But I did not say it, Mrs. Dr. dear, because I have too much respect for myself to condescend to argue with the likes of her. But I could tell worse things than THAT of Mrs. Leander Crawford, if I was disposed to gossip. And as for Mrs. Alec Davis, if she had said that to me, Mrs. Dr. dear, do you know what I would have said? I would have said, 'I have no doubt you would like to spank Faith, Mrs. Davis, but you will never have the chance to spank a minister's daughter either in this world or in that which is to come.'"

"If poor Faith had only been decently dressed," lamented Miss Cornelia again, "it wouldn't have been quite that bad. But that dress looked dreadful, as she stood there upon the platform."

"It was clean, though, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan. "They ARE clean children. They may be very heedless and reckless, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I am not saying they are not, but they NEVER forget to wash behind their ears."

"The idea of Faith forgetting what day was Sunday," persisted Miss Cornelia. "She will grow up just as careless and impractical as her father, believe ME. I suppose Carl would have known better if he hadn't been sick. I don't know what was wrong with him, but I think it very likely he had been eating those blueberries that grew in the graveyard. No wonder they made him sick. If I was a Methodist I'd try to keep my graveyard cleaned up at least."

“I am of the opinion that Carl only ate the sours that grow on the dyke,” said Susan hopefully. “I do not think ANY minister’s son would eat blueberries that grew on the graves of dead people. You know it would not be so bad, Mrs. Dr. dear, to eat things that grew on the dyke.”

“The worst of last night’s performance was the face Faith made made at somebody in the congregation before she started in,” said Miss Cornelia. “Elder Clow declares she made it at him. And DID you hear that she was seen riding on a pig to-day?”

“I saw her. Walter was with her. I gave him a little — a VERY little — scolding about it. He did not say much, but he gave me the impression that it had been his idea and that Faith was not to blame.”

“I do not not believe THAT, Mrs. Dr. dear,” cried Susan, up in arms. “That is just Walter’s way — to take the blame on himself. But you know as well as I do, Mrs. Dr. dear, that that blessed child would never have thought of riding on a pig, even if he does write poetry.”

“Oh, there’s no doubt the notion was hatched in Faith Meredith’s brain,” said Miss Cornelia. “And I don’t say that I’m sorry that Amos Drew’s old pigs did get their comeuppance for once. But the minister’s daughter!”

“AND the doctor’s son!” said Anne, mimicking Miss Cornelia’s tone. Then she laughed. “Dear Miss Cornelia, they’re only little children. And you KNOW they’ve never yet done anything bad — they’re just heedless and impulsive — as I was myself once. They’ll grow sedate and sober — as I’ve done.”

Miss Cornelia laughed, too.

“There are times, Anne dearie, when I know by your eyes that YOUR soberness is put on like a garment and you’re really aching to do something wild and young again. Well, I feel encouraged. Somehow, a talk with you always does have that effect on me. Now, when I go to see Barbara Samson, it’s just the opposite. She makes me feel that everything’s wrong and always will be. But of course living all your life with a man like Joe Samson wouldn’t be exactly cheering.”

“It is a very strange thing to think that she married Joe Samson after all her chances,” remarked Susan. “She was much sought after when she was a girl. She used to boast to me that she had twenty-one beaus and Mr. Pethick.”

“What was Mr. Pethick?”

“Well, he was a sort of hanger-on, Mrs. Dr. dear, but you could not exactly call him a beau. He did not really have any intentions. Twenty-one beaus — and me that never had one! But Barbara went through the woods and picked up the crooked stick after all. And yet they say her husband can make better baking powder biscuits than she can, and she always gets him to make them when company comes to tea.”

“Which reminds ME that I have company coming to tea tomorrow and I must go home and set my bread,” said Miss Cornelia. “Mary said she could set it and no doubt she could. But while I live and move and have my being I set my own bread, believe me.”

“How is Mary getting on?” asked Anne.

“I’ve no fault to find with Mary,” said Miss Cornelia rather gloomily. “She’s getting some flesh on her bones and she’s clean and respectful — though there’s more in her than I can fathom. She’s a sly puss. If you dug for a thousand years you couldn’t get to the bottom of that child’s mind, believe ME! As for work, I never saw anything like her. She EATS it up. Mrs. Wiley may have been cruel to her, but folks needn’t say she made Mary work. Mary’s a born worker. Sometimes I wonder which will wear out first — her legs or her tongue. I don’t have enough to do to keep me out of mischief these days. I’ll be real glad when school opens, for then I’ll have something to do again. Mary doesn’t want to go to school, but I put my foot down and said that go she must. I shall NOT have the Methodists saying that I kept her out of school while I lolled in idleness.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

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There was a little unfailing spring, always icy cold and crystal pure, in a certain birch-screened hollow of Rainbow Valley in the lower corner near the marsh. Not a great many people knew of its existence. The manse and Ingleside children knew, of course, as they knew everything else about the magic valley. Occasionally they went there to get a drink, and it figured in many of their plays as a fountain of old romance. Anne knew of it and loved it because it somehow reminded her of the beloved Dryad's Bubble at Green Gables. Rosemary West knew of it; it was her fountain of romance, too. Eighteen years ago she had sat behind it one spring twilight and heard young Martin Crawford stammer out a confession of fervent, boyish love. She had whispered her own secret in return, and they had kissed and promised by the wild wood spring. They had never stood together by it again — Martin had sailed on his fatal voyage soon after; but to Rosemary West it was always a sacred spot, hallowed by that immortal hour of youth and love. Whenever she passed near it she turned aside to hold a secret tryst with an old dream — a dream from which the pain had long gone, leaving only its unforgettable sweetness.

The spring was a hidden thing. You might have passed within ten feet of it and never have suspected its existence. Two generations past a huge old pine had fallen almost across it. Nothing was left of the tree but its crumbling trunk out of which the ferns grew thickly, making a green roof and a lacy screen for the water. A maple-tree grew beside it with a curiously gnarled and twisted trunk, creeping along the ground for a little way before shooting up into the air, and so forming a quaint seat; and September had flung a scarf of pale smoke-blue asters around the hollow.

John Meredith, taking the cross-lots road through Rainbow Valley on his way home from some pastoral visitations around the Harbour head one

evening, turned aside to drink of the little spring. Walter Blythe had shown it to him one afternoon only a few days before, and they had had a long talk together on the maple seat. John Meredith, under all his shyness and aloofness, had the heart of a boy. He had been called Jack in his youth, though nobody in Glen St. Mary would ever have believed it. Walter and he had taken to each other and had talked unreservedly. Mr. Meredith found his way into some sealed and sacred chambers of the lad's soul wherein not even Di had ever looked. They were to be chums from that friendly hour and Walter knew that he would never be frightened of the minister again.

"I never believed before that it was possible to get really acquainted with a minister," he told his mother that night.

John Meredith drank from his slender white hand, whose grip of steel always surprised people who were unacquainted with it, and then sat down on the maple seat. He was in no hurry to go home; this was a beautiful spot and he was mentally weary after a round of rather uninspiring conversations with many good and stupid people. The moon was rising. Rainbow Valley was wind-haunted and star-sentinelled only where he was, but afar from the upper end came the gay notes of children's laughter and voices.

The ethereal beauty of the asters in the moonlight, the glimmer of the little spring, the soft croon of the brook, the wavering grace of the brackens all wove a white magic round John Meredith. He forgot congregational worries and spiritual problems; the years slipped away from him; he was a young divinity student again and the roses of June were blooming red and fragrant on the dark, queenly head of his Cecilia. He sat there and dreamed like any boy. And it was at this propitious moment that Rosemary West stepped aside from the by-path and stood beside him in that dangerous, spell-weaving place. John Meredith stood up as she came in and saw her — REALLY saw her — for the first time.

He had met her in his church once or twice and shaken hands with her abstractedly as he did with anyone he happened to encounter on his way down the aisle. He had never met her elsewhere, for the Wests were Episcopalians, with church affinities in Lowbridge, and no occasion for

calling upon them had ever arisen. Before tonight, if anyone had asked John Meredith what Rosemary West looked like he would not have had the slightest notion. But he was never to forget her, as she appeared to him in the glamour of kind moonlight by the spring.

She was certainly not in the least like Cecilia, who had always been his ideal of womanly beauty. Cecilia had been small and dark and vivacious — Rosemary West was tall and fair and placid, yet John Meredith thought he had never seen so beautiful a woman.

She was bareheaded and her golden hair — hair of a warm gold, “molasses taffy” colour as Di Blythe had said — was pinned in sleek, close coils over her head; she had large, tranquil, blue eyes that always seemed full of friendliness, a high white forehead and a finely shaped face.

Rosemary West was always called a “sweet woman.” She was so sweet that even her highbred, stately air had never gained for her the reputation of being “stuck-up,” which it would inevitably have done in the case of anyone else in Glen St. Mary. Life had taught her to be brave, to be patient, to love, to forgive. She had watched the ship on which her lover went sailing out of Four Winds Harbour into the sunset. But, though she watched long, she had never seen it coming sailing back. That vigil had taken girlhood from her eyes, yet she kept her youth to a marvellous degree. Perhaps this was because she always seemed to preserve that attitude of delighted surprise towards life which most of us leave behind in childhood — an attitude which not only made Rosemary herself seem young, but flung a pleasing illusion of youth over the consciousness of every one who talked to her.

John Meredith was startled by her loveliness and Rosemary was startled by his presence. She had never thought she would find anyone by that remote spring, least of all the recluse of Glen St. Mary manse. She almost dropped the heavy armful of books she was carrying home from the Glen lending library, and then, to cover her confusion, she told one of those small fibs which even the best of women do tell at times.

“I — I came for a drink,” she said, stammering a little, in answer to Mr. Meredith’s grave “good evening, Miss West.” She felt that she was an

unpardonable goose and she longed to shake herself. But John Meredith was not a vain man and he knew she would likely have been as much startled had she met old Elder Clow in that unexpected fashion. Her confusion put him at ease and he forgot to be shy; besides, even the shyest of men can sometimes be quite audacious in moonlight.

“Let me get you a cup,” he said smiling. There was a cup near by, if he had only known it, a cracked, handleless blue cup secreted under the maple by the Rainbow Valley children; but he did not know it, so he stepped out to one of the birch-trees and stripped a bit of its white skin away. Deftly he fashioned this into a three-cornered cup, filled it from the spring, and handed it to Rosemary.

Rosemary took it and drank every drop to punish herself for her fib, for she was not in the least thirsty, and to drink a fairly large cupful of water when you are not thirsty is somewhat of an ordeal. Yet the memory of that draught was to be very pleasant to Rosemary. In after years it seemed to her that there was something sacramental about it. Perhaps this was because of what the minister did when she handed him back the cup. He stooped again and filled it and drank of it himself. It was only by accident that he put his lips just where Rosemary had put hers, and Rosemary knew it. Nevertheless, it had a curious significance for her. They two had drunk of the same cup. She remembered idly that an old aunt of hers used to say that when two people did this their after-lives would be linked in some fashion, whether for good or ill.

John Meredith held the cup uncertainly. He did not know what to do with it. The logical thing would have been to toss it away, but somehow he was disinclined to do this. Rosemary held out her hand for it.

“Will you let me have it?” she said. “You made it so knackily. I never saw anyone make a birch cup so since my little brother used to make them long ago — before he died.”

“I learned how to make them when I was a boy, camping out one summer. An old hunter taught me,” said Mr. Meredith. “Let me carry your books, Miss West.”

Rosemary was startled into another fib and said oh, they were not heavy. But the minister took them from her with quite a masterful air and they walked away together. It was the first time Rosemary had stood by the valley spring without thinking of Martin Crawford. The mystic tryst had been broken.

The little by-path wound around the marsh and then struck up the long wooded hill on the top of which Rosemary lived. Beyond, through the trees, they could see the moonlight shining across the level summer fields. But the little path was shadowy and narrow. Trees crowded over it, and trees are never quite as friendly to human beings after nightfall as they are in daylight. They wrap themselves away from us. They whisper and plot furtively. If they reach out a hand to us it has a hostile, tentative touch. People walking amid trees after night always draw closer together instinctively and involuntarily, making an alliance, physical and mental, against certain alien powers around them. Rosemary's dress brushed against John Meredith as they walked. Not even an absentminded minister, who was after all a young man still, though he firmly believed he had outlived romance, could be insensible to the charm of the night and the path and the companion.

It is never quite safe to think we have done with life. When we imagine we have finished our story fate has a trick of turning the page and showing us yet another chapter. These two people each thought their hearts belonged irrevocably to the past; but they both found their walk up that hill very pleasant. Rosemary thought the Glen minister was by no means as shy and tonguetied as he had been represented. He seemed to find no difficulty in talking easily and freely. Glen housewives would have been amazed had they heard him. But then so many Glen housewives talked only gossip and the price of eggs, and John Meredith was not interested in either. He talked to Rosemary of books and music and wide-world doings and something of his own history, and found that she could understand and respond. Rosemary, it appeared, possessed a book which Mr. Meredith had not read and wished to read. She offered to lend it to him and when they reached the old homestead on the hill he went in to get it.

The house itself was an old-fashioned gray one, hung with vines, through which the light in the sitting-room winked in friendly fashion. It looked down the Glen, over the harbour, silvered in the moonlight, to the sand-dunes and the moaning ocean. They walked in through a garden that always seemed to smell of roses, even when no roses were in bloom. There was a sisterhood of lilies at the gate and a ribbon of asters on either side of the broad walk, and a lacery of fir trees on the hill's edge beyond the house.

"You have the whole world at your doorstep here," said John Meredith, with a long breath. "What a view — what an outlook! At times I feel stifled down there in the Glen. You can breathe up here."

"It is calm tonight," said Rosemary laughing. "If there were a wind it would blow your breath away. We get 'a' the airts the wind can blow' up here. This place should be called Four Winds instead of the Harbour."

"I like wind," he said. "A day when there is no wind seems to me DEAD. A windy day wakes me up." He gave a conscious laugh. "On a calm day I fall into day dreams. No doubt you know my reputation, Miss West. If I cut you dead the next time we meet don't put it down to bad manners. Please understand that it is only abstraction and forgive me — and speak to me."

They found Ellen West in the sitting room when they went in. She laid her glasses down on the book she had been reading and looked at them in amazement tintured with something else. But she shook hands amiably with Mr. Meredith and he sat down and talked to her, while Rosemary hunted out his book.

Ellen West was ten years older than Rosemary, and so different from her that it was hard to believe they were sisters. She was dark and massive, with black hair, thick, black eyebrows and eyes of the clear, slaty blue of the gulf water in a north wind. She had a rather stern, forbidding look, but she was in reality very jolly, with a hearty, gurgling laugh and a deep, mellow, pleasant voice with a suggestion of masculinity about it. She had once remarked to Rosemary that she would really like to have a talk with that Presbyterian minister at the Glen, to see if he could find a word to say

to a woman when he was cornered. She had her chance now and she tackled him on world politics. Miss Ellen, who was a great reader, had been devouring a book on the Kaiser of Germany, and she demanded Mr. Meredith's opinion of him.

"A dangerous man," was his answer.

"I believe you!" Miss Ellen nodded. "Mark my words, Mr. Meredith, that man is going to fight somebody yet. He's ACHING to. He is going to set the world on fire."

"If you mean that he will wantonly precipitate a great war I hardly think so," said Mr. Meredith. "The day has gone by for that sort of thing."

"Bless you, it hasn't," rumbled Ellen. "The day never goes by for men and nations to make asses of themselves and take to the fists. The millennium isn't THAT near, Mr. Meredith, and YOU don't think it is any more than I do. As for this Kaiser, mark my words, he is going to make a heap of trouble" — and Miss Ellen prodded her book emphatically with her long finger. "Yes, if he isn't nipped in the bud he's going to make trouble. WE'LL live to see it — you and I will live to see it, Mr. Meredith. And who is going to nip him? England should, but she won't. WHO is going to nip him? Tell me that, Mr. Meredith."

Mr. Meredith couldn't tell her, but they plunged into a discussion of German militarism that lasted long after Rosemary had found the book. Rosemary said nothing, but sat in a little rocker behind Ellen and stroked an important black cat meditatively. John Meredith hunted big game in Europe with Ellen, but he looked oftener at Rosemary than at Ellen, and Ellen noticed it. After Rosemary had gone to the door with him and come back Ellen rose and looked at her accusingly.

"Rosemary West, that man has a notion of courting you."

Rosemary quivered. Ellen's speech was like a blow to her. It rubbed all the bloom off the pleasant evening. But she would not let Ellen see how it hurt her.

“Nonsense,” she said, and laughed, a little too carelessly. “You see a beau for me in every bush, Ellen. Why he told me all about his wife tonight — how much she was to him — how empty her death had left the world.”

“Well, that may be HIS way of courting,” retorted Ellen. “Men have all kinds of ways, I understand. But don’t forget your promise, Rosemary.”

“There is no need of my either forgetting or remembering it,” said Rosemary, a little wearily. “YOU forget that I’m an old maid, Ellen. It is only your sisterly delusion that I am still young and blooming and dangerous. Mr. Meredith merely wants to be a friend — if he wants that much itself. He’ll forget us both long before he gets back to the manse.”

“I’ve no objection to your being friends with him,” conceded Ellen, “but it musn’t go beyond friendship, remember. I’m always suspicious of widowers. They are not given to romantic ideas about friendship. They’re apt to mean business. As for this Presbyterian man, what do they call him shy for? He’s not a bit shy, though he may be absentminded — so absentminded that he forgot to say goodnight to ME when you started to go to the door with him. He’s got brains, too. There’s so few men round here that can talk sense to a body. I’ve enjoyed the evening. I wouldn’t mind seeing more of him. But no philandering, Rosemary, mind you — no philandering.”

Rosemary was quite used to being warned by Ellen from philandering if she so much as talked five minutes to any marriageable man under eighty or over eighteen. She had always laughed at the warning with unfeigned amusement. This time it did not amuse her — it irritated her a little. Who wanted to philander?

“Don’t be such a goose, Ellen,” she said with unaccustomed shortness as she took her lamp. She went upstairs without saying goodnight.

Ellen shook her head dubiously and looked at the black cat.

“What is she so cross about, St. George?” she asked. “When you howl you’re hit, I’ve always heard, George. But she promised, Saint — she

promised, and we Wests always keep our word. So it won't matter if he does want to philander, George. She promised. I won't worry."

Upstairs, in her room, Rosemary sat for a long while looking out of the window across the moonlit garden to the distant, shining harbour. She felt vaguely upset and unsettled. She was suddenly tired of outworn dreams. And in the garden the petals of the last red rose were scattered by a sudden little wind. Summer was over — it was autumn.

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. ALEC DAVIS MAKES A CALL

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John Meredith walked slowly home. At first he thought a little about Rosemary, but by the time he reached Rainbow Valley he had forgotten all about her and was meditating on a point regarding German theology which Ellen had raised. He passed through Rainbow Valley and knew it not. The charm of Rainbow Valley had no potency against German theology. When he reached the manse he went to his study and took down a bulky volume in order to see which had been right, he or Ellen. He remained immersed in its mazes until dawn, struck a new trail of speculation and pursued it like a sleuth hound for the next week, utterly lost to the world, his parish and his family. He read day and night; he forgot to go to his meals when Una was not there to drag him to them; he never thought about Rosemary or Ellen again. Old Mrs. Marshall, over-harbour, was very ill and sent for him, but the message lay unheeded on his desk and gathered dust. Mrs. Marshall recovered but never forgave him. A young couple came to the manse to be married and Mr. Meredith, with unbrushed hair, in carpet slippers and faded dressing gown, married them. To be sure, he began by reading the funeral service to them and got along as far as “ashes to ashes and dust to dust” before he vaguely suspected that something was wrong.

“Dear me,” he said absently, “that is strange — very strange.”

The bride, who was very nervous, began to cry. The bridegroom, who was not in the least nervous, giggled.

“Please, sir, I think you’re burying us instead of marrying us,” he said.

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Meredith, as it did not matter much. He turned up the marriage service and got through with it, but the bride never felt quite properly married for the rest of her life.

He forgot his prayer-meeting again — but that did not matter, for it was a wet night and nobody came. He might even have forgotten his Sunday service if it had not been for Mrs. Alec Davis. Aunt Martha came in on Saturday afternoon and told him that Mrs. Davis was in the parlour and wanted to see him. Mr. Meredith sighed. Mrs. Davis was the only woman in Glen St. Mary church whom he positively detested. Unfortunately, she was also the richest, and his board of managers had warned Mr. Meredith against offending her. Mr. Meredith seldom thought of such a worldly matter as his stipend; but the managers were more practical. Also, they were astute. Without mentioning money, they contrived to instil into Mr. Meredith's mind a conviction that he should not offend Mrs. Davis. Otherwise, he would likely have forgotten all about her as soon as Aunt Martha had gone out. As it was, he turned down his Ewald with a feeling of annoyance and went across the hall to the parlour.

Mrs. Davis was sitting on the sofa, looking about her with an air of scornful disapproval.

What a scandalous room! There were no curtains on the window. Mrs. Davis did not know that Faith and Una had taken them down the day before to use as court trains in one of their plays and had forgotten to put them up again, but she could not have accused those windows more fiercely if she had known. The blinds were cracked and torn. The pictures on the walls were crooked; the rugs were awry; the vases were full of faded flowers; the dust lay in heaps — literally in heaps.

“What are we coming to?” Mrs. Davis asked herself, and then primmed up her unbeautiful mouth.

Jerry and Carl had been whooping and sliding down the banisters as she came through the hall. They did not see her and continued whooping and sliding, and Mrs. Davis was convinced they did it on purpose. Faith's pet rooster ambled through the hall, stood in the parlour doorway and looked at her. Not liking her looks, he did not venture in. Mrs. Davis gave a scornful sniff. A pretty manse, indeed, where roosters paraded the halls and stared people out of countenance.

“Shoo, there,” commanded Mrs. Davis, poking her flounced, changeable-silk parasol at him.

Adam shooed. He was a wise rooster and Mrs. Davis had wrung the necks of so many roosters with her own fair hands in the course of her fifty years that an air of the executioner seemed to hang around her. Adam scuttled through the hall as the minister came in.

Mr. Meredith still wore slippers and dressing gown, and his dark hair still fell in uncared-for locks over his high brow. But he looked the gentleman he was; and Mrs. Alec Davis, in her silk dress and beplumed bonnet, and kid gloves and gold chain looked the vulgar, coarse-souled woman she was. Each felt the antagonism of the other's personality. Mr. Meredith shrank, but Mrs. Davis girded up her loins for the fray. She had come to the manse to propose a certain thing to the minister and she meant to lose no time in proposing it. She was going to do him a favour — a great favour — and the sooner he was made aware of it the better. She had been thinking about it all summer and had come to a decision at last. This was all that mattered, Mrs. Davis thought. When she decided a thing it WAS decided. Nobody else had any say in the matter. That had always been her attitude. When she had made her mind up to marry Alec Davis she had married him and that was the end to it. Alec had never known how it happened, but what odds? So in this case — Mrs. Davis had arranged everything to her own satisfaction. Now it only remained to inform Mr. Meredith.

“Will you please shut that door?” said Mrs. Davis, unpriming her mouth slightly to say it, but speaking with asperity. “I have something important to say, and I can't say it with that racket in the hall.”

Mr. Meredith shut the door meekly. Then he sat down before Mrs. Davis. He was not wholly aware of her yet. His mind was still wrestling with Ewald's arguments. Mrs. Davis sensed this detachment and it annoyed her.

“I have come to tell you, Mr. Meredith,” she said aggressively, “that I have decided to adopt Una.”

“To — adopt — Una!” Mr. Meredith gazed at her blankly, not understanding in the least.

“Yes. I’ve been thinking it over for some time. I have often thought of adopting a child, since my husband’s death. But it seemed so hard to get a suitable one. It is very few children I would want to take into MY home. I wouldn’t think of taking a home child — some outcast of the slums in all probability. And there is hardly ever any other child to be got. One of the fishermen down at the harbour died last fall and left six youngsters. They tried to get me to take one, but I soon gave them to understand that I had no idea of adopting trash like that. Their grandfather stole a horse. Besides, they were all boys and I wanted a girl — a quiet, obedient girl that I could train up to be a lady. Una will suit me exactly. She would be a nice little thing if she was properly looked after — so different from Faith. I would never dream of adopting Faith. But I’ll take Una and I’ll give her a good home, and upbringing, Mr. Meredith, and if she behaves herself I’ll leave her all my money when I die. Not one of my own relatives shall have a cent of it in any case, I’m determined on that. It was the idea of aggravating them that set me to thinking of adopting a child as much as anything in the first place. Una shall be well dressed and educated and trained, Mr. Meredith, and I shall give her music and painting lessons and treat her as if she was my own.”

Mr. Meredith was wide enough awake by this time. There was a faint flush in his pale cheek and a dangerous light in his fine dark eyes. Was this woman, whose vulgarity and consciousness of money oozed out of her at every pore, actually asking him to give her Una — his dear little wistful Una with Cecilia’s own dark-blue eyes — the child whom the dying mother had clasped to her heart after the other children had been led weeping from the room. Cecilia had clung to her baby until the gates of death had shut between them. She had looked over the little dark head to her husband.

“Take good care of her, John,” she had entreated. “She is so small — and sensitive. The others can fight their way — but the world will hurt HER. Oh, John, I don’t know what you and she are going to do. You both need me so much. But keep her close to you — keep her close to you.”

These had been almost her last words except a few unforgettable ones for him alone. And it was this child whom Mrs. Davis had coolly announced her intention of taking from him. He sat up straight and looked at Mrs. Davis. In spite of the worn dressing gown and the frayed slippers there was something about him that made Mrs. Davis feel a little of the old reverence for “the cloth” in which she had been brought up. After all, there WAS a certain divinity hedging a minister, even a poor, unworldly, abstracted one.

“I thank you for your kind intentions, Mrs. Davis,” said Mr. Meredith with a gentle, final, quite awful courtesy, “but I cannot give you my child.”

Mrs. Davis looked blank. She had never dreamed of his refusing.

“Why, Mr. Meredith,” she said in astonishment. “You must be cr — you can’t mean it. You must think it over — think of all the advantages I can give her.”

“There is no need to think it over, Mrs. Davis. It is entirely out of the question. All the worldly advantages it is in your power to bestow on her could not compensate for the loss of a father’s love and care. I thank you again — but it is not to be thought of.”

Disappointment angered Mrs. Davis beyond the power of old habit to control. Her broad red face turned purple and her voice trembled.

“I thought you’d be only too glad to let me have her,” she sneered.

“Why did you think that?” asked Mr. Meredith quietly.

“Because nobody ever supposed you cared anything about any of your children,” retorted Mrs. Davis contemptuously. “You neglect them scandalously. It is the talk of the place. They aren’t fed and dressed properly, and they’re not trained at all. They have no more manners than a pack of wild Indians. You never think of doing your duty as a father. You let a stray child come here among them for a fortnight and never took any notice of her — a child that swore like a trooper I’m told. YOU wouldn’t have cared if they’d caught smallpox from her. And Faith made an

exhibition of herself getting up in preaching and making that speech! And she rid a pig down the street — under your very eyes I understand. The way they act is past belief and you never lift a finger to stop them or try to teach them anything. And now when I offer one of them a good home and good prospects you refuse it and insult me. A pretty father you, to talk of loving and caring for your children!”

“That will do, woman!” said Mr. Meredith. He stood up and looked at Mrs. Davis with eyes that made her quail. “That will do,” he repeated. “I desire to hear no more, Mrs. Davis. You have said too much. It may be that I have been remiss in some respects in my duty as a parent, but it is not for you to remind me of it in such terms as you have used. Let us say good afternoon.”

Mrs. Davis did not say anything half so amiable as good afternoon, but she took her departure. As she swept past the minister a large, plump toad, which Carl had secreted under the lounge, hopped out almost under her feet. Mrs. Davis gave a shriek and in trying to avoid treading on the awful thing, lost her balance and her parasol. She did not exactly fall, but she staggered and reeled across the room in a very undignified fashion and brought up against the door with a thud that jarred her from head to foot. Mr. Meredith, who had not seen the toad, wondered if she had been attacked with some kind of apoplectic or paralytic seizure, and ran in alarm to her assistance. But Mrs. Davis, recovering her feet, waved him back furiously.

“Don’t you dare to touch me,” she almost shouted. “This is some more of your children’s doings, I suppose. This is no fit place for a decent woman. Give me my umbrella and let me go. I’ll never darken the doors of your manse or your church again.”

Mr. Meredith picked up the gorgeous parasol meekly enough and gave it to her. Mrs. Davis seized it and marched out. Jerry and Carl had given up banister sliding and were sitting on the edge of the veranda with Faith. Unfortunately, all three were singing at the tops of their healthy young voices “There’ll be a hot time in the old town tonight.” Mrs. Davis believed the song was meant for her and her only. She stopped and shook her parasol at them.

“Your father is a fool,” she said, “and you are three young varmints that ought to be whipped within an inch of your lives.”

“He isn’t,” cried Faith. “We’re not,” cried the boys. But Mrs. Davis was gone.

“Goodness, isn’t she mad!” said Jerry. “And what is a ‘varmint’ anyhow?”

John Meredith paced up and down the parlour for a few minutes; then he went back to his study and sat down. But he did not return to his German theology. He was too grievously disturbed for that. Mrs. Davis had wakened him up with a vengeance. WAS he such a remiss, careless father as she had accused him of being? HAD he so scandalously neglected the bodily and spiritual welfare of the four little motherless creatures dependent on him? WERE his people talking of it as harshly as Mrs. Davis had declared? It must be so, since Mrs. Davis had come to ask for Una in the full and confident belief that he would hand the child over to her as unconcernedly and gladly as one might hand over a strayed, unwelcome kitten. And, if so, what then?

John Meredith groaned and resumed his pacing up and down the dusty, disordered room. What could he do? He loved his children as deeply as any father could and he knew, past the power of Mrs. Davis or any of her ilk, to disturb his conviction, that they loved him devotedly. But WAS he fit to have charge of them? He knew — none better — his weaknesses and limitations. What was needed was a good woman’s presence and influence and common sense. But how could that be arranged? Even were he able to get such a housekeeper it would cut Aunt Martha to the quick. She believed she could still do all that was meet and necessary. He could not so hurt and insult the poor old woman who had been so kind to him and his. How devoted she had been to Cecilia! And Cecilia had asked him to be very considerate of Aunt Martha. To be sure, he suddenly remembered that Aunt Martha had once hinted that he ought to marry again. He felt she would not resent a wife as she would a housekeeper. But that was out of the question. He did not wish to marry — he did not and could not care for anyone. Then what could he do? It suddenly occurred to him that he would go over to Ingleside and talk over his difficulties with Mrs. Blythe. Mrs. Blythe was one of the few women he never felt shy or tongue-tied with. She

was always so sympathetic and refreshing. It might be that she could suggest some solution of his problems. And even if she could not Mr. Meredith felt that he needed a little decent human companionship after his dose of Mrs. Davis — something to take the taste of her out of his soul.

He dressed hurriedly and ate his supper less abstractedly than usual. It occurred to him that it was a poor meal. He looked at his children; they were rosy and healthy looking enough — except Una, and she had never been very strong even when her mother was alive. They were all laughing and talking — certainly they seemed happy. Carl was especially happy because he had two most beautiful spiders crawling around his supper plate. Their voices were pleasant, their manners did not seem bad, they were considerate of and gentle to one another. Yet Mrs. Davis had said their behaviour was the talk of the congregation.

As Mr. Meredith went through his gate Dr. Blythe and Mrs. Blythe drove past on the road that led to Lowbridge. The minister's face fell. Mrs. Blythe was going away — there was no use in going to Ingleside. And he craved a little companionship more than ever. As he gazed rather hopelessly over the landscape the sunset light struck on a window of the old West homestead on the hill. It flared out rosily like a beacon of good hope. He suddenly remembered Rosemary and Ellen West. He thought that he would relish some of Ellen's pungent conversation. He thought it would be pleasant to see Rosemary's slow, sweet smile and calm, heavenly blue eyes again. What did that old poem of Sir Philip Sidney's say? — "continual comfort in a face" — that just suited her. And he needed comfort. Why not go and call? He remembered that Ellen had asked him to drop in sometimes and there was Rosemary's book to take back — he ought to take it back before he forgot. He had an uneasy suspicion that there were a great many books in his library which he had borrowed at sundry times and in divers places and had forgotten to take back. It was surely his duty to guard against that in this case. He went back into his study, got the book, and plunged downward into Rainbow Valley.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE GOSSIP

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On the evening after Mrs. Myra Murray of the over-harbour section had been buried Miss Cornelia and Mary Vance came up to Ingleside. There were several things concerning which Miss Cornelia wished to unburden her soul. The funeral had to be all talked over, of course. Susan and Miss Cornelia thrashed this out between them; Anne took no part or delight in such goulsh conversations. She sat a little apart and watched the autumnal flame of dahlias in the garden, and the dreaming, glamorous harbour of the September sunset. Mary Vance sat beside her, knitting meekly. Mary's heart was down in the Rainbow Valley, whence came sweet, distance-softened sounds of children's laughter, but her fingers were under Miss Cornelia's eye. She had to knit so many rounds of her stocking before she might go to the valley. Mary knit and held her tongue, but used her ears.

"I never saw a nicer looking corpse," said Miss Cornelia judicially. "Myra Murray was always a pretty woman — she was a Corey from Lowbridge and the Coreys were noted for their good looks."

"I said to the corpse as I passed it, 'poor woman. I hope you are as happy as you look.'" sighed Susan. "She had not changed much. That dress she wore was the black satin she got for her daughter's wedding fourteen years ago. Her Aunt told her then to keep it for her funeral, but Myra laughed and said, 'I may wear it to my funeral, Aunt, but I will have a good time out of it first.' And I may say she did. Myra Murray was not a woman to attend her own funeral before she died. Many a time afterwards when I saw her enjoying herself out in company I thought to myself, 'You are a handsome woman, Myra Murray, and that dress becomes you, but it will likely be your shroud at last.' And you see my words have come true, Mrs. Marshall Elliott."

Susan sighed again heavily. She was enjoying herself hugely. A funeral was really a delightful subject of conversation.

“I always liked to meet Myra,” said Miss Cornelia. “She was always so gay and cheerful — she made you feel better just by her handshake. Myra always made the best of things.”

“That is true,” asserted Susan. “Her sister-in-law told me that when the doctor told her at last that he could do nothing for her and she would never rise from that bed again, Myra said quite cheerfully, ‘Well, if that is so, I’m thankful the preserving is all done, and I will not have to face the fall housecleaning. I always liked housecleaning in spring,’ she says, ‘but I always hated it in the fall. I will get clear of it this year, thank goodness.’ There are people who would call that levity, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and I think her sister-in-law was a little ashamed of it. She said perhaps her sickness had made Myra a little light-headed. But I said, ‘No, Mrs. Murray, do not worry over it. It was just Myra’s way of looking at the bright side.’”

“Her sister Luella was just the opposite,” said Miss Cornelia. “There was no bright side for Luella — there was just black and shades of gray. For years she used always to be declaring she was going to die in a week or so. ‘I won’t be here to burden you long,’ she would tell her family with a groan. And if any of them ventured to talk about their little future plans she’d groan also and say, ‘Ah, I won’t be here then.’ When I went to see her I always agreed with her and it made her so mad that she was always quite a lot better for several days afterwards. She has better health now but no more cheerfulness. Myra was so different. She was always doing or saying something to make some one feel good. Perhaps the men they married had something to do with it. Luella’s man was a Tartar, believe ME, while Jim Murray was decent, as men go. He looked heartbroken to-day. It isn’t often I feel sorry for a man at his wife’s funeral, but I did feel for Jim Murray.”

“No wonder he looked sad. He will not get a wife like Myra again in a hurry,” said Susan. “Maybe he will not try, since his children are all grown up and Mirabel is able to keep house. But there is no predicting what a widower may or may not do and I, for one, will not try.”

“We’ll miss Myra terrible in church,” said Miss Cornelia. “She was such a worker. Nothing ever stumped HER. If she couldn’t get over a difficulty she’d get around it, and if she couldn’t get around it she’d pretend it wasn’t there — and generally it wasn’t. ‘I’ll keep a stiff upper lip to my journey’s end,’ said she to me once. Well, she has ended her journey.”

“Do you think so?” asked Anne suddenly, coming back from dreamland. “I can’t picture HER journey as being ended. Can YOU think of her sitting down and folding her hands — that eager, asking spirit of hers, with its fine adventurous outlook? No, I think in death she just opened a gate and went through — on — on — to new, shining adventures.”

“Maybe — maybe,” assented Miss Cornelia. “Do you know, Anne dearie, I never was much taken with this everlasting rest doctrine myself — though I hope it isn’t heresy to say so. I want to bustle round in heaven the same as here. And I hope there’ll be a celestial substitute for pies and doughnuts — something that has to be MADE. Of course, one does get awful tired at times — and the older you are the tireder you get. But the very tiredest could get rested in something short of eternity, you’d think — except, perhaps, a lazy man.”

“When I meet Myra Murray again,” said Anne, “I want to see her coming towards me, brisk and laughing, just as she always did here.”

“Oh, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, in a shocked tone, “you surely do not think that Myra will be laughing in the world to come?”

“Why not, Susan? Do you think we will be crying there?”

“No, no, Mrs. Dr. dear, do not misunderstand me. I do not think we shall be either crying or laughing.”

“What then?”

“Well,” said Susan, driven to it. “it is my opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear, that we shall just look solemn and holy.”

“And do you really think, Susan,” said Anne, looking solemn enough, “that either Myra Murray or I could look solemn and holy all the time — ALL the time, Susan?”

“Well,” admitted Susan reluctantly, “I might go so far as to say that you both would have to smile now and again, but I can never admit that there will be laughing in heaven. The idea seems really irreverent, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“Well, to come back to earth,” said Miss Cornelia, “who can we get to take Myra’s class in Sunday School? Julia Clow has been teaching it since Myra took ill, but she’s going to town for the winter and we’ll have to get somebody else.”

“I heard that Mrs. Laurie Jamieson wanted it,” said Anne. “The Jamiesons have come to church very regularly since they moved to the Glen from Lowbridge.”

“New brooms!” said Miss Cornelia dubiously. “Wait till they’ve gone regularly for a year.”

“You cannot depend on Mrs. Jamieson a bit, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan solemnly. “She died once and when they were measuring her for her coffin, after laying her out just beautiful, did she not go and come back to life! Now, Mrs. Dr. dear, you know you CANNOT depend on a woman like that.”

“She might turn Methodist at any moment,” said Miss Cornelia. “They tell me they went to the Methodist Church at Lowbridge quite as often as to the Presbyterian. I haven’t caught them at it here yet, but I would not approve of taking Mrs. Jamieson into the Sunday School. Yet we must not offend them. We are losing too many people, by death or bad temper. Mrs. Alec Davis has left the church, no one knows why. She told the managers that she would never pay another cent to Mr. Meredith’s salary. Of course, most people say that the children offended her, but somehow I don’t think so. I tried to pump Faith, but all I could get out of her was that Mrs. Davis had come, seemingly in high good humour, to see her father, and had left in an awful rage, calling them all ‘varmints!’”

“Varmints, indeed!” said Susan furiously. “Does Mrs. Alec Davis forget that her uncle on her mother’s side was suspected of poisoning his wife? Not that it was ever proved, Mrs. Dr. dear, and it does not do to believe all you hear. But if I had an uncle whose wife died without any satisfactory reason, I would not go about the country calling innocent children varmints.”

“The point is,” said Miss Cornelia, “that Mrs. Davis paid a large subscription, and how its loss is going to be made up is a problem. And if she turns the other Douglasses against Mr. Meredith, as she will certainly try to do, he will just have to go.”

“I do not think Mrs. Alec Davis is very well liked by the rest of the clan,” said Susan. “It is not likely she will be able to influence them.”

“But those Douglasses all hang together so. If you touch one, you touch all. We can’t do without them, so much is certain. They pay half the salary. They are not mean, whatever else may be said of them. Norman Douglas used to give a hundred a year long ago before he left.”

“What did he leave for?” asked Anne.

“He declared a member of the session cheated him in a cow deal. He hasn’t come to church for twenty years. His wife used to come regular while she was alive, poor thing, but he never would let her pay anything, except one red cent every Sunday. She felt dreadfully humiliated. I don’t know that he was any too good a husband to her, though she was never heard to complain. But she always had a cowed look. Norman Douglas didn’t get the woman he wanted thirty years ago and the Douglasses never liked to put up with second best.”

“Who was the woman he did want.”

“Ellen West. They weren’t engaged exactly, I believe, but they went about together for two years. And then they just broke off — nobody ever know why. Just some silly quarrel, I suppose. And Norman went and married Hester Reese before his temper had time to cool — married her just to spite Ellen, I haven’t a doubt. So like a man! Hester was a nice little thing,

but she never had much spirit and he broke what little she had. She was too meek for Norman. He needed a woman who could stand up to him. Ellen would have kept him in fine order and he would have liked her all the better for it. He despised Hester, that is the truth, just because she always gave in to him. I used to hear him say many a time, long ago when he was a young fellow ‘Give me a spunky woman — spunk for me every time.’ And then he went and married a girl who couldn’t say boo to a goose — manlike. That family of Reeses were just vegetables. They went through the motions of living, but they didn’t LIVE.”

“Russell Reese used his first wife’s wedding-ring to marry his second,” said Susan reminiscently. “That was TOO economical in my opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear. And his brother John has his own tombstone put up in the over-harbour graveyard, with everything on it but the date of death, and he goes and looks at it every Sunday. Most folks would not consider that much fun, but it is plain he does. People do have such different ideas of enjoyment. As for Norman Douglas, he is a perfect heathen. When the last minister asked him why he never went to church he said “Too many ugly women there, parson — too many ugly women!” I should like to go to such a man, Mrs. Dr. dear, and say to him solemnly, ‘There is a hell!’”

“Oh, Norman doesn’t believe there is such a place,” said Miss Cornelia. “I hope he’ll find out his mistake when he comes to die. There, Mary, you’ve knit your three inches and you can go and play with the children for half an hour.”

Mary needed no second bidding. She flew to Rainbow Valley with a heart as light as her heels, and in the course of conversation told Faith Meredith all about Mrs. Alec Davis.

“And Mrs. Elliott says that she’ll turn all the Douglasses against your father and then he’ll have to leave the Glen because his salary won’t be paid,” concluded Mary. “I don’t know what is to be done, honest to goodness. If only old Norman Douglas would come back to church and pay, it wouldn’t be so bad. But he won’t — and the Douglasses will leave — and you all will have to go.”

Faith carried a heavy heart to bed with her that night. The thought of leaving the Glen was unbearable. Nowhere else in the world were there such chums as the Blythes. Her little heart had been wrung when they had left Maywater — she had shed many bitter tears when she parted with Maywater chums and the old manse there where her mother had lived and died. She could not contemplate calmly the thought of such another and harder wrench. She COULDN'T leave Glen St. Mary and dear Rainbow Valley and that delicious graveyard.

“It’s awful to be minister’s family,” groaned Faith into her pillow. “Just as soon as you get fond of a place you are torn up by the roots. I’ll never, never, NEVER marry a minister, no matter how nice he is.”

Faith sat up in bed and looked out of the little vine-hung window. The night was very still, the silence broken only by Una's soft breathing. Faith felt terribly alone in the world. She could see Glen St. Mary lying under the starry blue meadows of the autumn night. Over the valley a light shone from the girls' room at Ingleside, and another from Walter's room. Faith wondered if poor Walter had toothache again. Then she sighed, with a little passing sigh of envy of Nan and Di. They had a mother and a settled home — THEY were not at the mercy of people who got angry without any reason and called you a varmint. Away beyond the Glen, amid fields that were very quiet with sleep, another light was burning. Faith knew it shone in the house where Norman Douglas lived. He was reputed to sit up all hours of the night reading. Mary had said if he could only be induced to return to the church all would be well. And why not? Faith looked at a big, low star hanging over the tall, pointed spruce at the gate of the Methodist Church and had an inspiration. She knew what ought to be done and she, Faith Meredith, would do it. She would make everything right. With a sigh of satisfaction, she turned from the lonely, dark world and cuddled down beside Una.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIT FOR TAT

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With Faith, to decide was to act. She lost no time in carrying out the idea. As soon as she came home from school the next day she left the manse and made her way down the Glen. Walter Blythe joined her as she passed the post office.

“I’m going to Mrs. Elliott’s on an errand for mother,” he said.
“Where are you going, Faith?”

“I am going somewhere on church business,” said Faith loftily. She did not volunteer any further information and Walter felt rather snubbed. They walked on in silence for a little while. It was a warm, windy evening with a sweet, resinous air. Beyond the sand dunes were gray seas, soft and beautiful. The Glen brook bore down a freight of gold and crimson leaves, like fairy shallops. In Mr. James Reese’s buckwheat stubble-land, with its beautiful tones of red and brown, a crow parliament was being held, whereat solemn deliberations regarding the welfare of crowland were in progress. Faith cruelly broke up the august assembly by climbing up on the fence and hurling a broken rail at it. Instantly the air was filled with flapping black wings and indignant caws.

“Why did you do that?” said Walter reproachfully. “They were having such a good time.”

“Oh, I hate crows,” said Faith airily. “The are so black and sly I feel sure they’re hypocrites. They steal little birds’ eggs out of their nests, you know. I saw one do it on our lawn last spring. Walter, what makes you so pale to-day? Did you have the toothache again last night?”

Walter shivered.

“Yes — a raging one. I couldn’t sleep a wink — so I just paced up and down the floor and imagined I was an early Christian martyr being tortured at the command of Nero. That helped ever so much for a while — and then I got so bad I couldn’t imagine anything.”

“Did you cry?” asked Faith anxiously.

“No — but I lay down on the floor and groaned,” admitted Walter. “Then the girls came in and Nan put cayenne pepper in it — and that made it worse — Di made me hold a swallow of cold water in my mouth — and I couldn’t stand it, so they called Susan. Susan said it served me right for sitting up in the cold garret yesterday writing poetry trash. But she started up the kitchen fire and got me a hot-water bottle and it stopped the toothache. As soon as I felt better I told Susan my poetry wasn’t trash and she wasn’t any judge. And she said no, thank goodness she was not and she did not know anything about poetry except that it was mostly a lot of lies. Now you know, Faith, that isn’t so. That is one reason why I like writing poetry — you can say so many things in it that are true in poetry but wouldn’t be true in prose. I told Susan so, but she said to stop my jawing and go to sleep before the water got cold, or she’d leave me to see if rhyming would cure toothache, and she hoped it would be a lesson to me.”

“Why don’t you go to the dentist at Lowbridge and get the tooth out?”

Walter shivered again.

“They want me to — but I can’t. It would hurt so.”

“Are you afraid of a little pain?” asked Faith contemptuously.

Walter flushed.

“It would be a BIG pain. I hate being hurt. Father said he wouldn’t insist on my going — he’d wait until I’d made up my own mind to go.”

“It wouldn’t hurt as long as the toothache,” argued Faith, “You’ve had five spells of toothache. If you’d just go and have it out there’d be no more bad

nights. I had a tooth out once. I yelled for a moment, but it was all over then — only the bleeding.”

“The bleeding is worst of all — it’s so ugly,” cried Walter. “It just made me sick when Jem cut his foot last summer. Susan said I looked more like fainting than Jem did. But I couldn’t bear to see Jem hurt, either. Somebody is always getting hurt, Faith — and it’s awful. I just can’t BEAR to see things hurt. It makes me just want to run — and run — and run — till I can’t hear or see them.”

“There’s no use making a fuss over anyone getting hurt,” said Faith, tossing her curls. “Of course, if you’ve hurt yourself very bad, you have to yell — and blood IS messy — and I don’t like seeing other people hurt, either. But I don’t want to run — I want to go to work and help them. Your father HAS to hurt people lots of times to cure them. What would they do if HE ran away?”

“I didn’t say I WOULD run. I said I WANTED to run. That’s a different thing. I want to help people, too. But oh, I wish there weren’t any ugly, dreadful things in the world. I wish everything was glad and beautiful.”

“Well, don’t let’s think of what isn’t,” said Faith. “After all, there’s lots of fun in being alive. You wouldn’t have toothache if you were dead, but still, wouldn’t you lots rather be alive than dead? I would, a hundred times. Oh, here’s Dan Reese. He’s been down to the harbour for fish.”

“I hate Dan Reese,” said Walter.

“So do I. All us girls do. I’m just going to walk past and never take the least notice of him. You watch me!”

Faith accordingly stalked past Dan with her chin out and an expression of scorn that bit into his soul. He turned and shouted after her.

“Pig-girl! Pig-girl!! Pig-girl!!!” in a crescendo of insult.

Faith walked on, seemingly oblivious. But her lip trembled slightly with a sense of outrage. She knew she was no match for Dan Reese when it came

to an exchange of epithets. She wished Jem Blythe had been with her instead of Walter. If Dan Reese had dared to call her a pig-girl in Jem's hearing, Jem would have wiped up the dust with him. But it never occurred to Faith to expect Walter to do it, or blame him for not doing it. Walter, she knew, never fought other boys. Neither did Charlie Clow of the north road. The strange part was that, while she despised Charlie for a coward, it never occurred to her to disdain Walter. It was simply that he seemed to her an inhabitant of a world of his own, where different traditions prevailed. Faith would as soon have expected a starry-eyed young angel to pummel dirty, freckled Dan Reese for her as Walter Blythe. She would not have blamed the angel and she did not blame Walter Blythe. But she wished that sturdy Jem or Jerry had been there and Dan's insult continued to rankle in her soul.

Walter was pale no longer. He had flushed crimson and his beautiful eyes were clouded with shame and anger. He knew that he ought to have avenged Faith. Jem would have sailed right in and made Dan eat his words with bitter sauce. Ritchie Warren would have overwhelmed Dan with worse "names" than Dan had called Faith. But Walter could not — simply could not—"call names." He knew he would get the worst of it. He could never conceive or utter the vulgar, ribald insults of which Dan Reese had unlimited command. And as for the trial by fist, Walter couldn't fight. He hated the idea. It was rough and painful — and, worst of all, it was ugly. He never could understand Jem's exultation in an occasional conflict. But he wished he COULD fight Dan Reese. He was horribly ashamed because Faith Meredith had been insulted in his presence and he had not tried to punish her insulter. He felt sure she must despise him. She had not even spoken to him since Dan had called her pig-girl. He was glad when they came to the parting of the ways.

Faith, too, was relieved, though for a different reason. She wanted to be alone because she suddenly felt rather nervous about her errand. Impulse had cooled, especially since Dan had bruised her self-respect. She must go through with it, but she no longer had enthusiasm to sustain her. She was going to see Norman Douglas and ask him to come back to church, and she began to be afraid of him. What had seemed so easy and simple up at the Glen seemed very different down here. She had heard a good deal about

Norman Douglas, and she knew that even the biggest boys in school were afraid of him. Suppose he called her something nasty — she had heard he was given to that. Faith could not endure being called names — they subdued her far more quickly than a physical blow. But she would go on — Faith Meredith always went on. If she did not her father might have to leave the Glen.

At the end of the long lane Faith came to the house — a big, old-fashioned one with a row of soldierly Lombardies marching past it. On the back veranda Norman Douglas himself was sitting, reading a newspaper. His big dog was beside him. Behind, in the kitchen, where his housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, was getting supper, there was a clatter of dishes — an angry clatter, for Norman Douglas had just had a quarrel with Mrs. Wilson, and both were in a very bad temper over it. Consequently, when Faith stepped on the veranda and Norman Douglas lowered his newspaper she found herself looking into the choleric eyes of an irritated man.

Norman Douglas was rather a fine-looking personage in his way. He had a sweep of long red beard over his broad chest and a mane of red hair, ungrizzled by the years, on his massive head. His high, white forehead was unwrinkled and his blue eyes could flash still with all the fire of his tempestuous youth. He could be very amiable when he liked, and he could be very terrible. Poor Faith, so anxiously bent on retrieving the situation in regard to the church, had caught him in one of his terrible moods.

He did not know who she was and he gazed at her with disfavour. Norman Douglas liked girls of spirit and flame and laughter. At this moment Faith was very pale. She was of the type to which colour means everything. Lacking her crimson cheeks she seemed meek and even insignificant. She looked apologetic and afraid, and the bully in Norman Douglas's heart stirred.

“Who the dickens are you? And what do you want here?” he demanded in his great resounding voice, with a fierce scowl.

For once in her life Faith had nothing to say. She had never supposed Norman Douglas was like THIS. She was paralyzed with terror of him. He saw it and it made him worse.

“What’s the matter with you?” he boomed. “You look as if you wanted to say something and was scared to say it. What’s troubling you? Confound it, speak up, can’t you?”

No. Faith could not speak up. No words would come. But her lips began to tremble.

“For heaven’s sake, don’t cry,” shouted Norman. “I can’t stand snivelling. If you’ve anything to say, say it and have done. Great Kitty, is the girl possessed of a dumb spirit? Don’t look at me like that — I’m human — I haven’t got a tail! Who are you — who are you, I say?”

Norman’s voice could have been heard at the harbour. Operations in the kitchen were suspended. Mrs. Wilson was listening open-eared and eyed. Norman put his huge brown hands on his knees and leaned forward, staring into Faith’s pallid, shrinking face. He seemed to loom over her like some evil giant out of a fairy tale. She felt as if he would eat her up next thing, body and bones.

“I — am — Faith — Meredith,” she said, in little more than a whisper.

“Meredith, hey? One of the parson’s youngsters, hey? I’ve heard of you — I’ve heard of you! Riding on pigs and breaking the Sabbath! A nice lot! What do you want here, hey? What do you want of the old pagan, hey? I don’t ask favours of parsons — and I don’t give any. What do you want, I say?”

Faith wished herself a thousand miles away. She stammered out her thought in its naked simplicity.

“I came — to ask you — to go to church — and pay — to the salary.”

Norman glared at her. Then he burst forth again.

“You impudent hussy — you! Who put you up to it, jade? Who put you up to it?”

“Nobody,” said poor Faith.

“That’s a lie. Don’t lie to me! Who sent you here? It wasn’t your father — he hasn’t the smeddum of a flea — but he wouldn’t send you to do what he dassn’t do himself. I suppose it was some of them confounded old maids at the Glen, was it — was it, hey?”

“No — I — I just came myself.”

“Do you take me for a fool?” shouted Norman.

“No — I thought you were a gentleman,” said Faith faintly, and certainly without any thought of being sarcastic.

Norman bounced up.

“Mind your own business. I don’t want to hear another word from you. If you wasn’t such a kid I’d teach you to interfere in what doesn’t concern you. When I want parsons or pill-dosers I’ll send for them. Till I do I’ll have no truck with them. Do you understand? Now, get out, cheese-face.”

Faith got out. She stumbled blindly down the steps, out of the yard gate and into the lane. Half way up the lane her daze of fear passed away and a reaction of tingling anger possessed her. By the time she reached the end of the lane she was in such a furious temper as she had never experienced before. Norman Douglas’ insults burned in her soul, kindling a scorching flame. Go home! Not she! She would go straight back and tell that old ogre just what she thought of him — she would show him — oh, wouldn’t she! Cheese-face, indeed!

Unhesitatingly she turned and walked back. The veranda was deserted and the kitchen door shut. Faith opened the door without knocking, and went in. Norman Douglas had just sat down at the supper table, but he still held his newspaper. Faith walked inflexibly across the room, caught the paper from his hand, flung it on the floor and stamped on it. Then she faced him, with her flashing eyes and scarlet cheeks. She was such a handsome young fury that Norman Douglas hardly recognized her.

“What’s brought you back?” he growled, but more in bewilderment than rage.

Unquailingly she glared back into the angry eyes against which so few people could hold their own.

“I have come back to tell you exactly what I think of you,” said Faith in clear, ringing tones. “I am not afraid of you. You are a rude, unjust, tyrannical, disagreeable old man. Susan says you are sure to go to hell, and I was sorry for you, but I am not now. Your wife never had a new hat for ten years — no wonder she died. I am going to make faces at you whenever I see you after this. Every time I am behind you you will know what is happening. Father has a picture of the devil in a book in his study, and I mean to go home and write your name under it. You are an old vampire and I hope you’ll have the Scotch fiddle!”

Faith did not know what a vampire meant any more than she knew what the Scotch fiddle was. She had heard Susan use the expressions and gathered from her tone that both were dire things. But Norman Douglas knew what the latter meant at least. He had listened in absolute silence to Faith’s tirade. When she paused for breath, with a stamp of her foot, he suddenly burst into loud laughter. With a mighty slap of hand on knee he exclaimed,

“I vow you’ve got spunk, after all — I like spunk. Come, sit down — sit down!”

“I will not.” Faith’s eyes flashed more passionately. She thought she was being made fun of — treated contemptuously. She would have enjoyed another explosion of rage, but this cut deep. “I will not sit down in your house. I am going home. But I am glad I came back here and told you exactly what my opinion of you is.”

“So am I — so am I,” chuckled Norman. “I like you — you’re fine — you’re great. Such roses — such vim! Did I call her cheese-face? Why, she never smelt a cheese. Sit down. If you’d looked like that at the first, girl! So you’ll write my name under the devil’s picture, will you? But he’s black, girl, he’s black — and I’m red. It won’t do — it won’t do! And you hope I’ll have the Scotch fiddle, do you? Lord love you, girl, I had IT when I was a boy. Don’t wish it on me again. Sit down — sit in. We’ll tak’ a cup o’ kindness.”

“No, thank you,” said Faith haughtily.

“Oh, yes, you will. Come, come now, I apologize, girl — I apologize. I made a fool of myself and I’m sorry. Man can’t say fairer. Forget and forgive. Shake hands, girl — shake hands. She won’t — no, she won’t! But she must! Look-a-here, girl, if you’ll shake hands and break bread with me I’ll pay what I used to to the salary and I’ll go to church the first Sunday in every month and I’ll make Kitty Alec hold her jaw. I’m the only one in the clan can do it. Is it a bargain, girl?”

It seemed a bargain. Faith found herself shaking hands with the ogre and then sitting at his board. Her temper was over — Faith’s tempers never lasted very long — but its excitement still sparkled in her eyes and crimsoned her cheeks. Norman Douglas looked at her admiringly.

“Go, get some of your best preserves, Wilson,” he ordered, “and stop sulking, woman, stop sulking. What if we did have a quarrel, woman? A good squall clears the air and briskens things up. But no drizzling and fogging afterwards — no drizzling and fogging, woman. I can’t stand that. Temper in a woman but no tears for me. Here, girl, is some messed up meat and potatoes for you. Begin on that. Wilson has some fancy name for it, but I call lit macanaccady. Anything I can’t analyze in the eating line I call macanaccady and anything wet that puzzles me I call shallamagouslem. Wilson’s tea is shallamagouslem. I swear she makes it out of burdocks. Don’t take any of the ungodly black liquid — here’s some milk for you. What did you say your name was?”

“Faith.”

“No name that — no name that! I can’t stomach such a name. Got any other?”

“No, sir.”

“Don’t like the name, don’t like it. There’s no smeddum to it. Besides, it makes me think of my Aunt Jinny. She called her three girls Faith, Hope, and Charity. Faith didn’t believe in anything — Hope was a born pessimist — and Charity was a miser. You ought to be called Red Rose — you look

like one when you're mad. I'LL call you Red Rose. And you've roped me into promising to go to church? But only once a month, remember — only once a month. Come now, girl, will you let me off? I used to pay a hundred to the salary every year and go to church. If I promise to pay two hundred a year will you let me off going to church? Come now!"

"No, no, sir," said Faith, dimpling roguishly. "I want you to go to church, too."

"Well, a bargain is a bargain. I reckon I can stand it twelve times a year. What a sensation it'll make the first Sunday I go! And old Susan Baker says I'm going to hell, hey? Do you believe I'll go there — come, now, do you?"

"I hope not, sir," stammered Faith in some confusion.

"WHY do you hope not? Come, now, WHY do you hope not? Give us a reason, girl — give us a reason."

"It — it must be a very — uncomfortable place, sir."

"Uncomfortable? All depends on your taste in comfortable, girl. I'd soon get tired of angels. Fancy old Susan in a halo, now!"

Faith did fancy it, and it tickled her so much that she had to laugh. Norman eyed her approvingly.

"See the fun of it, hey? Oh, I like you — you're great. About this church business, now — can your father preach?"

"He is a splendid preacher," said loyal Faith.

"He is, hey? I'll see — I'll watch out for flaws. He'd better be careful what he says before ME. I'll catch him — I'll trip him up — I'll keep tabs on his arguments. I'm bound to have some fun out of this church going business. Does he ever preach hell?"

"No — o — o — I don't think so."

“Too bad. I like sermons on that subject. You tell him that if he wants to keep me in good humour to preach a good rip-roaring sermon on hell once every six months — and the more brimstone the better. I like ‘em smoking. And think of all the pleasure he’d give the old maids, too. They’d all keep looking at old Norman Douglas and thinking, ‘That’s for you, you old reprobate. That’s what’s in store for YOU!’ I’ll give an extra ten dollars every time you get your father to preach on hell. Here’s Wilson and the jam. Like that, hey? IT isn’t macanaccady. Taste!”

Faith obediently swallowed the big spoonful Norman held out to her. Luckily it WAS good.

“Best plum jam in the world,” said Norman, filling a large saucer and plumping it down before her. “Glad you like it. I’ll give you a couple of jars to take home with you. There’s nothing mean about me — never was. The devil can’t catch me at THAT corner, anyhow. It wasn’t my fault that Hester didn’t have a new hat for ten years. It was her own — she pinched on hats to save money to give yellow fellows over in China. I never gave a cent to missions in my life — never will. Never you try to bamboozle me into that! A hundred a year to the salary and church once a month — but no spoiling good heathens to make poor Christians! Why, girl, they wouldn’t be fit for heaven or hell — clean spoiled for either place — clean spoiled. Hey, Wilson, haven’t you got a smile on yet? Beats all how you women can sulk! I never sulked in my life — it’s just one big flash and crash with me and then — pouf — the squall’s over and the sun is out and you could eat out of my hand.”

Norman insisted on driving Faith home after supper and he filled the buggy up with apples, cabbages, potatoes and pumpkins and jars of jam.

“There’s a nice little tom-pussy out in the barn. I’ll give you that too, if you’d like it. Say the word,” he said.

“No, thank you,” said Faith decidedly. “I don’t like cats, and besides, I have a rooster.”

“Listen to her. You can’t cuddle a rooster as you can a kitten. Who ever heard of petting a rooster? Better take little Tom. I want to find a good

home for him.”

“No. Aunt Martha has a cat and he would kill a strange kitten.”

Norman yielded the point rather reluctantly. He gave Faith an exciting drive home, behind his wild two-year old, and when he had let her out at the kitchen door of the manse and dumped his cargo on the back veranda he drove away shouting,

“It’s only once a month — only once a month, mind!”

Faith went up to bed, feeling a little dizzy and breathless, as if she had just escaped from the grasp of a genial whirlwind. She was happy and thankful. No fear now that they would have to leave the Glen and the graveyard and Rainbow Valley. But she fell asleep troubled by a disagreeable subconsciousness that Dan Reese had called her pig-girl and that, having stumbled on such a congenial epithet, he would continue to call her so whenever opportunity offered.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DOUBLE VICTORY

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Norman Douglas came to church the first Sunday in November and made all the sensation he desired. Mr. Meredith shook hands with him absently on the church steps and hoped dreamily that Mrs. Douglas was well.

“She wasn’t very well just before I buried her ten years ago, but I reckon she has better health now,” boomed Norman, to the horror and amusement of every one except Mr. Meredith, who was absorbed in wondering if he had made the last head of his sermon as clear as he might have, and hadn’t the least idea what Norman had said to him or he to Norman.

Norman intercepted Faith at the gate.

“Kept my word, you see — kept my word, Red Rose. I’m free now till the first Sunday in December. Fine sermon, girl — fine sermon. Your father has more in his head than he carries on his face. But he contradicted himself once — tell him he contradicted himself. And tell him I want that brimstone sermon in December. Great way to wind up the old year — with a taste of hell, you know. And what’s the matter with a nice tasty discourse on heaven for New Year’s? Though it wouldn’t be half as interesting as hell, girl — not half. Only I’d like to know what your father thinks about heaven — he CAN think — rarest thing in the world — a person who can think. But he DID contradict himself. Ha, ha! Here’s a question you might ask him sometime when he’s awake, girl. ‘Can God make a stone so big He couldn’t lift it Himself?’ Don’t forget now. I want to hear his opinion on it. I’ve stumped many a minister with that, girl.”

Faith was glad to escape him and run home. Dan Reese, standing among the crowd of boys at the gate,

looked at her and shaped his mouth into “pig-girl,” but dared not utter it aloud just there. Next day in school was a different matter. At noon recess Faith encountered Dan in the little spruce plantation behind the school and Dan shouted once more,

“Pig-girl! Pig-girl! ROOSTER-GIRL!”

Walter Blythe suddenly rose from a mossy cushion behind a little clump of firs where he had been reading. He was very pale, but his eyes blazed.

“You hold your tongue, Dan Reese!” he said.

“Oh, hello, Miss Walter,” retorted Dan, not at all abashed. He vaulted airily to the top of the rail fence and chanted insultingly,

”Cowardy, cowardy-custard
Stole a pot of mustard,
Cowardy, cowardy-custard!”

“You are a coincidence!” said Walter scornfully, turning still whiter. He had only a very hazy idea what a coincidence was, but Dan had none at all and thought it must be something peculiarly opprobrious.

“Yah! Cowardy!” he yelled again. “Your mother writes lies — lies — lies! And Faith Meredith is a pig-girl — a — pig-girl — a pig-girl! And she’s a rooster-girl — a rooster-girl — a rooster-girl! Yah! Cowardy — cowardy — cust—”

Dan got no further. Walter had hurled himself across the intervening space and knocked Dan off the fence backward with one well-directed blow. Dan’s sudden inglorious sprawl was greeted with a burst of laughter and a clapping of hands from Faith. Dan sprang up, purple with rage, and began to climb the fence. But just then the school-bell rang and Dan knew what happened to boys who were late during Mr. Hazard’s regime.

“We’ll fight this out,” he howled. “Cowardy!”

“Any time you like,” said Walter.

“Oh, no, no, Walter,” protested Faith. “Don’t fight him. I don’t mind what he says — I wouldn’t condescend to mind the like of HIM.”

“He insulted you and he insulted my mother,” said Walter, with the same deadly calm. “Tonight after school, Dan.”

“I’ve got to go right home from school to pick taters after the harrows, dad says,” answered Dan sulkily. “But tomorrow night’ll do.”

“All right — here tomorrow night,” agreed Walter.

“And I’ll smash your sissy-face for you,” promised Dan.

Walter shuddered — not so much from fear of the threat as from repulsion over the ugliness and vulgarity of it. But he held his head high and marched into school. Faith followed in a conflict of emotions. She hated to think of Walter fighting that little sneak, but oh, he had been splendid! And he was going to fight for HER — Faith Meredith — to punish her insulter! Of course he would win — such eyes spelled victory.

Faith’s confidence in her champion had dimmed a little by evening, however. Walter had seemed so very quiet and dull the rest of the day in school.

“If it were only Jem,” she sighed to Una, as they sat on Hezekiah Pollock’s tombstone in the graveyard. “HE is such a fighter — he could finish Dan off in no time. But Walter doesn’t know much about fighting.”

“I’m so afraid he’ll be hurt,” sighed Una, who hated fighting and couldn’t understand the subtle, secret exultation she divined in Faith.

“He oughtn’t to be,” said Faith uncomfortably. “He’s every bit as big as Dan.”

“But Dan’s so much older,” said Una. “Why, he’s nearly a year older.”

“Dan hasn’t done much fighting when you come to count up,” said Faith. “I believe he’s really a coward. He didn’t think Walter would fight, or he wouldn’t have called names before him. Oh, if you could just have seen

Walter's face when he looked at him, Una! It made me shiver — with a nice shiver. He looked just like Sir Galahad in that poem father read us on Saturday.”

“I hate the thought of them fighting and I wish it could be stopped,” said Una.

“Oh, it's got to go on now,” cried Faith. “It's a matter of honour. Don't you DARE tell anyone, Una. If you do I'll never tell you secrets again!”

“I won't tell,” agreed Una. “But I won't stay tomorrow to watch the fight. I'm coming right home.”

“Oh, all right. I have to be there — it would be mean not to, when Walter is fighting for me. I'm going to tie my colours on his arm — that's the thing to do when he's my knight. How lucky Mrs. Blythe gave me that pretty blue hair-ribbon for my birthday! I've only worn it twice so it will be almost new. But I wish I was sure Walter would win. It will be so — so HUMILIATING if he doesn't.”

Faith would have been yet more dubious if she could have seen her champion just then. Walter had gone home from school with all his righteous anger at a low ebb and a very nasty feeling in its place. He had to fight Dan Reese the next night — and he didn't want to — he hated the thought of it. And he kept thinking of it all the time. Not for a minute could he get away from the thought. Would it hurt much? He was terribly afraid that it would hurt. And would he be defeated and shamed?

He could not eat any supper worth speaking of. Susan had made a big batch of his favourite monkey-faces, but he could choke only one down. Jem ate four. Walter wondered how he could. How could ANYBODY eat? And how could they all talk gaily as they were doing? There was mother, with her shining eyes and pink cheeks. SHE didn't know her son had to fight next day. Would she be so gay if she knew, Walter wondered darkly. Jem had taken Susan's picture with his new camera and the result was passed around the table and Susan was terribly indignant over it.

“I am no beauty, Mrs. Dr. dear, and well I know it, and have always known it,” she said in an aggrieved tone, “but that I am as ugly as that picture makes me out I will never, no, never believe.”

Jem laughed over this and Anne laughed again with him. Walter couldn't endure it. He got up and fled to his room.

“That child has got something on his mind, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “He has et next to nothing. Do you suppose he is plotting another poem?”

Poor Walter was very far removed in spirit from the starry realms of poesy just then. He propped his elbow on his open windowsill and leaned his head drearily on his hands.

“Come on down to the shore, Walter,” cried Jem, busting in. “The boys are going to burn the sandhill grass tonight. Father says we can go. Come on.”

At any other time Walter would have been delighted. He gloried in the burning of the sandhill grass. But now he flatly refused to go, and no arguments or entreaties could move him. Disappointed Jem, who did not care for the long dark walk to Four Winds Point alone, retreated to his museum in the garret and buried himself in a book. He soon forgot his disappointment, revelling with the heroes of old romance, and pausing occasionally to picture himself a famous general, leading his troops to victory on some great battlefield.

Walter sat at his window until bedtime. Di crept in, hoping to be told what was wrong, but Walter could not talk of it, even to Di. Talking of it seemed to give it a reality from which he shrank. It was torture enough to think of it. The crisp, withered leaves rustled on the maple trees outside his window. The glow of rose and flame had died out of the hollow, silvery sky, and the full moon was rising gloriously over Rainbow Valley. Afar off, a ruddy woodfire was painting a page of glory on the horizon beyond the hills. It was a sharp, clear evening when faraway sounds were heard distinctly. A fox was barking across the pond; an engine was puffing down at the Glen station; a bluejay was screaming madly in the maple grove; there was laughter over on the manse lawn. How could people laugh? How

could foxes and bluejays and engines behave as if nothing were going to happen on the morrow?

“Oh, I wish it was over,” groaned Walter.

He slept very little that night and had hard work choking down his porridge in the morning. Susan WAS rather lavish in her platefuls. Mr. Hazard found him an unsatisfactory pupil that day. Faith Meredith’s wits seemed to be wool-gathering, too. Dan Reese kept drawing surreptitious pictures of girls, with pig or rooster heads, on his slate and holding them up for all to see. The news of the coming battle had leaked out and most of the boys and many of the girls were in the spruce plantation when Dan and Walter sought it after school. Una had gone home, but Faith was there, having tied her blue ribbon around Walter’s arm. Walter was thankful that neither Jem nor Di nor Nan were among the crowd of spectators. Somehow they had not heard of what was in the wind and had gone home, too. Walter faced Dan quite undauntedly now. At the last moment all his fear had vanished, but he still felt disgust at the idea of fighting. Dan, it was noted, was really paler under his freckles than Walter was. One of the older boys gave the word and Dan struck Walter in the face.

Walter reeled a little. The pain of the blow tingled through all his sensitive frame for a moment. Then he felt pain no longer. Something, such as he had never experienced before, seemed to roll over him like a flood. His face flushed crimson, his eyes burned like flame. The scholars of Glen St. Mary school had never dreamed that “Miss Walter” could look like that. He hurled himself forward and closed with Dan like a young wildcat.

There were no particular rules in the fights of the Glen school boys. It was catchas-catch can, and get your blows in anyhow. Walter fought with a savage fury and a joy in the struggle against which Dan could not hold his ground. It was all over very speedily. Walter had no clear consciousness of what he was doing until suddenly the red mist cleared from his sight and he found himself kneeling on the body of the prostrate Dan whose nose — oh, horror! — was spouting blood.

“Have you had enough?” demanded Walter through his clenched teeth.

Dan sulkily admitted that he had.

“My mother doesn’t write lies?”

“No.”

“Faith Meredith isn’t a pig-girl?”

“No.”

“Nor a rooster-girl?”

“No.”

“And I’m not a coward?”

“No.”

Walter had intended to ask, “And you are a liar?” but pity intervened and he did not humiliate Dan further. Besides, that blood was so horrible.

“You can go, then,” he said contemptuously.

There was a loud clapping from the boys who were perched on the rail fence, but some of the girls were crying. They were frightened. They had seen schoolboy fights before, but nothing like Walter as he had grappled with Dan. There had been something terrifying about him. They thought he would kill Dan. Now that all was over they sobbed hysterically — except Faith, who still stood tense and crimson cheeked.

Walter did not stay for any conqueror’s meed. He sprang over the fence and rushed down the spruce hill to Rainbow Valley. He felt none of the victor’s joy, but he felt a certain calm satisfaction in duty done and honour avenged — mingled with a sickish qualm when he thought of Dan’s gory nose. It had been so ugly, and Walter hated ugliness.

Also, he began to realize that he himself was somewhat sore and battered up. His lip was cut and swollen and one eye felt very strange. In Rainbow Valley he encountered Mr. Meredith, who was coming home from an

afternoon call on the Miss Wests. That reverend gentleman looked gravely at him.

“It seems to me that you have been fighting, Walter?”

“Yes, sir,” said Walter, expecting a scolding.

“What was it about?”

“Dan Reese said my mother wrote lies and that that Faith was a pig-girl,” answered Walter bluntly.

“Oh — h! Then you were certainly justified, Walter.”

“Do you think it’s right to fight, sir?” asked Walter curiously.

“Not always — and not often — but sometimes — yes, sometimes,” said John Meredith. “When womenkind are insulted for instance — as in your case. My motto, Walter, is, don’t fight till you’re sure you ought to, and THEN put every ounce of you into it. In spite of sundry discolorations I infer that you came off best.”

“Yes. I made him take it all back.”

“Very good — very good, indeed. I didn’t think you were such a fighter, Walter.”

“I never fought before — and I didn’t want to right up to the last — and then,” said Walter, determined to make a clean breast of it, “I liked it while I was at it.”

The Rev. John’s eyes twinkled.

“You were — a little frightened — at first?”

“I was a whole lot frightened,” said honest Walter. “But I’m not going to be frightened any more, sir. Being frightened of things is worse than the things themselves. I’m going to ask father to take me over to Lowbridge tomorrow to get my tooth out.”

“Right again. ‘Fear is more pain than is the pain it fears.’ Do you know who wrote that, Walter? It was Shakespeare. Was there any feeling or emotion or experience of the human heart that that wonderful man did not know? When you go home tell your mother I am proud of you.”

Walter did not tell her that, however; but he told her all the rest, and she sympathized with him and told him she was glad he had stood up for her and Faith, and she anointed his sore spots and rubbed cologne on his aching head.

“Are all mothers as nice as you?” asked Walter, hugging her.
“You’re WORTH standing up for.”

Miss Cornelia and Susan were in the living room when Anne came downstairs, and listened to the story with much enjoyment. Susan in particular was highly gratified.

“I am real glad to hear he has had a good fight, Mrs. Dr. dear. Perhaps it may knock that poetry nonsense out of him. And I never, no, never could bear that little viper of a Dan Reese. Will you not sit nearer to the fire, Mrs. Marshall Elliott? These November evenings are very chilly.”

“Thank you, Susan, I’m not cold. I called at the manse before I came here and got quite warm — though I had to go to the kitchen to do it, for there was no fire anywhere else. The kitchen looked as if it had been stirred up with a stick, believe ME. Mr. Meredith wasn’t home. I couldn’t find out where he was, but I have an idea that he was up at the Wests’. Do you know, Anne dearie, they say he has been going there frequently all the fall and people are beginning to think he is going to see Rosemary.”

“He would get a very charming wife if he married Rosemary,” said Anne, piling driftwood on the fire. “She is one of the most delightful girls I’ve ever known — truly one of the race of Joseph.”

“Ye — s — only she is an Episcopalian,” said Miss Cornelia doubtfully.
“Of course, that is better than if she was a Methodist — but I do think Mr.

Meredith could find a good enough wife in his own denomination. However, very likely there is nothing in it. It's only a month ago that I said to him, 'You ought to marry again, Mr. Meredith.' He looked as shocked as if I had suggested something improper. 'My wife is in her grave, Mrs. Elliott,' he said, in that gentle, saintly way of his. 'I suppose so,' I said, 'or I wouldn't be advising you to marry again.' Then he looked more shocked than ever. So I doubt if there is much in this Rosemary story. If a single minister calls twice at a house where there is a single woman all the gossips have it he is courting her."

"It seems to me — if I may presume to say so — that Mr. Meredith is too shy to go courting a second wife," said Susan solemnly.

"He ISN'T shy, believe ME," retorted Miss Cornelia. "Absentminded, — yes — but shy, no. And for all he is so abstracted and dreamy he has a very good opinion of himself, manlike, and when he is really awake he wouldn't think it much of a chore to ask any woman to have him. No, the trouble is, he's deluding himself into believing that his heart is buried, while all the time it's beating away inside of him just like anybody else's. He may have a notion of Rosemary West and he may not. If he has, we must make the best of it. She is a sweet girl and a fine housekeeper, and would make a good mother for those poor, neglected children. And," concluded Miss Cornelia resignedly, "my own grandmother was an Episcopalian."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARY BRINGS EVIL TIDINGS

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Mary Vance, whom Mrs. Elliott had sent up to the manse on an errand, came tripping down Rainbow Valley on her way to Ingleside where she was to spend the afternoon with Nan and Di as a Saturday treat. Nan and Di had been picking spruce gum with Faith and Una in the manse woods and the four of them were now sitting on a fallen pine by the brook, all, it must be admitted, chewing rather vigorously. The Ingleside twins were not allowed to chew spruce gum anywhere but in the seclusion of Rainbow Valley, but Faith and Una were unrestricted by such rules of etiquette and cheerfully chewed it everywhere, at home and abroad, to the very proper horror of the Glen. Faith had been chewing it in church one day; but Jerry had realized the enormity of THAT, and had given her such an older-brotherly scolding that she never did it again.

“I was so hungry I just felt as if I had to chew something,” she protested. “You know well enough what breakfast was like, Jerry Meredith. I COULDN’T eat scorched porridge and my stomach just felt so queer and empty. The gum helped a lot — and I didn’t chew VERY hard. I didn’t make any noise and I never cracked the gum once.”

“You mustn’t chew gum in church, anyhow,” insisted Jerry. “Don’t let me catch you at it again.”

“You chewed yourself in prayer-meeting last week,” cried Faith.

“THAT’S different,” said Jerry loftily. “Prayer-meeting isn’t on Sunday. Besides, I sat away at the back in a dark seat and nobody saw me. You were sitting right up front where every one saw you. And I took the gum out of my mouth for the last hymn and stuck it on the back of the pew right up in front where every one saw you. And I took the gum out of my

mouth for the last hymn and stuck it on the back of the pew in front of me. Then I came away and forgot it. I went back to get it next morning, but it was gone. I suppose Rod Warren swiped it. And it was a dandy chew.”

Mary Vance walked down the Valley with her head held high. She had on a new blue velvet cap with a scarlet rosette in it, a coat of navy blue cloth and a little squirrel-fur muff. She was very conscious of her new clothes and very well pleased with herself. Her hair was elaborately crimped, her face was quite plump, her cheeks rosy, her white eyes shining. She did not look much like the forlorn and ragged waif the Merediths had found in the old Taylor barn. Una tried not to feel envious. Here was Mary with a new velvet cap, but she and Faith had to wear their shabby old gray tams again this winter. Nobody ever thought of getting them new ones and they were afraid to ask their father for them for fear that he might be short of money and then he would feel badly. Mary had told them once that ministers were always short of money, and found it “awful hard” to make ends meet. Since then Faith and Una would have gone in rags rather than ask their father for anything if they could help it. They did not worry a great deal over their shabbiness; but it was rather trying to see Mary Vance coming out in such style and putting on such airs about it, too. The new squirrel muff was really the last straw. Neither Faith nor Una had ever had a muff, counting themselves lucky if they could compass mittens without holes in them. Aunt Martha could not see to darn holes and though Una tried to, she made sad cobbling. Somehow, they could not make their greeting of Mary very cordial. But Mary did not mind or notice that; she was not overly sensitive. She vaulted lightly to a seat on the pine tree, and laid the offending muff on a bough. Una saw that it was lined with shirred red satin and had red tassels. She looked down at her own rather purple, chapped, little hands and wondered if she would ever, EVER be able to put them into a muff like that.

“Give us a chew,” said Mary companionably. Nan, Di and Faith all produced an amber-hued knot or two from their pockets and passed them to Mary. Una sat very still. She had four lovely big knots in the pocket of her tight, threadbare little jacket, but she wasn’t going to give one of them to Mary Vance — not one. Let Mary pick her own gum! People with squirrel muffs needn’t expect to get everything in the world.

“Great day, isn’t it?” said Mary, swinging her legs, the better, perhaps, to display new boots with very smart cloth tops. Una tucked HER feet under her. There was a hole in the toe of one of her boots and both laces were much knotted. But they were the best she had. Oh, this Mary Vance! Why hadn’t they left her in the old barn?

Una never felt badly because the Ingleside twins were better dressed than she and Faith were. THEY wore their pretty clothes with careless grace and never seemed to think about them at all. Somehow, they did not make other people feel shabby. But when Mary Vance was dressed up she seemed fairly to exude clothes — to walk in an atmosphere of clothes — to make everybody else feel and think clothes. Una, as she sat there in the honey-tinted sunshine of the gracious December afternoon, was acutely and miserably conscious of everything she had on — the faded tam, which was yet her best, the skimpy jacket she had worn for three winters, the holes in her skirt and her boots, the shivering insufficiency of her poor little undergarments. Of course, Mary was going out for a visit and she was not. But even if she had been she had nothing better to put on and in this lay the sting.

“Say, this is great gum. Listen to me cracking it. There ain’t any gum spruces down at Four Winds,” said Mary. “Sometimes I just hanker after a chew. Mrs. Elliott won’t let me chew gum if she sees me. She says it ain’t ladylike. This lady-business puzzles me. I can’t get on to all its kinks. Say, Una, what’s the matter with you? Cat got your tongue?”

“No,” said Una, who could not drag her fascinated eyes from that squirrel muff. Mary leaned past her, picked it up and thrust it into Una’s hands.

“Stick your paws in that for a while,” she ordered. “They look sorter pinched. Ain’t that a dandy muff? Mrs. Elliott give it to me last week for a birthday present. I’m to get the collar at Christmas. I heard her telling Mr. Elliott that.”

“Mrs. Elliott is very good to you,” said Faith.

“You bet she is. And I’M good to her, too,” retorted Mary. “I work like a nigger to make it easy for her and have everything just as she likes it. We

was made for each other. ‘Tisn’t every one could get along with her as well as I do. She’s pizen neat, but so am I, and so we agree fine.”

“I told you she would never whip you.”

“So you did. She’s never tried to lay a finger on me and I ain’t never told a lie to her — not one, true’s you live. She combs me down with her tongue sometimes though, but that just slips off ME like water off a duck’s back. Say, Una, why didn’t you hang on to the muff?”

Una had put it back on the bough.

“My hands aren’t cold, thank you,” she said stiffly.

“Well, if you’re satisfied, I am. Say, old Kitty Alec has come back to church as meek as Moses and nobody knows why. But everybody is saying it was Faith brought Norman Douglas out. His housekeeper says you went there and gave him an awful tongue-lashing. Did you?”

“I went and asked him to come to church,” said Faith uncomfortably.

“Fancy your spunk!” said Mary admiringly. “I wouldn’t have dared do that and I’m not so slow. Mrs. Wilson says the two of you jawed something scandalous, but you come off best and then he just turned round and like to eat you up. Say, is your father going to preach here tomorrow?”

“No. He’s going to exchange with Mr. Perry from Charlottetown. Father went to town this morning and Mr. Perry is coming out tonight.”

“I THOUGHT there was something in the wind, though old Martha wouldn’t give me any satisfaction. But I felt sure she wouldn’t have been killing that rooster for nothing.”

“What rooster? What do you mean?” cried Faith, turning pale.

“I don’t know what rooster. I didn’t see it. When she took the butter Mrs. Elliott sent up she said she’d been out to the barn killing a rooster for dinner tomorrow.”

Faith sprang down from the pine.

“It’s Adam — we have no other rooster — she has killed Adam.”

“Now, don’t fly off the handle. Martha said the butcher at the Glen had no meat this week and she had to have something and the hens were all laying and too poor.”

“If she has killed Adam—” Faith began to run up the hill.

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

“She’ll go crazy now. She was so fond of that Adam. He ought to have been in the pot long ago — he’ll be as tough as sole leather. But I wouldn’t like to be in Martha’s shoes. Faith’s just white with rage; Una, you’d better go after her and try to peacify her.”

Mary had gone a few steps with the Blythe girls when Una suddenly turned and ran after her.

“Here’s some gum for you, Mary,” she said, with a little repentant catch in her voice, thrusting all her four knots into Mary’s hands, “and I’m glad you have such a pretty muff.”

“Why, thanks,” said Mary, rather taken by surprise. To the Blythe girls, after Una had gone, she said, “Ain’t she a queer little mite? But I’ve always said she had a good heart.”

CHAPTER XIX.

POOR ADAM!

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When Una got home Faith was lying face downwards on her bed, utterly refusing to be comforted. Aunt Martha had killed Adam. He was reposing on a platter in the pantry that very minute, trussed and dressed, encircled by his liver and heart and gizzard. Aunt Martha heeded Faith's passion of grief and anger not a whit.

"We had to have something for the strange minister's dinner," she said. "You're too big a girl to make such a fuss over an old rooster. You knew he'd have to be killed sometime."

"I'll tell father when he comes home what you've done," sobbed Faith.

"Don't you go bothering your poor father. He has troubles enough. And I'M housekeeper here."

"Adam was MINE — Mrs. Johnson gave him to me. You had no business to touch him," stormed Faith.

"Don't you get sassy now. The rooster's killed and there's an end of it. I ain't going to set no strange minister down to a dinner of cold b'iled mutton. I was brought up to know better than that, if I have come down in the world."

Faith would not go down to supper that night and she would not go to church the next morning. But at dinner time she went to the table, her eyes swollen with crying, her face sullen.

The Rev. James Perry was a sleek, rubicund man, with a bristling white moustache, bushy white eyebrows, and a shining bald head. He was certainly not handsome and he was a very tiresome, pompous sort of person. But if he had looked like the Archangel Michael and talked with the tongues of men and angels Faith would still have utterly detested him. He carved Adam up dexterously, showing off his plump white hands and very handsome diamond ring. Also, he made jovial remarks all through the performance. Jerry and Carl giggled, and even Una smiled wanly, because she thought politeness demanded it. But Faith only scowled darkly. The Rev. James thought her manners shockingly bad. Once, when he was delivering himself of an unctuous remark to Jerry, Faith broke in rudely with a flat contradiction. The Rev. James drew his bushy eyebrows together at her.

“Little girls should not interrupt,” he said, “and they should not contradict people who know far more than they do.”

This put Faith in a worse temper than ever. To be called “little girl” as if she were no bigger than chubby Rilla Blythe over at Ingleside! It was insufferable. And how that abominable Mr. Perry did eat! He even picked poor Adam’s bones. Neither Faith nor Una would touch a mouthful, and looked upon the boys as little better than cannibals. Faith felt that if that awful repast did not soon come to an end she would wind it up by throwing something at Mr. Perry’s gleaming head. Fortunately, Mr. Perry found Aunt Martha’s leathery apple pie too much even for his powers of mastication and the meal came to an end, after a long grace in which Mr. Perry offered up devout thanks for the food which a kind and beneficent Providence had provided for sustenance and temperate pleasure.

“God hadn’t a single thing to do with providing Adam for you,” muttered Faith rebelliously under her breath.

The boys gladly made their escape to outdoors, Una went to help Aunt Martha with the dishes — though that rather grumpy old dame never welcomed her timid assistance — and Faith betook herself to the study where a cheerful wood fire was burning in the grate. She thought she would thereby escape from the hated Mr. Perry, who had announced his intention of taking a nap in his room during the afternoon. But scarcely

had Faith settled herself in a corner, with a book, when he walked in and, standing before the fire, proceeded to survey the disorderly study with an air of disapproval.

“Your father’s books seem to be in somewhat deplorable confusion, my little girl,” he said severely.

Faith darkled in her corner and said not a word. She would NOT talk to this — this creature.

“You should try to put them in order,” Mr. Perry went on, playing with his handsome watch chain and smiling patronizingly on Faith. “You are quite old enough to attend to such duties. MY little daughter at home is only ten and she is already an excellent little housekeeper and the greatest help and comfort to her mother. She is a very sweet child. I wish you had the privilege of her acquaintance. She could help you in many ways. Of course, you have not had the inestimable privilege of a good mother’s care and training. A sad lack — a very sad lack. I have spoken more than once to your father in this connection and pointed out his duty to him faithfully, but so far with no effect. I trust he may awaken to a realization of his responsibility before it is too late. In the meantime, it is your duty and privilege to endeavour to take your sainted mother’s place. You might exercise a great influence over your brothers and your little sister — you might be a true mother to them. I fear that you do not think of these things as you should. My dear child, allow me to open your eyes in regard to them.”

Mr. Perry’s oily, complacent voice trickled on. He was in his element. Nothing suited him better than to lay down the law, patronize and exhort. He had no idea of stopping, and he did not stop. He stood before the fire, his feet planted firmly on the rug, and poured out a flood of pompous platitudes. Faith heard not a word. She was really not listening to him at all. But she was watching his long black coat-tails with impish delight growing in her brown eyes. Mr. Perry was standing VERY near the fire. His coat-tails began to scorch — his coat-tails began to smoke. He still prosed on, wrapped up in his own eloquence. The coat-tails smoked worse. A tiny spark flew up from the burning wood and alighted in the middle of

one. It clung and caught and spread into a smouldering flame. Faith could restrain herself no longer and broke into a stifled giggle.

Mr. Perry stopped short, angered over this impertinence. Suddenly he became conscious that a reek of burning cloth filled the room. He whirled round and saw nothing. Then he clapped his hands to his coat-tails and brought them around in front of him. There was already quite a hole in one of them — and this was his new suit. Faith shook with helpless laughter over his pose and expression.

“Did you see my coat-tails burning?” he demanded angrily.

“Yes, sir,” said Faith demurely.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he demanded, glaring at her.

“You said it wasn’t good manners to interrupt, sir,” said Faith, more demurely still.

“If — if I was your father, I would give you a spanking that you would remember all your life, Miss,” said a very angry reverend gentleman, as he stalked out of the study. The coat of Mr. Meredith’s second best suit would not fit Mr. Perry, so he had to go to the evening service with his singed coat-tail. But he did not walk up the aisle with his usual consciousness of the honour he was conferring on the building. He never would agree to an exchange of pulpits with Mr. Meredith again, and he was barely civil to the latter when they met for a few minutes at the station the next morning. But Faith felt a certain gloomy satisfaction. Adam was partially avenged.

CHAPTER XX.

FAITH MAKES A FRIEND

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Next day in school was a hard one for Faith. Mary Vance had told the tale of Adam, and all the scholars, except the Blythes, thought it quite a joke. The girls told Faith, between giggles, that it was too bad, and the boys wrote sardonic notes of condolence to her. Poor Faith went home from school feeling her very soul raw and smarting within her.

“I’m going over to Ingleside to have a talk with Mrs. Blythe,” she sobbed. “SHE won’t laugh at me, as everybody else does. I’ve just GOT to talk to somebody who understands how bad I feel.”

She ran down through Rainbow Valley. Enchantment had been at work the night before. A light snow had fallen and the powdered firs were dreaming of a spring to come and a joy to be. The long hill beyond was richly purple with leafless beeches. The rosy light of sunset lay over the world like a pink kiss. Of all the airy, fairy places, full of weird, elfin grace, Rainbow Valley that winter evening was the most beautiful. But all its dreamlike loveliness was lost on poor, sore-hearted little Faith.

By the brook she came suddenly upon Rosemary West, who was sitting on the old pine tree. She was on her way home from Ingleside, where she had been giving the girls their music lesson. She had been lingering in Rainbow Valley quite a little time, looking across its white beauty and roaming some by-ways of dream. Judging from the expression of her face, her thoughts were pleasant ones. Perhaps the faint, occasional tinkle from the bells on the Tree Lovers brought the little lurking smile to her lips. Or perhaps it was occasioned by the consciousness that John Meredith seldom failed to spend Monday evening in the gray house on the white wind-swept hill.

Into Rosemary's dreams burst Faith Meredith full of rebellious bitterness. Faith stopped abruptly when she saw Miss West. She did not know her very well — just well enough to speak to when they met. And she did not want to see any one just then — except Mrs. Blythe. She knew her eyes and nose were red and swollen and she hated to have a stranger know she had been crying.

“Good evening, Miss West,” she said uncomfortably.

“What is the matter, Faith?” asked Rosemary gently.

“Nothing,” said Faith rather shortly.

“Oh!” Rosemary smiled. “You mean nothing that you can tell to outsiders, don't you?”

Faith looked at Miss West with sudden interest. Here was a person who understood things. And how pretty she was! How golden her hair was under her plummy hat! How pink her cheeks were over her velvet coat! How blue and companionable her eyes were! Faith felt that Miss West could be a lovely friend — if only she were a friend instead of a stranger!

“I — I'm going up to tell Mrs. Blythe,” said Faith. “She always understands — she never laughs at us. I always talk things over with her. It helps.”

“Dear girlie, I'm sorry to have to tell you that Mrs. Blythe isn't home,” said Miss West, sympathetically. “She went to Avonlea to-day and isn't coming back till the last of the week.”

Faith's lip quivered.

“Then I might as well go home again,” she said miserably.

“I suppose so — unless you think you could bring yourself to talk it over with me instead,” said Miss Rosemary gently. “It IS such a help to talk things over. I know. I don't suppose I can be as good at understanding as Mrs. Blythe — but I promise you that I won't laugh.”

“You wouldn’t laugh outside,” hesitated Faith. “But you might — inside.”

“No, I wouldn’t laugh inside, either. Why should I? Something has hurt you — it never amuses me to see anybody hurt, no matter what hurts them. If you feel that you’d like to tell me what has hurt you I’ll be glad to listen. But if you think you’d rather not — that’s all right, too, dear.”

Faith took another long, earnest look into Miss West’s eyes. They were very serious — there was no laughter in them, not even far, far back. With a little sigh she sat down on the old pine beside her new friend and told her all about Adam and his cruel fate.

Rosemary did not laugh or feel like laughing. She understood and sympathized — really, she was almost as good as Mrs. Blythe — yes, quite as good.

“Mr. Perry is a minister, but he should have been a BUTCHER,” said Faith bitterly. “He is so fond of carving things up. He ENJOYED cutting poor Adam to pieces. He just sliced into him as if he were any common rooster.”

“Between you and me, Faith, I don’t like Mr. Perry very well myself,” said Rosemary, laughing a little — but at Mr. Perry, not at Adam, as Faith clearly understood. “I never did like him. I went to school with him — he was a Glen boy, you know — and he was a most detestable little prig even then. Oh, how we girls used to hate holding his fat, clammy hands in the ring-around games. But we must remember, dear, that he didn’t know that Adam had been a pet of yours. He thought he WAS just a common rooster. We must be just, even when we are terribly hurt.”

“I suppose so,” admitted Faith. “But why does everybody seem to think it funny that I should have loved Adam so much, Miss West? If it had been a horrid old cat nobody would have thought it queer. When Lottie Warren’s kitten had its legs cut off by the binder everybody was sorry for her. She cried two days in school and nobody laughed at her, not even Dan Reese. And all her chums went to the kitten’s funeral and helped her bury it — only they couldn’t bury its poor little paws with it, because they couldn’t find them. It was a horrid thing to have happen, of course, but I don’t think

it was as dreadful as seeing your pet EATEN UP. Yet everybody laughs at ME.”

“I think it is because the name ‘rooster’ seems rather a funny one,” said Rosemary gravely. “There IS something in it that is comical. Now, ‘chicken’ is different. It doesn’t sound so funny to talk of loving a chicken.”

“Adam was the dearest little chicken, Miss West. He was just a little golden ball. He would run up to me and peck out of my hand. And he was handsome when he grew up, too — white as snow, with such a beautiful curving white tail, though Mary Vance said it was too short. He knew his name and always came when I called him — he was a very intelligent rooster. And Aunt Martha had no right to kill him. He was mine. It wasn’t fair, was it, Miss West?”

“No, it wasn’t,” said Rosemary decidedly. “Not a bit fair. I remember I had a pet hen when I was a little girl. She was such a pretty little thing — all golden brown and speckly. I loved her as much as I ever loved any pet. She was never killed — she died of old age. Mother wouldn’t have her killed because she was my pet.”

“If MY mother had been living she wouldn’t have let Adam be killed,” said Faith. “For that matter, father wouldn’t have either, if he’d been home and known of it. I’m SURE he wouldn’t, Miss West.”

“I’m sure, too,” said Rosemary. There was a little added flush on her face. She looked rather conscious but Faith noticed nothing.

“Was it VERY wicked of me not to tell Mr. Perry his coat-tails were scorching?” she asked anxiously.

“Oh, terribly wicked,” answered Rosemary, with dancing eyes. “But I would have been just as naughty, Faith — I wouldn’t have told him they were scorching — and I don’t believe I would ever have been a bit sorry for my wickedness, either.”

“Una thought I should have told him because he was a minister.”

“Dearest, if a minister doesn’t behave as a gentleman we are not bound to respect his coat-tails. I know I would just have loved to see Jimmy Perry’s coat-tails burning up. It must have been fun.”

Both laughed; but Faith ended with a bitter little sigh.

“Well, anyway, Adam is dead and I am NEVER going to love anything again.”

“Don’t say that, dear. We miss so much out of life if we don’t love. The more we love the richer life is — even if it is only some little furry or feathery pet. Would you like a canary, Faith — a little golden bit of a canary? If you would I’ll give you one. We have two up home.”

“Oh, I WOULD like that,” cried Faith. “I love birds. Only — would Aunt Martha’s cat eat it? It’s so TRAGIC to have your pets eaten. I don’t think I could endure it a second time.”

“If you hang the cage far enough from the wall I don’t think the cat could harm it. I’ll tell you just how to take care of it and I’ll bring it to Ingleside for you the next time I come down.”

To herself, Rosemary was thinking,

“It will give every gossip in the Glen something to talk of, but I WILL not care. I want to comfort this poor little heart.”

Faith was comforted. Sympathy and understanding were very sweet. She and Miss Rosemary sat on the old pine until the twilight crept softly down over the white valley and the evening star shone over the gray maple grove. Faith told Rosemary all her small history and hopes, her likes and dislikes, the ins and outs of life at the manse, the ups and downs of school society. Finally they parted firm friends.

Mr. Meredith was, as usual, lost in dreams when supper began that evening, but presently a name pierced his abstraction and brought him back to reality. Faith was telling Una of her meeting with Rosemary.

“She is just lovely, I think,” said Faith. “Just as nice as Mrs. Blythe — but different. I felt as if I wanted to hug her. She did hug ME — such a nice, velvety hug. And she called me ‘dearest.’ It THRILLED me. I could tell her ANYTHING.”

“So you liked Miss West, Faith?” Mr. Meredith asked, with a rather odd intonation.

“I love her,” cried Faith.

“Ah!” said Mr. Meredith. “Ah!”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE IMPOSSIBLE WORD

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John Meredith walked meditatively through the clear crispness of a winter night in Rainbow Valley. The hills beyond glistened with the chill splendid lustre of moonlight on snow. Every little fir tree in the long valley sang its own wild song to the harp of wind and frost. His children and the Blythe lads and lasses were coasting down the eastern slope and whizzing over the glassy pond. They were having a glorious time and their gay voices and gayer laughter echoed up and down the valley, dying away in elfin cadences among the trees. On the right the lights of Ingleside gleamed through the maple grove with the genial lure and invitation which seems always to glow in the beacons of a home where we know there is love and good-cheer and a welcome for all kin, whether of flesh or spirit. Mr. Meredith liked very well on occasion to spend an evening arguing with the doctor by the drift wood fire, where the famous china dogs of Ingleside kept ceaseless watch and ward, as became deities of the hearth, but tonight he did not look that way. Far on the western hill gleamed a paler but more alluring star. Mr. Meredith was on his way to see Rosemary West, and he meant to tell her something which had been slowly blossoming in his heart since their first meeting and had sprung into full flower on the evening when Faith had so warmly voiced her admiration for Rosemary.

He had come to realize that he had learned to care for Rosemary. Not as he had cared for Cecilia, of course. THAT was entirely different. That love of romance and dream and glamour could never, he thought, return. But Rosemary was beautiful and sweet and dear — very dear. She was the best of companions. He was happier in her company than he had ever expected to be again. She would be an ideal mistress for his home, a good mother to his children.

During the years of his widowhood Mr. Meredith had received innumerable hints from brother members of Presbytery and from many parishioners who could not be suspected of any ulterior motive, as well as from some who could, that he ought to marry again: But these hints never made any impression on him. It was commonly thought he was never aware of them. But he was quite acutely aware of them. And in his own occasional visitations of common sense he knew that the common sensible thing for him to do was to marry. But common sense was not the strong point of John Meredith, and to choose out, deliberately and coldbloodedly, some “suitable” woman, as one might choose a housekeeper or a business partner, was something he was quite incapable of doing. How he hated that word “suitable.” It reminded him so strongly of James Perry. “A SUIT able woman of SUIT able age,” that unctuous brother of the cloth had said, in his far from subtle hint. For the moment John Meredith had had a perfectly unbelievable desire to rush madly away and propose marriage to the youngest, most unsuitable woman it was possible to discover.

Mrs. Marshall Elliott was his good friend and he liked her. But when she had bluntly told him he should marry again he felt as if she had torn away the veil that hung before some sacred shrine of his innermost life, and he had been more or less afraid of her ever since. He knew there were women in his congregation “of suitable age” who would marry him quite readily. That fact had seeped through all his abstraction very early in his ministry in Glen St. Mary. They were good, substantial, uninteresting women, one or two fairly comely, the others not exactly so and John Meredith would as soon have thought of marrying any one of them as of hanging himself. He had some ideals to which no seeming necessity could make him false. He could ask no woman to fill Cecilia’s place in his home unless he could offer her at least some of the affection and homage he had given to his girlish bride. And where, in his limited feminine acquaintance, was such a woman to be found?

Rosemary West had come into his life on that autumn evening bringing with her an atmosphere in which his spirit recognized native air. Across the gulf of strangerhood they clasped hands of friendship. He knew her better in that ten minutes by the hidden spring than he knew Emmeline Drew or Elizabeth Kirk or Amy Annetta Douglas in a year, or could know

them, in a century. He had fled to her for comfort when Mrs. Alec Davis had outraged his mind and soul and had found it. Since then he had gone often to the house on the hill, slipping through the shadowy paths of night in Rainbow Valley so astutely that Glen gossip could never be absolutely certain that he DID go to see Rosemary West. Once or twice he had been caught in the West living room by other visitors; that was all the Ladies' Aid had to go by. But when Elizabeth Kirk heard it she put away a secret hope she had allowed herself to cherish, without a change of expression on her kind plain face, and Emmeline Drew resolved that the next time she saw a certain old bachelor of Lowbridge she would not snub him as she had done at a previous meeting. Of course, if Rosemary West was out to catch the minister she would catch him; she looked younger than she was and MEN thought her pretty; besides, the West girls had money!

"It is to be hoped that he won't be so absentminded as to propose to Ellen by mistake," was the only malicious thing she allowed herself to say to a sympathetic sister Drew. Emmeline bore no further grudge towards Rosemary. When all was said and done, an unencumbered bachelor was far better than a widower with four children. It had been only the glamour of the manse that had temporarily blinded Emmeline's eyes to the better part.

A sled with three shrieking occupants sped past Mr. Meredith to the pond. Faith's long curls streamed in the wind and her laughter rang above that of the others. John Meredith looked after them kindly and longingly. He was glad that his children had such chums as the Blythes — glad that they had so wise and gay and tender a friend as Mrs. Blythe. But they needed something more, and that something would be supplied when he brought Rosemary West as a bride to the old manse. There was in her a quality essentially maternal.

It was Saturday night and he did not often go calling on Saturday night, which was supposed to be dedicated to a thoughtful revision of Sunday's sermon. But he had chosen this night because he had learned that Ellen West was going to be away and Rosemary would be alone. Often as he had spent pleasant evenings in the house on the hill he had never, since that first meeting at the spring, seen Rosemary alone. Ellen had always been there.

He did not precisely object to Ellen being there. He liked Ellen West very much and they were the best of friends. Ellen had an almost masculine understanding and a sense of humour which his own shy, hidden appreciation of fun found very agreeable. He liked her interest in politics and world events. There was no man in the Glen, not even excepting Dr. Blythe, who had a better grasp of such things.

“I think it is just as well to be interested in things as long as you live,” she had said. “If you’re not, it doesn’t seem to me that there’s much difference between the quick and the dead.”

He liked her pleasant, deep, rumbling voice; he liked the hearty laugh with which she always ended up some jolly and well-told story. She never gave him digs about his children as other Glen women did; she never bored him with local gossip; she had no malice and no pettiness. She was always splendidly sincere. Mr. Meredith, who had picked up Miss Cornelia’s way of classifying people, considered that Ellen belonged to the race of Joseph. Altogether, an admirable woman for a sister-in-law. Nevertheless, a man did not want even the most admirable of women around when he was proposing to another woman. And Ellen was always around. She did not insist on talking to Mr. Meredith herself all the time. She let Rosemary have a fair share of him. Many evenings, indeed, Ellen effaced herself almost totally, sitting back in the corner with St. George in her lap, and letting Mr. Meredith and Rosemary talk and sing and read books together. Sometimes they quite forgot her presence. But if their conversation or choice of duets ever betrayed the least tendency to what Ellen considered philandering, Ellen promptly nipped that tendency in the bud and blotted Rosemary out for the rest of the evening. But not even the grimmest of amiable dragons can altogether prevent a certain subtle language of eye and smile and eloquent silence; and so the minister’s courtship progressed after a fashion.

But if it was ever to reach a climax that climax must come when Ellen was away. And Ellen was so seldom away, especially in winter. She found her own fireside the pleasantest place in the world, she vowed. Gadding had no attraction for her. She was fond of company but she wanted it at home. Mr. Meredith had almost been driven to the conclusion that he must write to

Rosemary what he wanted to say, when Ellen casually announced one evening that she was going to a silver wedding next Saturday night. She had been bridesmaid when the principals were married. Only old guests were invited, so Rosemary was not included. Mr. Meredith pricked up his ears a trifle and a gleam flashed into his dreamy dark eyes. Both Ellen and Rosemary saw it; and both Ellen and Rosemary felt, with a tingling shock, that Mr. Meredith would certainly come up the hill next Saturday night.

“Might as well have it over with, St. George,” Ellen sternly told the black cat, after Mr. Meredith had gone home and Rosemary had silently gone upstairs. “He means to ask her, St. George — I’m perfectly sure of that. So he might as well have his chance to do it and find out he can’t get her, George. She’d rather like to take him, Saint. I know that — but she promised, and she’s got to keep her promise. I’m rather sorry in some ways, St. George. I don’t know of a man I’d sooner have for a brother-in-law if a brother-in-law was convenient. I haven’t a thing against him, Saint — not a thing except that he won’t see and can’t be made to see that the Kaiser is a menace to the peace of Europe. That’s HIS blind spot. But he’s good company and I like him. A woman can say anything she likes to a man with a mouth like John Meredith’s and be sure of not being misunderstood. Such a man is more precious than rubies, Saint — and much rarer, George. But he can’t have Rosemary — and I suppose when he finds out he can’t have her he’ll drop us both. And we’ll miss him, Saint — we’ll miss him something scandalous, George. But she promised, and I’ll see that she keeps her promise!”

Ellen’s face looked almost ugly in its lowering resolution.
Upstairs Rosemary was crying into her pillow.

So Mr. Meredith found his lady alone and looking very beautiful. Rosemary had not made any special toilet for the occasion; she wanted to, but she thought it would be absurd to dress up for a man you meant to refuse. So she wore her plain dark afternoon dress and looked like a queen in it. Her suppressed excitement coloured her face to brilliancy, her great blue eyes were pools of light less placid than usual.

She wished the interview were over. She had looked forward to it all day with dread. She felt quite sure that John Meredith cared a great deal for

her after a fashion — and she felt just as sure that he did not care for her as he had cared for his first love. She felt that her refusal would disappoint him considerably, but she did not think it would altogether overwhelm him. Yet she hated to make it; hated for his sake and — Rosemary was quite honest with herself — for her own. She knew she could have loved John Meredith if — if it had been permissible. She knew that life would be a blank thing if, rejected as lover, he refused longer to be a friend. She knew that she could be very happy with him and that she could make him happy. But between her and happiness stood the prison gate of the promise she had made to Ellen years ago. Rosemary could not remember her father. He had died when she was only three years old. Ellen, who had been thirteen, remembered him, but with no special tenderness. He had been a stern, reserved man many years older than his fair, pretty wife. Five years later their brother of twelve died also; since his death the two girls had always lived alone with their mother. They had never mingled very freely in the social life of the Glen or Lowbridge, though where they went the wit and spirit of Ellen and the sweetness and beauty of Rosemary made them welcome guests. Both had what was called “a disappointment” in their girlhood. The sea had not given up Rosemary’s lover; and Norman Douglas, then a handsome, redhaired young giant, noted for wild driving and noisy though harmless escapades, had quarrelled with Ellen and left her in a fit of pique.

There were not lacking candidates for both Martin’s and Norman’s places, but none seemed to find favour in the eyes of the West girls, who drifted slowly out of youth and bellehood without any seeming regret. They were devoted to their mother, who was a chronic invalid. The three had a little circle of home interests — books and pets and flowers — which made them happy and contented.

Mrs. West’s death, which occurred on Rosemary’s twenty-fifth birthday, was a bitter grief to them. At first they were intolerably lonely. Ellen, especially, continued to grieve and brood, her long, moody musings broken only by fits of stormy, passionate weeping. The old Lowbridge doctor told Rosemary that he feared permanent melancholy or worse.

Once, when Ellen had sat all day, refusing either to speak or eat, Rosemary had flung herself on her knees by her sister's side.

"Oh, Ellen, you have me yet," she said imploringly. "Am I nothing to you? We have always loved each other so."

"I won't have you always," Ellen had said, breaking her silence with harsh intensity. "You will marry and leave me. I shall be left all alone. I cannot bear the thought — I CANNOT. I would rather die."

"I will never marry," said Rosemary, "never, Ellen."

Ellen bent forward and looked searchingly into Rosemary's eyes.

"Will you promise me that solemnly?" she said. "Promise it on mother's Bible."

Rosemary assented at once, quite willing to humour Ellen. What did it matter? She knew quite well she would never want to marry any one. Her love had gone down with Martin Crawford to the deeps of the sea; and without love she could not marry any one. So she promised readily, though Ellen made rather a fearsome rite of it. They clasped hands over the Bible, in their mother's vacant room, and both vowed to each other that they would never marry and would always live together.

Ellen's condition improved from that hour. She soon regained her normal cheery poise. For ten years she and Rosemary lived in the old house happily, undisturbed by any thought of marrying or giving in marriage. Their promise sat very lightly on them. Ellen never failed to remind her sister of it whenever any eligible male creature crossed their paths, but she had never been really alarmed until John Meredith came home that night with Rosemary. As for Rosemary, Ellen's obsession regarding that promise had always been a little matter of mirth to her — until lately. Now, it was a merciless fetter, self-imposed but never to be shaken off. Because of it tonight she must turn her face from happiness.

It was true that the shy, sweet, rosebud love she had given to her boy-lover she could never give to another. But she knew now that she could give to

John Meredith a love richer and more womanly. She knew that he touched deeps in her nature that Martin had never touched — that had not, perhaps, been in the girl of seventeen to touch. And she must send him away tonight — send him back to his lonely hearth and his empty life and his heartbreaking problems, because she had promised Ellen, ten years before, on their mother's Bible, that she would never marry.

John Meredith did not immediately grasp his opportunity. On the contrary, he talked for two good hours on the least lover-like of subjects. He even tried politics, though politics always bored Rosemary. The later began to think that she had been altogether mistaken, and her fears and expectations suddenly seemed to her grotesque. She felt flat and foolish. The glow went out of her face and the lustre out of her eyes. John Meredith had not the slightest intention of asking her to marry him.

And then, quite suddenly, he rose, came across the room, and standing by her chair, he asked it. The room had grown terribly still. Even St. George ceased to purr. Rosemary heard her own heart beating and was sure John Meredith must hear it too.

Now was the time for her to say no, gently but firmly. She had been ready for days with her stilted, regretful little formula. And now the words of it had completely vanished from her mind. She had to say no — and she suddenly found she could not say it. It was the impossible word. She knew now that it was not that she COULD have loved John Meredith, but that she DID love him. The thought of putting him from her life was agony.

She must say SOMETHING; she lifted her bowed golden head and asked him stammeringly to give her a few days for — for consideration.

John Meredith was a little surprised. He was not vainer than any man has a right to be, but he had expected that Rosemary West would say yes. He had been tolerably sure she cared for him. Then why this doubt — this hesitation? She was not a school girl to be uncertain as to her own mind. He felt an ugly shock of disappointment and dismay. But he assented to her request with his unfailing gentle courtesy and went away at once.

“I will tell you in a few days,” said Rosemary, with downcast eyes and burning face.

When the door shut behind him she went back into the room and wrung her hands.

CHAPTER XXII.

ST. GEORGE KNOWS ALL ABOUT IT

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At midnight Ellen West was walking home from the Pollock silver wedding. She had stayed a little while after the other guests had gone, to help the gray-haired bride wash the dishes. The distance between the two houses was not far and the road good, so that Ellen was enjoying the walk back home in the moonlight.

The evening had been a pleasant one. Ellen, who had not been to a party for years, found it very pleasant. All the guests had been members of her old set and there was no intrusive youth to spoil the flavour, for the only son of the bride and groom was far away at college and could not be present. Norman Douglas had been there and they had met socially for the first time in years, though she had seen him once or twice in church that winter. Not the least sentiment was awakened in Ellen's heart by their meeting. She was accustomed to wonder, when she thought about it at all, how she could ever have fancied him or felt so badly over his sudden marriage. But she had rather liked meeting him again. She had forgotten how bracing and stimulating he could be. No gathering was ever stagnant when Norman Douglas was present. Everybody had been surprised when Norman came. It was well known he never went anywhere. The Pollocks had invited him because he had been one of the original guests, but they never thought he would come. He had taken his second cousin, Amy Annetta Douglas, out to supper and seemed rather attentive to her. But Ellen sat across the table from him and had a spirited argument with him — an argument during which all his shouting and banter could not fluster her and in which she came off best, flooring Norman so composedly and so completely that he was silent for ten minutes. At the end of which time he had muttered in his ruddy beard—"spunky as ever — spunky as ever" — and began to hector Amy Annetta, who giggled foolishly over his sallies where Ellen would have retorted bitinglly.

Ellen thought these things over as she walked home, tasting them with reminiscent relish. The moonlit air sparkled with frost. The snow crisped under her feet. Below her lay the Glen with the white harbour beyond. There was a light in the manse study. So John Meredith had gone home. Had he asked Rosemary to marry him? And after what fashion had she made her refusal known? Ellen felt that she would never know this, though she was quite curious. She was sure Rosemary would never tell her anything about it and she would not dare to ask. She must just be content with the fact of the refusal. After all, that was the only thing that really mattered.

“I hope he’ll have sense enough to come back once in a while and be friendly,” she said to herself. She disliked so much to be alone that thinking aloud was one of her devices for circumventing unwelcome solitude. “It’s awful never to have a man-body with some brains to talk to once in a while. And like as not he’ll never come near the house again. There’s Norman Douglas, too — I like that man, and I’d like to have a good rousing argument with him now and then. But he’d never dare come up for fear people would think he was courting me again — for fear I’d think it, too, most likely — though he’s more a stranger to me now than John Meredith. It seems like a dream that we could ever have been beaux. But there it is — there’s only two men in the Glen I’d ever want to talk to — and what with gossip and this wretched lovemaking business it’s not likely I’ll ever see either of them again. I could,” said Ellen, addressing the unmoved stars with a spiteful emphasis, “I could have made a better world myself.”

She paused at her gate with a sudden vague feeling of alarm. There was still a light in the livingroom and to and fro across the window-shades went the shadow of a woman walking restlessly up and down. What was Rosemary doing up at this hour of the night? And why was she striding about like a lunatic?

Ellen went softly in. As she opened the hall door Rosemary came out of the room. She was flushed and breathless. An atmosphere of stress and passion hung about her like a garment.

“Why aren’t you in bed, Rosemary?” demanded Ellen.

“Come in here,” said Rosemary intensely. “I want to tell you something.”

Ellen composedly removed her wraps and overshoes, and followed her sister into the warm, firelighted room. She stood with her hand on the table and waited. She was looking very handsome herself, in her own grim, black-browed style. The new black velvet dress, with its train and V-neck, which she had made purposely for the party, became her stately, massive figure. She wore coiled around her neck the rich heavy necklace of amber beads which was a family heirloom. Her walk in the frosty air had stung her cheeks into a glowing scarlet. But her steel-blue eyes were as icy and unyielding as the sky of the winter night. She stood waiting in a silence which Rosemary could break only by a convulsive effort.

“Ellen, Mr. Meredith was here this evening.”

“Yes?”

“And — and — he asked me to marry him.”

“So I expected. Of course, you refused him?”

“No.”

“Rosemary.” Ellen clenched her hands and took an involuntary step forward. “Do you mean to tell me that you accepted him?”

“No — no.”

Ellen recovered her self-command.

“What DID you do then?”

“I — I asked him to give me a few days to think it over.”

“I hardly see why that was necessary,” said Ellen, coldly contemptuous, “when there is only the one answer you can make him.”

Rosemary held out her hands beseechingly.

“Ellen,” she said desperately, “I love John Meredith — I want to be his wife. Will you set me free from that promise?”

“No,” said Ellen, merciless, because she was sick from fear.

“Ellen — Ellen—”

“Listen,” interrupted Ellen. “I did not ask you for that promise. You offered it.”

“I know — I know. But I did not think then that I could ever care for anyone again.”

“You offered it,” went on Ellen unmovably. “You promised it over our mother’s Bible. It was more than a promise — it was an oath. Now you want to break it.”

“I only asked you to set me free from it, Ellen.”

“I will not do it. A promise is a promise in my eyes. I will not do it. Break your promise — be forsworn if you will — but it shall not be with any assent of mine.”

“You are very hard on me, Ellen.”

“Hard on you! And what of me? Have you ever given a thought to what my loneliness would be here if you left me? I could not bear it — I would go crazy. I CANNOT live alone. Haven’t I been a good sister to you? Have I ever opposed any wish of yours? Haven’t I indulged you in everything?”

“Yes — yes.”

“Then why do you want to leave me for this man whom you hadn’t seen a year ago?”

“I love him, Ellen.”

“Love! You talk like a school miss instead of a middle-aged woman. He doesn’t love you. He wants a housekeeper and a governess. You don’t love

him. You want to be ‘Mrs.’ — you are one of those weakminded women who think it’s a disgrace to be ranked as an old maid. That’s all there is to it.”

Rosemary quivered. Ellen could not, or would not, understand. There was no use arguing with her.

“So you won’t release me, Ellen?”

“No, I won’t. And I won’t talk of it again. You promised and you’ve got to keep your word. That’s all. Go to bed. Look at the time! You’re all romantic and worked up. Tomorrow you’ll be more sensible. At any rate, don’t let me hear any more of this nonsense. Go.”

Rosemary went without another word, pale and spiritless. Ellen walked stormily about the room for a few minutes, then paused before the chair where St. George had been calmly sleeping through the whole evening. A reluctant smile overspread her dark face. There had been only one time in her life — the time of her mother’s death — when Ellen had not been able to temper tragedy with comedy. Even in that long ago bitterness, when Norman Douglas had, after a fashion, jilted her, she had laughed at herself quite as often as she had cried.

“I expect there’ll be some sulking, St. George. Yes, Saint, I expect we are in for a few unpleasant foggy days. Well, we’ll weather them through, George. We’ve dealt with foolish children before, Saint. Rosemary’ll sulk a while — and then she’ll get over it — and all will be as before, George. She promised — and she’s got to keep her promise. And that’s the last word on the subject I’ll say to you or her or anyone, Saint.”

But Ellen lay savagely awake till morning.

There was no sulking, however. Rosemary was pale and quiet the next day, but beyond that Ellen could detect no difference in her. Certainly, she seemed to bear Ellen no grudge. It was stormy, so no mention was made of going to church. In the afternoon Rosemary shut herself in her room and wrote a note to John Meredith. She could not trust herself to say “no” in person. She felt quite sure that if he suspected she was saying “no”

reluctantly he would not take it for an answer, and she could not face pleading or entreaty. She must make him think she cared nothing at all for him and she could do that only by letter. She wrote him the stiffest, coolest little refusal imaginable. It was barely courteous; it certainly left no loophole of hope for the boldest lover — and John Meredith was anything but that. He shrank into himself, hurt and mortified, when he read Rosemary's letter next day in his dusty study. But under his mortification a dreadful realization presently made itself felt. He had thought he did not love Rosemary as deeply as he had loved Cecilia. Now, when he had lost her, he knew that he did. She was everything to him — everything! And he must put her out of his life completely. Even friendship was impossible now. Life stretched before him in intolerable dreariness. He must go on — there was his work — his children — but the heart had gone out of him. He sat alone all that evening in his dark, cold, comfortless study with his head bowed on his hands. Up on the hill Rosemary had a headache and went early to bed, while Ellen remarked to St. George, purring his disdain of foolish humankind, who did not know that a soft cushion was the only thing that really mattered,

“What would women do if headaches had never been invented, St. George? But never mind, Saint. We'll just wink the other eye for a few weeks. I admit I don't feel comfortable myself, George. I feel as if I had drowned a kitten. But she promised, Saint — and she was the one to offer it, George. Bismillah!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GOOD-CONDUCT CLUB

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A light rain had been falling all day — a little, delicate, beautiful spring rain, that somehow seemed to hint and whisper of mayflowers and wakening violets. The harbour and the gulf and the lowlying shore fields had been dim with pearl-gray mists. But now in the evening the rain had ceased and the mists had blown out to sea. Clouds sprinkled the sky over the harbour like little fiery roses. Beyond it the hills were dark against a spendthrift splendour of daffodil and crimson. A great silvery evening star was watching over the bar. A brisk, dancing, new-sprung wind was blowing up from Rainbow Valley, resinous with the odours of fir and damp mosses. It crooned in the old spruces around the graveyard and ruffled Faith's splendid curls as she sat on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone with her arms round Mary Vance and Una. Carl and Jerry were sitting opposite them on another tombstone and all were rather full of mischief after being cooped up all day.

"The air just SHINES tonight, doesn't it? It's been washed so clean, you see," said Faith happily.

Mary Vance eyed her gloomily. Knowing what she knew, or fancied she knew, Mary considered that Faith was far too lighthearted. Mary had something on her mind to say and she meant to say it before she went home. Mrs. Elliott had sent her up to the manse with some new-laid eggs, and had told her not to stay longer than half an hour. The half hour was nearly up, so Mary uncurled her cramped legs from under her and said abruptly,

"Never mind about the air. Just you listen to me. You manse young ones have just got to behave yourselves better than you've been doing this

spring — that's all there is to it. I just come up tonight a-purpose to tell you so. The way people are talking about you is awful."

"What have we been doing now?" cried Faith in amazement, pulling her arm away from Mary. Una's lips trembled and her sensitive little soul shrank within her. Mary was always so brutally frank. Jerry began to whistle out of bravado. He meant to let Mary see he didn't care for HER tirades. Their behaviour was no business of HERS anyway. What right had SHE to lecture them on their conduct?

"Doing now! You're doing ALL the time," retorted Mary. "Just as soon as the talk about one of your didos fades away you do something else to start it up again. It seems to me you haven't any idea of how manse children ought to behave!"

"Maybe YOU can tell us," said Jerry, killingly sarcastic.

Sarcasm was quite thrown away on Mary.

"I can tell you what will happen if you don't learn to behave yourselves. The session will ask your father to resign. There now, Master Jerry-know-it-all. Mrs. Alec Davis said so to Mrs. Elliott. I heard her. I always have my ears pricked up when Mrs. Alec Davis comes to tea. She said you were all going from bad to worse and that though it was only what was to be expected when you had nobody to bring you up, still the congregation couldn't be expected to put up with it much longer, and something would have to be done. The Methodists just laugh and laugh at you, and that hurts the Presbyterian feelings. SHE says you all need a good dose of birch tonic. Lor', if that would make folks good I oughter be a young saint. I'm not telling you this because I want to hurt YOUR feelings. I'm sorry for you" — Mary was past mistress of the gentle art of condescension." I understand that you haven't much chance, the way things are. But other people don't make as much allowance as I do. Miss Drew says Carl had a frog in his pocket in Sunday School last Sunday and it hopped out while she was hearing the lesson. She says she's going to give up the class. Why don't you keep your insecks home?"

“I popped it right back in again,” said Carl. “It didn’t hurt anybody — a poor little frog! And I wish old Jane Drew WOULD give up our class. I hate her. Her own nephew had a dirty plug of tobacco in his pocket and offered us fellows a chew when Elder Clow was praying. I guess that’s worse than a frog.”

“No, ‘cause frogs are more unexpected-like. They make more of a sensation. ‘Sides, he wasn’t caught at it. And then that praying competition you had last week has made a fearful scandal. Everybody is talking about it.”

“Why, the Blythes were in that as well as us,” cried Faith, indignantly. “It was Nan Blythe who suggested it in the first place. And Walter took the prize.”

“Well, you get the credit of it any way. It wouldn’t have been so bad if you hadn’t had it in the graveyard.”

“I should think a graveyard was a very good place to pray in,” retorted Jerry.

“Deacon Hazard drove past when YOU were praying,” said Mary, “and he saw and heard you, with your hands folded over your stomach, and groaning after every sentence. He thought you were making fun of HIM.”

“So I was,” declared unabashed Jerry. “Only I didn’t know he was going by, of course. That was just a mean accident. I wasn’t praying in real earnest — I knew I had no chance of winning the prize. So I was just getting what fun I could out of it. Walter Blythe can pray bully. Why, he can pray as well as dad.”

“Una is the only one of US who really likes praying,” said Faith pensively.

“Well, if praying scandalizes people so much we mustn’t do it any more,” sighed Una.

“Shucks, you can pray all you want to, only not in the graveyard — and don’t make a game of it. That was what made it so bad — that, and having

a tea-party on the tombstones.”

“We hadn’t.”

“Well, a soap-bubble party then. You had SOMETHING. The over-harbour people swear you had a tea-party, but I’m willing to take your word. And you used this tombstone as a table.”

“Well, Martha wouldn’t let us blow bubbles in the house. She was awful cross that day,” explained Jerry. “And this old slab made such a jolly table.”

“Weren’t they pretty?” cried Faith, her eyes sparkling over the remembrance. “They reflected the trees and the hills and the harbour like little fairy worlds, and when we shook them loose they floated away down to Rainbow Valley.”

“All but one and it went over and bust up on the Methodist spire,” said Carl.

“I’m glad we did it once, anyhow, before we found out it was wrong,” said Faith.

“It wouldn’t have been wrong to blow them on the lawn,” said Mary impatiently. “Seems like I can’t knock any sense into your heads. You’ve been told often enough you shouldn’t play in the graveyard. The Methodists are sensitive about it.”

“We forget,” said Faith dolefully. “And the lawn is so small — and so caterpillary — and so full of shrubs and things. We can’t be in Rainbow Valley all the time — and where are we to go?”

“It’s the things you DO in the graveyard. It wouldn’t matter if you just sat here and talked quiet, same as we’re doing now. Well, I don’t know what is going to come of it all, but I DO know that Elder Warren is going to speak to your pa about it. Deacon Hazard is his cousin.”

“I wish they wouldn’t bother father about us,” said Una.

“Well, people think he ought to bother himself about you a little more. I don’t — I understand him. He’s a child in some ways himself — that’s what he is, and needs some one to look after him as bad as you do. Well, perhaps he’ll have some one before long, if all tales is true.”

“What do you mean?” asked Faith.

“Haven’t you got any idea — honest?” demanded Mary.

“No, no. What DO you mean?”

“Well, you are a lot of innocents, upon my word. Why, EVERYbody is talking of it. Your pa goes to see Rosemary West. SHE is going to be your step-ma.”

“I don’t believe it,” cried Una, flushing crimson.

“Well, I dunno. I just go by what folks say. I don’t give it for a fact. But it would be a good thing. Rosemary West’d make you toe the mark if she came here, I’ll bet a cent, for all she’s so sweet and smiley on the face of her. They’re always that way till they’ve caught them. But you need some one to bring you up. You’re disgracing your pa and I feel for him. I’ve always thought an awful lot of your pa ever since that night he talked to me so nice. I’ve never said a single swear word since, or told a lie. And I’d like to see him happy and comfortable, with his buttons on and his meals decent, and you young ones licked into shape, and that old cat of a Martha put in HER proper place. The way she looked at the eggs I brought her tonight. ‘I hope they’re fresh,’ says she. I just wished they WAS rotten. But you just mind that she gives you all one for breakfast, including your pa. Make a fuss if she doesn’t. That was what they was sent up for — but I don’t trust old Martha. She’s quite capable of feeding ‘em to her cat.”

Mary’s tongue being temporarily tired, a brief silence fell over the graveyard. The manse children did not feel like talking. They were digesting the new and not altogether palatable ideas Mary had suggested to them. Jerry and Carl were somewhat startled. But, after all, what did it matter? And it wasn’t likely there was a word of truth in it. Faith, on the

whole, was pleased. Only Una was seriously upset. She felt that she would like to get away and cry.

“Will there be any stars in my crown?” sang the Methodist choir, beginning to practise in the Methodist church.

“I want just three,” said Mary, whose theological knowledge had increased notably since her residence with Mrs. Elliott. “Just three — setting up on my head, like a coronet, a big one in the middle and a small one each side.”

“Are there different sizes in souls?” asked Carl.

“Of course. Why, little babies must have smaller ones than big men. Well, it’s getting dark and I must scoot home. Mrs. Elliott doesn’t like me to be out after dark. Laws, when I lived with Mrs. Wiley the dark was just the same as the daylight to me. I didn’t mind it no more’n a gray cat. Them days seem a hundred years ago. Now, you mind what I’ve said and try to behave yourselves, for you pa’s sake. I’LL always back you up and defend you — you can be dead sure of that. Mrs. Elliott says she never saw the like of me for sticking up for my friends. I was real sassy to Mrs. Alec Davis about you and Mrs. Elliott combed me down for it afterwards. The fair Cornelia has a tongue of her own and no mistake. But she was pleased underneath for all, ‘cause she hates old Kitty Alec and she’s real fond of you. I can see through folks.”

Mary sailed off, excellently well pleased with herself, leaving a rather depressed little group behind her.

“Mary Vance always says something that makes us feel bad when she comes up,” said Una resentfully.

“I wish we’d left her to starve in the old barn,” said Jerry vindictively.

“Oh, that’s wicked, Jerry,” rebuked Una.

“May as well have the game as the name,” retorted unrepentant Jerry. “If people say we’re so bad let’s BE bad.”

“But not if it hurts father,” pleaded Faith.

Jerry squirmed uncomfortably. He adored his father. Through the unshaded study window they could see Mr. Meredith at his desk. He did not seem to be either reading or writing. His head was in his hands and there was something in his whole attitude that spoke of weariness and dejection. The children suddenly felt it.

“I dare say somebody’s been worrying him about us to-day,” said Faith. “I wish we COULD get along without making people talk. Oh — Jem Blythe! How you scared me!”

Jem Blythe had slipped into the graveyard and sat down beside the girls. He had been prowling about Rainbow Valley and had succeeded in finding the first little star-white cluster of arbutus for his mother. The manse children were rather silent after his coming. Jem was beginning to grow away from them somewhat this spring. He was studying for the entrance examination of Queen’s Academy and stayed after school with the older pupils for extra lessons. Also, his evenings were so full of work that he seldom joined the others in Rainbow Valley now. He seemed to be drifting away into grownup land.

“What is the matter with you all tonight?” he asked. “There’s no fun in you.”

“Not much,” agreed Faith dolefully. “There wouldn’t be much fun in you either if YOU knew you were disgracing your father and making people talk about you.”

“Who’s been talking about you now?”

“Everybody — so Mary Vance says.” And Faith poured out her troubles to sympathetic Jem. “You see,” she concluded dolefully, “we’ve nobody to bring us up. And so we get into scrapes and people think we’re bad.”

“Why don’t you bring yourselves up?” suggested Jem. “I’ll tell you what to do. Form a Good-Conduct Club and punish yourselves every time you do anything that’s not right.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Faith, struck by it. “But,” she added doubtfully, “things that don’t seem a bit of harm to US seem simply dreadful to other people. How can we tell? We can’t be bothering father all the time — and he has to be away a lot, anyhow.”

“You could mostly tell if you stopped to think a thing over before doing it and ask yourselves what the congregation would say about it,” said Jem. “The trouble is you just rush into things and don’t think them over at all. Mother says you’re all too impulsive, just as she used to be. The Good-Conduct Club would help you to think, if you were fair and honest about punishing yourselves when you broke the rules. You’d have to punish in some way that really HURT, or it wouldn’t do any good.”

“Whip each other?”

“Not exactly. You’d have to think up different ways of punishment to suit the person. You wouldn’t punish each other — you’d punish YOURSELVES. I read all about such a club in a storybook. You try it and see how it works.”

“Let’s,” said Faith; and when Jem was gone they agreed they would. “If things aren’t right we’ve just got to make them right,” said Faith, resolutely.

“We’ve got to be fair and square, as Jem says,” said Jerry. “This is a club to bring ourselves up, seeing there’s nobody else to do it. There’s no use in having many rules. Let’s just have one and any of us that breaks it has got to be punished hard.”

“But HOW.”

“We’ll think that up as we go along. We’ll hold a session of the club here in the graveyard every night and talk over what we’ve done through the day, and if we think we’ve done anything that isn’t right or that would disgrace dad the one that does it, or is responsible for it, must be punished. That’s the rule. We’ll all decide on the kind of punishment — it must be made to fit the crime, as Mr. Flagg says. And the one that’s, guilty will be

bound to carry it out and no shirking. There's going to be fun in this," concluded Jerry, with a relish.

"You suggested the soap-bubble party," said Faith.

"But that was before we'd formed the club," said Jerry hastily.

"Everything starts from tonight."

"But what if we can't agree on what's right, or what the punishment ought to be? S'pose two of us thought of one thing and two another. There ought to be five in a club like this."

"We can ask Jem Blythe to be umpire. He is the squarest boy in Glen St. Mary. But I guess we can settle our own affairs mostly. We want to keep this as much of a secret as we can. Don't breathe a word to Mary Vance. She'd want to join and do the bringing up."

"I think," said Faith, "that there's no use in spoiling every day by dragging punishments in. Let's have a punishment day."

"We'd better choose Saturday because there is no school to interfere," suggested Una.

"And spoil the one holiday in the week," cried Faith. "Not much! No, let's take Friday. That's fish day, anyhow, and we all hate fish. We may as well have all the disagreeable things in one day. Then other days we can go ahead and have a good time."

"Nonsense," said Jerry authoritatively. "Such a scheme wouldn't work at all. We'll just punish ourselves as we go along and keep a clear slate. Now, we all understand, don't we? This is a Good-Conduct Club, for the purpose of bringing ourselves up. We agree to punish ourselves for bad conduct, and always to stop before we do anything, no matter what, and ask ourselves if it is likely to hurt dad in any way, and any one who shirks is to be cast out of the club and never allowed to play with the rest of us in Rainbow Valley again. Jem Blythe to be umpire in case of disputes. No more taking bugs to Sunday School, Carl, and no more chewing gum in public, if you please, Miss Faith."

“No more making fun of elders praying or going to the Methodist prayer meeting,” retorted Faith.

“Why, it isn’t any harm to go to the Methodist prayer meeting,” protested Jerry in amazement.

“Mrs. Elliott says it is, She says manse children have no business to go anywhere but to Presbyterian things.”

“Darn it, I won’t give up going to the Methodist prayer meeting,” cried Jerry. “It’s ten times more fun than ours is.”

“You said a naughty word,” cried Faith. “NOW, you’ve got to punish yourself.”

“Not till it’s all down in black and white. We’re only talking the club over. It isn’t really formed until we’ve written it out and signed it. There’s got to be a constitution and by-laws. And you KNOW there’s nothing wrong in going to a prayer meeting.”

“But it’s not only the wrong things we’re to punish ourselves for, but anything that might hurt father.”

“It won’t hurt anybody. You know Mrs. Elliott is cracked on the subject of Methodists. Nobody else makes any fuss about my going. I always behave myself. You ask Jem or Mrs. Blythe and see what they say. I’ll abide by their opinion. I’m going for the paper now and I’ll bring out the lantern and we’ll all sign.”

Fifteen minutes later the document was solemnly signed on Hezekiah Pollock’s tombstone, on the centre of which stood the smoky manse lantern, while the children knelt around it. Mrs. Elder Clow was going past at the moment and next day all the Glen heard that the manse children had been having another praying competition and had wound it up by chasing each other all over the graves with a lantern. This piece of embroidery was probably suggested by the fact that, after the signing and sealing was completed, Carl had taken the lantern and had walked circumspectly to the

little hollow to examine his ant-hill. The others had gone quietly into the manse and to bed.

“Do you think it is true that father is going to marry Miss West?” Una had tremulously asked of Faith, after their prayers had been said.

“I don’t know, but I’d like it,” said Faith.

“Oh, I wouldn’t,” said Una, chokingly. “She is nice the way she is. But Mary Vance says it changes people **ALTOGETHER** to be made stepmothers. They get horrid cross and mean and hateful then, and turn your father against you. She says they’re sure to do that. She never knew it to fail in a single case.”

“I don’t believe Miss West would **EVER** try to do that,” cried Faith.

“Mary says **ANYBODY** would. She knows **ALL** about stepmothers, Faith — she says she’s seen hundreds of them — and you’ve never seen one. Oh, Mary has told me bloodcurdling things about them. She says she knew of one who whipped her husband’s little girls on their bare shoulders till they bled, and then shut them up in a cold, dark coal cellar all night. She says they’re **ALL** aching to do things like that.”

“I don’t believe Miss West would. You don’t know her as well as I do, Una. Just think of that sweet little bird she sent me. I love it far more even than Adam.”

“It’s just being a stepmother changes them. Mary says they can’t help it. I wouldn’t mind the whippings so much as having father hate us.”

“You know nothing could make father hate us. Don’t be silly, Una. I dare say there’s nothing to worry over. Likely if we run our club right and bring ourselves up properly father won’t think of marrying any one. And if he does, I **KNOW** Miss West will be lovely to us.”

But Una had no such conviction and she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CHARITABLE IMPULSE

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For a fortnight things ran smoothly in the Good-Conduct Club. It seemed to work admirably. Not once was Jem Blythe called in as umpire. Not once did any of the manse children set the Glen gossips by the ears. As for their minor peccadilloes at home, they kept sharp tabs on each other and gamely underwent their self-imposed punishment — generally a voluntary absence from some gay Friday night frolic in Rainbow Valley, or a sojourn in bed on some spring evening when all young bones ached to be out and away. Faith, for whispering in Sunday School, condemned herself to pass a whole day without speaking a single word, unless it was absolutely necessary, and accomplished it. It was rather unfortunate that Mr. Baker from over-harbour should have chosen that evening for calling at the manse, and that Faith should have happened to go to the door. Not one word did she reply to his genial greeting, but went silently away to call her father briefly. Mr. Baker was slightly offended and told his wife when he went home that that the biggest Meredith girl seemed a very shy, sulky little thing, without manners enough to speak when she was spoken to. But nothing worse came of it, and generally their penances did no harm to themselves or anybody else. All of them were beginning to feel quite cocksure that after all, it was a very easy matter to bring yourself up.

“I guess people will soon see that we can behave ourselves properly as well as anybody,” said Faith jubilantly. “It isn’t hard when we put our minds to it.”

She and Una were sitting on the Pollock tombstone. It had been a cold, raw, wet day of spring storm and Rainbow Valley was out of the question for girls, though the manse and the Ingleside boys were down there fishing. The rain had held up, but the east wind blew mercilessly in from the sea, cutting to bone and marrow. Spring was late in spite of its early

promise, and there was even yet a hard drift of old snow and ice in the northern corner of the graveyard. Lida Marsh, who had come up to bring the manse a mess of herring, slipped in through the gate shivering. She belonged to the fishing village at the harbour mouth and her father had, for thirty years, made a practice of sending a mess from his first spring catch to the manse. He never darkened a church door; he was a hard drinker and a reckless man, but as long as he sent those herring up to the manse every spring, as his father had done before him, he felt comfortably sure that his account with the Powers That Govern was squared for the year. He would not have expected a good mackerel catch if he had not so sent the first fruits of the season.

Lida was a mite of ten and looked younger, because she was such a small, wizened little creature. Tonight, as she sidled boldly enough up to the manse girls, she looked as if she had never been warm since she was born. Her face was purple and her pale-blue, bold little eyes were red and watery. She wore a tattered print dress and a ragged woollen comforter, tied across her thin shoulders and under her arms. She had walked the three miles from the harbour mouth barefooted, over a road where there was still snow and slush and mud. Her feet and legs were as purple as her face. But Lida did not mind this much. She was used to being cold, and she had been going barefooted for a month already, like all the other swarming young fry of the fishing village. There was no selfpity in her heart as she sat down on the tombstone and grinned cheerfully at Faith and Una. Faith and Una grinned cheerfully back. They knew Lida slightly, having met her once or twice the preceding summer when they had gone down the harbour with the Blythes.

“Hello!” said Lida, “ain’t this a fierce kind of a night?”

“T’ain’t fit for a dog to be out, is it?”

“Then why are you out?” asked Faith.

“Pa made me bring you up some herring,” returned Lida. She shivered, coughed, and stuck out her bare feet. Lida was not thinking about herself or her feet, and was making no bid for sympathy. She held her feet out instinctively to keep them from the wet grass around the tombstone. But

Faith and Una were instantly swamped with a wave of pity for her. She looked so cold — so miserable.

“Oh, why are you barefooted on such a cold night?” cried Faith.
“Your feet must be almost frozen.”

“Pretty near,” said Lida proudly. “I tell you it was fierce walking up that harbour road.”

“Why didn’t you put on your shoes and stockings?” asked Una.

“Hain’t none to put on. All I had was wore out by the time winter was over,” said Lida indifferently.

For a moment Faith stared in horror. This was terrible. Here was a little girl, almost a neighbour, half frozen because she had no shoes or stockings in this cruel spring weather. Impulsive Faith thought of nothing but the dreadfulness of it. In a moment she was pulling off her own shoes and stockings.

“Here, take these and put them right on,” she said, forcing them into the hands of the astonished Lida. “Quick now. You’ll catch your death of cold. I’ve got others. Put them right on.”

Lida, recovering her wits, snatched at the offered gift, with a sparkle in her dull eyes. Sure she would put them on, and that mighty quick, before any one appeared with authority to recall them. In a minute she had pulled the stockings over her scrawny little legs and slipped Faith’s shoes over her thick little ankles.

“I’m obliged to you,” she said, “but won’t your folks be cross?”

“No — and I don’t care if they are,” said Faith. “Do you think I could see any one freezing to death without helping them if I could? It wouldn’t be right, especially when my father’s a minister.”

“Will you want them back? It’s awful cold down at the harbour mouth — long after it’s warm up here,” said Lida slyly.

“No, you’re to keep them, of course. That is what I meant when I gave them. I have another pair of shoes and plenty of stockings.”

Lida had meant to stay awhile and talk to the girls about many things. But now she thought she had better get away before somebody came and made her yield up her booty. So she shuffled off through the bitter twilight, in the noiseless, shadowy way she had slipped in. As soon as she was out of sight of the manse she sat down, took off the shoes and stockings, and put them in her herring basket. She had no intention of keeping them on down that dirty harbour road. They were to be kept good for gala occasions. Not another little girl down at the harbour mouth had such fine black cashmere stockings and such smart, almost new shoes. Lida was furnished forth for the summer. She had no qualms in the matter. In her eyes the manse people were quite fabulously rich, and no doubt those girls had slathers of shoes and stockings. Then Lida ran down to the Glen village and played for an hour with the boys before Mr. Flagg’s store, splashing about in a pool of slush with the maddest of them, until Mrs. Elliott came along and bade her begone home.

“I don’t think, Faith, that you should have done that,” said Una, a little reproachfully, after Lida had gone. “You’ll have to wear your good boots every day now and they’ll soon scuff out.”

“I don’t care,” cried Faith, still in the fine glow of having done a kindness to a fellow creature. “It isn’t fair that I should have two pairs of shoes and poor little Lida Marsh not have any. NOW we both have a pair. You know perfectly well, Una, that father said in his sermon last Sunday that there was no real happiness in getting or having — only in giving. And it’s true. I feel FAR happier now than I ever did in my whole life before. Just think of Lida walking home this very minute with her poor little feet all nice and warm and comfy.”

“You know you haven’t another pair of black cashmere stockings,” said Una. “Your other pair were so full of holes that Aunt Martha said she couldn’t darn them any more and she cut the legs up for stove dusters. You’ve nothing but those two pairs of striped stockings you hate so.”

All the glow and uplift went out of Faith. Her gladness collapsed like a pricked balloon. She sat for a few dismal minutes in silence, facing the consequences of her rash act.

“Oh, Una, I never thought of that,” she said dolefully. “I didn’t stop to think at all.”

The striped stockings were thick, heavy, coarse, ribbed stockings of blue and red which Aunt Martha had knit for Faith in the winter. They were undoubtedly hideous. Faith loathed them as she had never loathed anything before. Wear them she certainly would not. They were still unworn in her bureau drawer.

“You’ll have to wear the striped stockings after this,” said Una. “Just think how the boys in school will laugh at you. You know how they laugh at Mamie Warren for her striped stockings and call her barber pole and yours are far worse.”

“I won’t wear them,” said Faith. “I’ll go barefooted first, cold as it is.”

“You can’t go barefooted to church tomorrow. Think what people would say.”

“Then I’ll stay home.”

“You can’t. You know very well Aunt Martha will make you go.”

Faith did know this. The one thing on which Aunt Martha troubled herself to insist was that they must all go to church, rain or shine. How they were dressed, or if they were dressed at all, never concerned her. But go they must. That was how Aunt Martha had been brought up seventy years ago, and that was how she meant to bring them up.

“Haven’t you got a pair you can lend me, Una?” said poor Faith piteously.

Una shook her head. “No, you know I only have the one black pair. And they’re so tight I can hardly get them on. They wouldn’t go on you.

Neither would my gray ones. Besides, the legs of THEM are all darned AND darned.”

“I won’t wear those striped stockings,” said Faith stubbornly.
“The feel of them is even worse than the looks. They make me feel as if my legs were as big as barrels and they’re so SCRATCHY.”

“Well, I don’t know what you’re going to do.”

“If father was home I’d go and ask him to get me a new pair before the store closes. But he won’t be home till too late. I’ll ask him Monday — and I won’t go to church tomorrow. I’ll pretend I’m sick and Aunt Martha’ll HAVE to let me stay home.”

“That would be acting a lie, Faith,” cried Una. “You CAN’T do that. You know it would be dreadful. What would father say if he knew? Don’t you remember how he talked to us after mother died and told us we must always be TRUE, no matter what else we failed in. He said we must never tell or act a lie — he said he’d TRUST us not to. You CAN’T do it, Faith. Just wear the striped stockings. It’ll only be for once. Nobody will notice them in church. It isn’t like school. And your new brown dress is so long they won’t show much. Wasn’t it lucky Aunt Martha made it big, so you’d have room to grow in it, for all you hated it so when she finished it?”

“I won’t wear those stockings,” repeated Faith. She uncoiled her bare, white legs from the tombstone and deliberately walked through the wet, cold grass to the bank of snow. Setting her teeth, she stepped upon it and stood there.

“What are you doing?” cried Una aghast. “You’ll catch your death of cold, Faith Meredith.”

“I’m trying to,” answered Faith. “I hope I’ll catch a fearful cold and be AWFUL sick tomorrow. Then I won’t be acting a lie. I’m going to stand here as long as I can bear it.”

“But, Faith, you might really die. You might get pneumonia. Please, Faith don’t. Let’s go into the house and get SOMETHING for your feet. Oh, here’s Jerry. I’m so thankful. Jerry, MAKE Faith get off that snow. Look at her feet.”

“Holy cats! Faith, what ARE you doing?” demanded Jerry. “Are you crazy?”

“No. Go away!” snapped Faith.

“Then are you punishing yourself for something? It isn’t right, if you are. You’ll be sick.”

“I want to be sick. I’m not punishing myself. Go away.”

“Where’s her shoes and stockings?” asked Jerry of Una.

“She gave them to Lida Marsh.”

“Lida Marsh? What for?”

“Because Lida had none — and her feet were so cold. And now she wants to be sick so that she won’t have to go to church tomorrow and wear her striped stockings. But, Jerry, she may die.”

“Faith,” said Jerry, “get off that ice-bank or I’ll pull you off.”

“Pull away,” dared Faith.

Jerry sprang at her and caught her arms. He pulled one way and Faith pulled another. Una ran behind Faith and pushed. Faith stormed at Jerry to leave her alone. Jerry stormed back at her not to be a dizzy idiot; and Una cried. They made no end of noise and they were close to the road fence of the graveyard. Henry Warren and his wife drove by and heard and saw them. Very soon the Glen heard that the manse children had been having an awful fight in the graveyard and using most improper language. Meanwhile, Faith had allowed herself to be pulled off the ice because her feet were aching so sharply that she was ready to get off any way. They all went in amiably and went to bed. Faith slept like a cherub and woke in the

morning without a trace of a cold. She felt that she couldn't feign sickness and act a lie, after remembering that long-ago talk with her father. But she was still as fully determined as ever that she would not wear those abominable stockings to church.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER SCANDAL AND ANOTHER “EXPLANATION”

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Faith went early to Sunday School and was seated in the corner of her class pew before any one came. Therefore, the dreadful truth did not burst upon any one until Faith left the class pew near the door to walk up to the manse pew after Sunday School. The church was already half filled and all who were sitting near the aisle saw that the minister’s daughter had boots on but no stockings!

Faith’s new brown dress, which Aunt Martha had made from an ancient pattern, was absurdly long for her, but even so it did not meet her boot-tops. Two good inches of bare white leg showed plainly.

Faith and Carl sat alone in the manse pew. Jerry had gone into the gallery to sit with a chum and the Blythe girls had taken Una with them. The Meredith children were given to “sitting all over the church” in this fashion and a great many people thought it very improper. The gallery especially, where irresponsible lads congregated and were known to whisper and suspected of chewing tobacco during service, was no place, for a son of the manse. But Jerry hated the manse pew at the very top of the church, under the eyes of Elder Clow and his family. He escaped from it whenever he could.

Carl, absorbed in watching a spider spinning its web at the window, did not notice Faith’s legs. She walked home with her father after church and he never noticed them. She got on the hated striped stockings before Jerry and Una arrived, so that for the time being none of the occupants of the manse knew what she had done. But nobody else in Glen St. Mary was ignorant of it. The few who had not seen soon heard. Nothing else was talked of on the way home from church. Mrs. Alec Davis said it was only what she expected, and the next thing you would see some of those young

ones coming to church with no clothes on at all. The president of the Ladies' Aid decided that she would bring the matter up at the next Aid meeting, and suggest that they wait in a body on the minister and protest. Miss Cornelia said that she, for her part, gave up. There was no use worrying over the manse fry any longer. Even Mrs. Dr. Blythe felt a little shocked, though she attributed the occurrence solely to Faith's forgetfulness. Susan could not immediately begin knitting stockings for Faith because it was Sunday, but she had one set up before any one else was out of bed at Ingleside the next morning.

"You need not tell me anything but that it was old Martha's fault, Mrs. Dr. dear," she told Anne. "I suppose that poor little child had no decent stockings to wear. I suppose every stocking she had was in holes, as you know very well they generally are. And I think, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the Ladies' Aid would be better employed in knitting some for them than in fighting over the new carpet for the pulpit platform. I am not a Ladies' Aider, but I shall knit Faith two pairs of stockings, out of this nice black yarn, as fast as my fingers can move and that you may tie to. Never shall I forget my sensations, Mrs. Dr. dear, when I saw a minister's child walking up the aisle of our church with no stockings on. I really did not know what way to look."

"And the church was just full of Methodists yesterday, too," groaned Miss Cornelia, who had come up to the Glen to do some shopping and run into Ingleside to talk the affair over. "I don't know how it is, but just as sure as those manse children do something especially awful the church is sure to be crowded with Methodists. I thought Mrs. Deacon Hazard's eyes would drop out of her head. When she came out of church she said, 'Well, that exhibition was no more than decent. I do pity the Presbyterians.' And we just had to TAKE it. There was nothing one could say."

"There was something I could have said, Mrs. Dr. dear, if I had heard her," said Susan grimly. "I would have said, for one thing, that in my opinion clean bare legs were quite as decent as holes. And I would have said, for another, that the Presbyterians did not feel greatly in need of pity seeing that they had a minister who could PREACH and the Methodists had NOT."

I could have squelched Mrs. Deacon Hazard, Mrs. Dr dear, and that you may tie to.”

“I wish Mr. Meredith didn’t preach quite so well and looked after his family a little better,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “He could at least glance over his children before they went to church and see that they were quite properly clothed. I’m tired making excuses for him, believe ME.”

Meanwhile, Faith’s soul was being harrowed up in Rainbow Valley. Mary Vance was there and, as usual, in a lecturing mood. She gave Faith to understand that she had disgraced herself and her father beyond redemption and that she, Mary Vance, was done with her. “Everybody” was talking, and “everybody” said the same thing.

“I simply feel that I can’t associate with you any longer,” she concluded.

“WE are going to associate with her then,” cried Nan Blythe. Nan secretly thought Faith HAD done a awful thing, but she wasn’t going to let Mary Vance run matters in this high-handed fashion. “And if YOU are not you needn’t come any more to Rainbow Valley, MISS Vance.”

Nan and Di both put their arms around Faith and glared defiance at Mary. The latter suddenly crumpled up, sat down on a stump and began to cry.

“It ain’t that I don’t want to,” she wailed. “But if I keep in with Faith people’ll be saying I put her up to doing things. Some are saying it now, true’s you live. I can’t afford to have such things said of me, now that I’m in a respectable place and trying to be a lady. And I never went bare-legged in church in my toughest days. I’d never have thought of doing such a thing. But that hateful old Kitty Alec says Faith has never been the same girl since that time I stayed in the manse. She says Cornelia Elliott will live to rue the day she took me in. It hurts my feelings, I tell you. But it’s Mr. Meredith I’m really worried over.”

“I think you needn’t worry about him,” said Di scornfully. “It isn’t likely necessary. Now, Faith darling, stop crying and tell us why you did it.”

Faith explained tearfully. The Blythe girls sympathized with her, and even Mary Vance agreed that it was a hard position to be in. But Jerry, on whom the thing came like a thunderbolt, refused to be placated. So THIS was what some mysterious hints he had got in school that day meant! He marched Faith and Una home without ceremony, and the Good-Conduct Club held an immediate session in the graveyard to sit in judgment on Faith's case.

"I don't see that it was any harm," said Faith defiantly. "Not MUCH of my legs showed. It wasn't WRONG and it didn't hurt anybody."

"It will hurt Dad. You KNOW it will. You know people blame him whenever we do anything queer."

"I didn't think of that," muttered Faith.

"That's just the trouble. You didn't think and you SHOULD have thought. That's what our Club is for — to bring us up and MAKE us think. We promised we'd always stop and think before doing things. You didn't and you've got to be punished, Faith — and real hard, too. You'll wear those striped stockings to school for a week for punishment."

"Oh, Jerry, won't a day do — two days? Not a whole week!"

"Yes, a whole week," said inexorable Jerry. "It is fair — ask Jem Blythe if it isn't."

Faith felt she would rather submit than ask Jem Blythe about such a matter. She was beginning to realize that her offence was a quite shameful one.

"I'll do it, then," she muttered, a little sulkily.

"You're getting off easy," said, Jerry severely. "And no matter how we punish you it won't help father. People will always think you just did it for mischief, and they'll blame father for not stopping it. We can never explain it to everybody."

This aspect of the case weighed on Faith's mind. Her own condemnation she could bear, but it tortured her that her father should be blamed. If people knew the true facts of the case they would not blame him. But how could she make them known to all the world? Getting up in church, as she had once done, and explaining the matter was out of the question. Faith had heard from Mary Vance how the congregation had looked upon that performance and realized that she must not repeat it. Faith worried over the problem for half a week. Then she had an inspiration and promptly acted upon it. She spent that evening in the garret, with a lamp and an exercise book, writing busily, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. It was the very thing! How clever she was to have thought of it! It would put everything right and explain everything and yet cause no scandal. It was eleven o'clock when she had finished to her satisfaction and crept down to bed, dreadfully tired, but perfectly happy.

In a few days the little weekly published in the Glen under the name of The Journal came out as usual, and the Glen had another sensation. A letter signed "Faith Meredith" occupied a prominent place on the front page and ran as follows: —

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I want to explain to everybody how it was I came to go to church without stockings on, so that everybody will know that father was not to blame one bit for it, and the old gossips need not say he is, because it is not true. I gave my only pair of black stockings to Lida Marsh, because she hadn't any and her poor little feet were awful cold and I was so sorry for her. No child ought to have to go without shoes and stockings in a Christian community before the snow is all gone, and I think the W. F. M. S. ought to have given her stockings. Of course, I know they are sending things to the little heathen children, and that is all right and a kind thing to do. But the little heathen children have lots more warm weather than we have, and I think the women of our church ought to look after Lida and not leave it all to me. When I gave her my stockings I forgot they were the only black pair I had without holes, but I am glad I did give them to her, because my conscience would have been uncomfortable if I hadn't. When she had gone away, looking so proud and happy, the poor little thing, I remembered that

all I had to wear were the horrid red and blue things Aunt Martha knit last winter for me out of some yarn that Mrs. Joseph Burr of Upper Glen sent us. It was dreadfully coarse yarn and all knots, and I never saw any of Mrs. Burr's own children wearing things made of such yarn. But Mary Vance says Mrs. Burr gives the minister stuff that she can't use or eat herself, and thinks it ought to go as part of the salary her husband signed to pay, but never does.

I just couldn't bear to wear those hateful stockings. They were so ugly and rough and felt so scratchy. Everybody would have made fun of me. I thought at first I'd pretend to be sick and not go to church next day, but I decided I couldn't do that, because it would be acting a lie, and father told us after mother died that was something we must never, never do. It is just as bad to act a lie as to tell one, though I know some people, right here in the Glen, who act them, and never seem to feel a bit bad about it. I will not mention any names, but I know who they are and so does father.

Then I tried my best to catch cold and really be sick by standing on the snowbank in the Methodist graveyard with my bare feet until Jerry pulled me off. But it didn't hurt me a bit and so I couldn't get out of going to church. So I just decided I would put my boots on and go that way. I can't see why it was so wrong and I was so careful to wash my legs just as clean as my face, but, anyway, father wasn't to blame for it. He was in the study thinking of his sermon and other heavenly things, and I kept out of his way before I went to Sunday School. Father does not look at people's legs in church, so of course he did not notice mine, but all the gossips did and talked about it, and that is why I am writing this letter to the Journal to explain. I suppose I did very wrong, since everybody says so, and I am sorry and I am wearing those awful stockings to punish myself, although father bought me two nice new black pairs as soon as Mr. Flagg's store opened on Monday morning. But it was all my fault, and if people blame father for it after they read this they are not Christians and so I do not mind what they say.

There is another thing I want to explain about before I stop. Mary Vance told me that Mr. Evan Boyd is blaming the Lew Baxters for stealing potatoes out of his field last fall. They did not touch his potatoes. They are

very poor, but they are honest. It was us did it — Jerry and Carl and I. Una was not with us at the time. We never thought it was stealing. We just wanted a few potatoes to cook over a fire in Rainbow Valley one evening to eat with our fried trout. Mr. Boyd's field was the nearest, just between the valley and the village, so we climbed over his fence and pulled up some stalks. The potatoes were awful small, because Mr. Boyd did not put enough fertilizer on them and we had to pull up a lot of stalks before we got enough, and then they were not much bigger than marbles. Walter and Di Blythe helped us eat them, but they did not come along until we had them cooked and did not know where we got them, so they were not to blame at all, only us. We didn't mean any harm, but if it was stealing we are very sorry and we will pay Mr. Boyd for them if he will wait until we grow up. We never have any money now because we are not big enough to earn any, and Aunt Martha says it takes every cent of poor father's salary, even when it is paid up regularly — and it isn't often — to run this house. But Mr. Boyd must not blame the Lew Baxters any more, when they were quite innocent, and give them a bad name. Yours respectfully, FAITH MEREDITH."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS CORNELIA GETS A NEW POINT OF VIEW

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“Susan, after I’m dead I’m going to come back to earth every time when the daffodils blow in this garden,” said Anne rapturously. “Nobody may see me, but I’ll be here. If anybody is in the garden at the time — I THINK I’ll come on an evening just like this, but it MIGHT be just at dawn — a lovely, pale-pinky spring dawn — they’ll just see the daffodils nodding wildly as if an extra gust of wind had blown past them, but it will be I.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will not be thinking of flaunting worldly things like daffies after you are dead,” said Susan. “And I do NOT believe in ghosts, seen or unseen.”

“Oh, Susan, I shall not be a ghost! That has such a horrible sound. I shall just be ME. And I shall run around in the twilight, whether it is morn or eve, and see all the spots I love. Do you remember how badly I felt when I left our little House of Dreams, Susan? I thought I could never love Ingleside so well. But I do. I love every inch of the ground and every stick and stone on it.”

“I am rather fond of the place myself,” said Susan, who would have died if she had been removed from it, “but we must not set our affections too much on earthly things, Mrs. Dr. dear. There are such things as fires and earthquakes. We should always be prepared. The Tom MacAllisters over-harbour were burned out three nights ago. Some say Tom MacAllister set the house on fire himself to get the insurance. That may or may not be. But I advise the doctor to have our chimneys seen to at once. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But I see Mrs. Marshall Elliott coming in at the gate, looking as if she had been sent for and couldn’t go.”

“Anne dearie, have you seen the Journal to-day?”

Miss Cornelia's voice was trembling, partly from emotion, partly from the fact that she had hurried up from the store too fast and lost her breath.

Anne bent over the daffodils to hide a smile. She and Gilbert had laughed heartily and heartlessly over the front page of the Journal that day, but she knew that to dear Miss Cornelia it was almost a tragedy, and she must not wound her feelings by any display of levity.

"Isn't it dreadful? What IS to be done?" asked Miss Cornelia despairingly. Miss Cornelia had vowed that she was done with worrying over the pranks of the manse children, but she went on worrying just the same.

Anne led the way to the veranda, where Susan was knitting, with Shirley and Rilla conning their primers on either side. Susan was already on her second pair of stockings for Faith. Susan never worried over poor humanity. She did what in her lay for its betterment and serenely left the rest to the Higher Powers.

"Cornelia Elliott thinks she was born to run this world, Mrs. Dr. dear," she had once said to Anne, "and so she is always in a stew over something. I have never thought I was, and so I go calmly along. Not but what it has sometimes occurred to me that things might be run a little better than they are. But it is not for us poor worms to nourish such thoughts. They only make us uncomfortable and do not get us anywhere."

"I don't see that anything can be done — now—" said Anne, pulling out a nice, cushiony chair for Miss Cornelia. "But how in the world did Mr. Vickers allow that letter to be printed? Surely he should have known better."

"Why, he's away, Anne dearie — he's been away to New Brunswick for a week. And that young scalawag of a Joe Vickers is editing the Journal in his absence. Of course, Mr. Vickers would never have put it in, even if he is a Methodist, but Joe would just think it a good joke. As you say, I don't suppose there is anything to be done now, only live it down. But if I ever get Joe Vickers cornered somewhere I'll give him a talking to he won't forget in a hurry. I wanted Marshall to stop our subscription to the Journal instantly, but he only laughed and said that to-day's issue was the only one

that had had anything readable in it for a year. Marshall never will take anything seriously — just like a man. Fortunately, Evan Boyd is like that, too. He takes it as a joke and is laughing all over the place about it. And he's another Methodist! As for Mrs. Burr of Upper Glen, of course she will be furious and they will leave the church. Not that it will be a great loss from any point of view. The Methodists are quite welcome to THEM."

"It serves Mrs. Burr right," said Susan, who had an old feud with the lady in question and had been hugely tickled over the reference to her in Faith's letter. "She will find that she will not be able to cheat the Methodist parson out of HIS salary with bad yarn."

"The worst of it is, there's not much hope of things getting any better," said Miss Cornelia gloomily. "As long as Mr. Meredith was going to see Rosemary West I did hope the manse would soon have a proper mistress. But that is all off. I suppose she wouldn't have him on account of the children — at least, everybody seems to think so."

"I do not believe that he ever asked her," said Susan, who could not conceive of any one refusing a minister.

"Well, nobody knows anything about THAT. But one thing is certain, he doesn't go there any longer. And Rosemary didn't look well all the spring. I hope her visit to Kingsport will do her good. She's been gone for a month and will stay another month, I understand. I can't remember when Rosemary was away from home before. She and Ellen could never bear to be parted. But I understand Ellen insisted on her going this time. And meanwhile Ellen and Norman Douglas are warming up the old soup."

"Is that really so?" asked Anne, laughing. "I heard a rumour of it, but I hardly believed it."

"Believe it! You may believe it all right, Anne, dearie. Nobody is in ignorance of it. Norman Douglas never left anybody in doubt as to his intentions in regard to anything. He always did his courting before the public. He told Marshall that he hadn't thought about Ellen for years, but the first time he went to church last fall he saw her and fell in love with her all over again. He said he'd clean forgot how handsome she was. He

hadn't seen her for twenty years, if you can believe it. Of course he never went to church, and Ellen never went anywhere else round here. Oh, we all know what Norman means, but what Ellen means is a different matter. I shan't take it upon me to predict whether it will be a match or not."

"He jilted her once — but it seems that does not count with some people, Mrs. Dr. dear," Susan remarked rather acidly.

"He jilted her in a fit of temper and repented it all his life," said Miss Cornelia. "That is different from a coldblooded jilting. For my part, I never detested Norman as some folks do. He could never overcrowd ME. I DO wonder what started him coming to church. I have never been able to believe Mrs. Wilsons's story that Faith Meredith went there and bullied him into it. I've always intended to ask Faith herself, but I've never happened to think of it just when I saw her. What influence could SHE have over Norman Douglas? He was in the store when I left, bellowing with laughter over that scandalous letter. You could have heard him at Four Winds Point. 'The greatest girl in the world,' he was shouting. 'She's that full of spunk she's bursting with it. And all the old grannies want to tame her, darn them. But they'll never be able to do it — never! They might as well try to drown a fish. Boyd, see that you put more fertilizer on your potatoes next year. Ho, ho, ho!' And then he laughed till the roof shook."

"Mr. Douglas pays well to the salary, at least," remarked Susan.

"Oh, Norman isn't mean in some ways. He'd give a thousand without blinking a lash, and roar like a Bull of Bashan if he had to pay five cents too much for anything. Besides, he likes Mr. Meredith's sermons, and Norman Douglas was always willing to shell out if he got his brains tickled up. There is no more Christianity about him than there is about a black, naked heathen in Africa and never will be. But he's clever and well read and he judges sermons as he would lectures. Anyhow, it's well he backs up Mr. Meredith and the children as he does, for they'll need friends more than ever after this. I am tired of making excuses for them, believe ME."

“Do you know, dear Miss Cornelia,” said Anne seriously, “I think we have all been making too many excuses. It is very foolish and we ought to stop it. I am going to tell you what I’d LIKE to do. I shan’t do it, of course” — Anne had noted a glint of alarm in Susan’s eye—”it would be too unconventional, and we must be conventional or die, after we reach what is supposed to be a dignified age. But I’d LIKE to do it. I’d like to call a meeting of the Ladies Aid and W.M.S. and the Girls Sewing Society, and include in the audience all and any Methodists who have been criticizing the Merediths — although I do think if we Presbyterians stopped criticizing and excusing we would find that other denominations would trouble themselves very little about our manse folks. I would say to them, ‘Dear Christian friends’ — with marked emphasis on ‘Christian’ — I have something to say to you and I want to say it good and hard, that you may take it home and repeat it to your families. You Methodists need not pity us, and we Presbyterians need not pity ourselves. We are not going to do it any more. And we are going to say, boldly and truthfully, to all critics and sympathizers, ‘We are PROUD of our minister and his family. Mr. Meredith is the best preacher Glen St. Mary church ever had. Moreover, he is a sincere, earnest teacher of truth and Christian charity. He is a faithful friend, a judicious pastor in all essentials, and a refined, scholarly, well-bred man. His family are worthy of him. Gerald Meredith is the cleverest pupil in the Glen school, and Mr. Hazard says that he is destined to a brilliant career. He is a manly, honourable, truthful little fellow. Faith Meredith is a beauty, and as inspiring and original as she is beautiful. There is nothing commonplace about her. All the other girls in the Glen put together haven’t the vim, and wit, and joyousness and ‘spunk’ she has. She has not an enemy in the world. Every one who knows her loves her. Of how many, children or grownups, can that be said? Una Meredith is sweetness personified. She will make a most lovable woman. Carl Meredith, with his love for ants and frogs and spiders, will some day be a naturalist whom all Canada — nay, all the world, will delight to honour. Do you know of any other family in the Glen, or out of it, of whom all these things can be said? Away with shamefaced excuses and apologies. We REJOICE in our minister and his splendid boys and girls!”

Anne stopped, partly because she was out of breath after her vehement speech and partly because she could not trust herself to speak further in

view of Miss Cornelia's face. That good lady was staring helplessly at Anne, apparently engulfed in billows of new ideas. But she came up with a gasp and struck out for shore gallantly.

“Anne Blythe, I wish you WOULD call that meeting and say just that! You've made me ashamed of myself, for one, and far be it from me to refuse to admit it. OF COURSE, that is how we should have talked — especially to the Methodists. And it's every word of it true — every word. We've just been shutting our eyes to the big worthwhile things and squinting them on the little things that don't really matter a pin's worth. Oh, Anne dearie, I can see a thing when it's hammered into my head. No more apologizing for Cornelia Marshall! I shall hold MY head up after this, believe ME — though I MAY talk things over with you as usual just to relieve my feelings if the Merediths do any more startling stunts. Even that letter I felt so bad about — why, it's only a good joke after all, as Norman says. Not many girls would have been cute enough to think of writing it — and all punctuated so nicely and not one word misspelled. Just let me hear any Methodist say one word about it — though all the same I'll never forgive Joe Vickers — believe ME! Where are the rest of your small fry tonight?”

“Walter and the twins are in Rainbow Valley. Jem is studying in the garret.”

“They are all crazy about Rainbow Valley. Mary Vance thinks it's the only place in the world. She'd be off up here every evening if I'd let her. But I don't encourage her in gadding. Besides, I miss the creature when she isn't around, Anne dearie. I never thought I'd get so fond of her. Not but what I see her faults and try to correct them. But she has never said one saucy word to me since she came to my house and she is a GREAT help — for when all is said and done, Anne dearie, I am not so young as I once was, and there is no sense denying it. I was fifty-nine my last birthday. I don't FEEL it, but there is no gainsaying the Family Bible.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SACRED CONCERT

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In spite of Miss Cornelia's new point of view she could not help feeling a little disturbed over the next performance of the manse children. In public she carried off the situation splendidly, saying to all the gossips the substance of what Anne had said in daffodil time, and saying it so pointedly and forcibly that her hearers found themselves feeling rather foolish and began to think that, after all, they were making too much of a childish prank. But in private Miss Cornelia allowed herself the relief of bemoaning it to Anne.

"Anne dearie, they had a CONCERT IN THE GRAVEYARD last Thursday evening, while the Methodist prayer meeting was going on. There they sat, on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone, and sang for a solid hour. Of course, I understand it was mostly hymns they sang, and it wouldn't have been quite so bad if they'd done nothing else. But I'm told they finished up with Polly Wolly Doodle at full length — and that just when Deacon Baxter was praying."

"I was there that night," said Susan," and, although I did not say anything about it to you, Mrs. Dr. dear, I could not help thinking that it was a great pity they picked that particular evening. It was truly bloodcurdling to hear them sitting there in that abode of the dead, shouting that frivolous song at the tops of their lungs."

"I don't know what YOU were doing in a Methodist prayer meeting," said Miss Cornelia acidly.

"I have never found that Methodism was catching," retorted Susan stiffly. "And, as I was going to say when I was interrupted, badly as I felt, I did NOT give in to the Methodists. When Mrs. Deacon Baxter said, as we

came out, ‘What a disgraceful exhibition!’ I said, looking her fairly in the eye, ‘They are all beautiful singers, and none of YOUR choir, Mrs. Baxter, ever bother themselves coming out to your prayer meeting, it seems. Their voices appear to be in tune only on Sundays!’ She was quite meek and I felt that I had snubbed her properly. But I could have done it much more thoroughly, Mrs. Dr. dear, if only they had left out Polly Wolly Doodle. It is truly terrible to think of that being sung in a graveyard.”

“Some of those dead folks sang Polly Wolly Doodle when they were living, Susan. Perhaps they like to hear it yet,” suggested Gilbert.

Miss Cornelia looked at him reproachfully and made up her mind that, on some future occasion, she would hint to Anne that the doctor should be admonished not to say such things. They might injure his practice. People might get it into their heads that he wasn’t orthodox. To be sure, Marshall said even worse things habitually, but then HE was not a public man.

“I understand that their father was in his study all the time, with his windows open, but never noticed them at all. Of course, he was lost in a book as usual. But I spoke to him about it yesterday, when he called.”

“How could you dare, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?” asked Susan rebukingly.

“Dare! It’s time somebody dared something. Why, they say he knows nothing about that letter of Faith’s to the JOURNAL because nobody liked to mention it to him. He never looks at a JOURNAL of course. But I thought he ought to know of this to prevent any such performances in future. He said he would ‘discuss it with them.’ But of course he’d never think of it again after he got out of our gate. That man has no sense of humour, Anne, believe ME. He preached last Sunday on ‘How to Bring up Children.’ A beautiful sermon it was, too — and everybody in church thinking ‘what a pity you can’t practise what you preach.’”

Miss Cornelia did Mr. Meredith an injustice in thinking he would soon forget what she had told him. He went home much disturbed and when the children came from Rainbow Valley that night, at a much later hour than they should have been prowling in it, he called them into his study.

They went in, somewhat awed. It was such an unusual thing for their father to do. What could he be going to say to them? They racked their memories for any recent transgression of sufficient importance, but could not recall any. Carl had spilled a saucerful of jam on Mrs. Peter Flagg's silk dress two evenings before, when, at Aunt Martha's invitation, she had stayed to supper. But Mr. Meredith had not noticed it, and Mrs. Flagg, who was a kindly soul, had made no fuss. Besides, Carl had been punished by having to wear Una's dress all the rest of the evening.

Una suddenly thought that perhaps her father meant to tell them that he was going to marry Miss West. Her heart began to beat violently and her legs trembled. Then she saw that Mr. Meredith looked very stern and sorrowful. No, it could not be that.

"Children," said Mr. Meredith, "I have heard something that has pained me very much. Is it true that you sat out in the graveyard all last Thursday evening and sang ribald songs while a prayer meeting was being held in the Methodist church?"

"Great Caesar, Dad, we forgot all about it being their prayer meeting night," exclaimed Jerry in dismay.

"Then it is true — you did do this thing?"

"Why, Dad, I don't know what you mean by ribald songs. We sang hymns — it was a sacred concert, you know. What harm was that? I tell you we never thought about it's being Methodist prayer meeting night. They used to have their meeting Tuesday nights and since they've changed to Thursdays it's hard to remember."

"Did you sing nothing but hymns?"

"Why," said Jerry, turning red, "we DID sing Polly Wolly Doodle at the last. Faith said, 'Let's have something cheerful to wind up with.' But we didn't mean any harm, Father — truly we didn't."

"The concert was my idea, Father," said Faith, afraid that Mr. Meredith might blame Jerry too much. "You know the Methodists themselves had a

sacred concert in their church three Sunday nights ago. I thought it would be good fun to get one up in imitation of it. Only they had prayers at theirs, and we left that part out, because we heard that people thought it awful for us to pray in a graveyard. YOU were sitting in here all the time,” she added, “and never said a word to us.”

“I did not notice what you were doing. That is no excuse for me, of course. I am more to blame than you — I realize that. But why did you sing that foolish song at the end?”

“We didn’t think,” muttered Jerry, feeling that it was a very lame excuse, seeing that he had lectured Faith so strongly in the Good-Conduct Club sessions for her lack of thought. “We’re sorry, Father — truly, we are. Pitch into us hard — we deserve a regular combing down.”

But Mr. Meredith did no combing down or pitching into. He sat down and gathered his small culprits close to him and talked a little to them, tenderly and wisely. They were overcome with remorse and shame, and felt that they could never be so silly and thoughtless again.

“We’ve just got to punish ourselves good and hard for this,” whispered Jerry as they crept upstairs. “We’ll have a session of the Club first thing tomorrow and decide how we’ll do it. I never saw father so cut up. But I wish to goodness the Methodists would stick to one night for their prayer meeting and not wander all over the week.”

“Anyhow, I’m glad it wasn’t what I was afraid it was,” murmured Una to herself.

Behind them, in the study, Mr. Meredith had sat down at his desk and buried his face in his arms.

“God help me!” he said. “I’m a poor sort of father. Oh, Rosemary! If you had only cared!”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FAST DAY

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The Good-Conduct Club had a special session the next morning before school. After various suggestions, it was decided that a fast day would be an appropriate punishment.

“We won’t eat a single thing for a whole day,” said Jerry. “I’m kind of curious to see what fasting is like, anyhow. This will be a good chance to find out.”

“What day will we choose for it?” asked Una, who thought it would be quite an easy punishment and rather wondered that Jerry and Faith had not devised something harder.

“Let’s pick Monday,” said Faith. “We mostly have a pretty FILLING dinner on Sundays, and Mondays meals never amount to much anyhow.”

“But that’s just the point,” exclaimed Jerry. “We mustn’t take the easiest day to fast, but the hardest — and that’s Sunday, because, as you say, we mostly have roast beef that day instead of cold ditto. It wouldn’t be much punishment to fast from ditto. Let’s take next Sunday. It will be a good day, for father is going to exchange for the morning service with the Upper Lowbridge minister. Father will be away till evening. If Aunt Martha wonders what’s got into us, we’ll tell her right up that we’re fasting for the good of our souls, and it is in the Bible and she is not to interfere, and I guess she won’t.”

Aunt Martha did not. She merely said in her fretful mumbling way, “What foolishness are you young rips up to now?” and thought no more about it. Mr. Meredith had gone away early in the morning before any one was up. He went without his breakfast, too, but that was, of course, of common

occurrence. Half of the time he forgot it and there was no one to remind him of it. Breakfast — Aunt Martha's breakfast — was not a hard meal to miss. Even the hungry "young rips" did not feel it any great deprivation to abstain from the "lumpy porridge and blue milk" which had aroused the scorn of Mary Vance. But it was different at dinner time. They were furiously hungry then, and the odor of roast beef which pervaded the manse, and which was wholly delightful in spite of the fact that the roast beef was badly underdone, was almost more than they could stand. In desperation they rushed to the graveyard where they couldn't smell it. But Una could not keep her eyes from the dining room window, through which the Upper Lowbridge minister could be seen, placidly eating.

"If I could only have just a weeny, teeny piece," she sighed.

"Now, you stop that," commanded Jerry. "Of course it's hard — but that's the punishment of it. I could eat a graven image this very minute, but am I complaining? Let's think of something else. We've just got to rise above our stomachs."

At supper time they did not feel the pangs of hunger which they had suffered earlier in the day.

"I suppose we're getting used to it," said Faith. "I feel an awfully queer all-gone sort of feeling, but I can't say I'm hungry."

"My head is funny," said Una. "It goes round and round sometimes."

But she went gamely to church with the others. If Mr. Meredith had not been so wholly wrapped up in and carried away with his subject he might have noticed the pale little face and hollow eyes in the manse pew beneath. But he noticed nothing and his sermon was something longer than usual. Then, just before he gave out the final hymn, Una Meredith tumbled off the seat of the manse pew and lay in a dead faint on the floor.

Mrs. Elder Clow was the first to reach her. She caught the thin little body from the arms of white-faced, terrified Faith and carried it into the vestry. Mr. Meredith forgot the hymn and everything else and rushed madly after her. The congregation dismissed itself as best it could.

“Oh, Mrs. Clow,” gasped Faith, “is Una dead? Have we killed her?”

“What is the matter with my child?” demanded the pale father.

“She has just fainted, I think,” said Mrs. Clow. “Oh, here’s the doctor, thank goodness.”

Gilbert did not find it a very easy thing to bring Una back to consciousness. He worked over her for a long time before her eyes opened. Then he carried her over to the manse, followed by Faith, sobbing hysterically in her relief.

“She is just hungry, you know — she didn’t eat a thing to-day — none of us did — we were all fasting.”

“Fasting!” said Mr. Meredith, and “Fasting?” said the doctor.

“Yes — to punish ourselves for singing Polly Wolly in the graveyard,” said Faith.

“My child, I don’t want you to punish yourselves for that,” said Mr. Meredith in distress. “I gave you your little scolding — and you were all penitent — and I forgave you.”

“Yes, but we had to be punished,” explained Faith. “It’s our rule — in our Good-Conduct Club, you know — if we do anything wrong, or anything that is likely to hurt father in the congregation, we HAVE to punish ourselves. We are bringing ourselves up, you know, because there is nobody to do it.”

Mr. Meredith groaned, but the doctor got up from Una’s side with an air of relief.

“Then this child simply fainted from lack of food and all she needs is a good square meal,” he said. “Mrs. Clow, will you be kind enough to see she gets it? And I think from Faith’s story that they all would be the better for something to eat, or we shall have more faintings.”

“I suppose we shouldn’t have made Una fast,” said Faith remorsefully. “When I think of it, only Jerry and I should have been punished. WE got up the concert and we were the oldest.”

“I sang Polly Wolly just the same as the rest of you,” said Una’s weak little voice, “so I had to be punished, too.”

Mrs. Clow came with a glass of milk, Faith and Jerry and Carl sneaked off to the pantry, and John Meredith went into his study, where he sat in the darkness for a long time, alone with his bitter thoughts. So his children were bringing themselves up because there was “nobody to do it” — struggling along amid their little perplexities without a hand to guide or a voice to counsel. Faith’s innocently uttered phrase rankled in her father’s mind like a barbed shaft. There was “nobody” to look after them — to comfort their little souls and care for their little bodies. How frail Una had looked, lying there on the vestry sofa in that long faint! How thin were her tiny hands, how pallid her little face! She looked as if she might slip away from him in a breath — sweet little Una, of whom Cecilia had begged him to take such special care. Since his wife’s death he had not felt such an agony of dread as when he had hung over his little girl in her unconsciousness. He must do something — but what? Should he ask Elizabeth Kirk to marry him? She was a good woman — she would be kind to his children. He might bring himself to do it if it were not for his love for Rosemary West. But until he had crushed that out he could not seek another woman in marriage. And he could not crush it out — he had tried and he could not. Rosemary had been in church that evening, for the first time since her return from Kingsport. He had caught a glimpse of her face in the back of the crowded church, just as he had finished his sermon. His heart had given a fierce throb. He sat while the choir sang the “collection piece,” with his bent head and tingling pulses. He had not seen her since the evening upon which he had asked her to marry him. When he had risen to give out the hymn his hands were trembling and his pale face was flushed. Then Una’s fainting spell had banished everything from his mind for a time. Now, in the darkness and solitude of the study it rushed back. Rosemary was the only woman in the world for him. It was of no use for him to think of marrying any other. He could not commit such a sacrilege even for his children’s sake. He must take up his burden alone —

he must try to be a better, a more watchful father — he must tell his children not to be afraid to come to him with all their little problems. Then he lighted his lamp and took up a bulky new book which was setting the theological world by the ears. He would read just one chapter to compose his mind. Five minutes later he was lost to the world and the troubles of the world.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WEIRD TALE

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On an early June evening Rainbow Valley was an entirely delightful place and the children felt it to be so, as they sat in the open glade where the bells rang elfishly on the Tree Lovers, and the White Lady shook her green tresses. The wind was laughing and whistling about them like a leal, glad-hearted comrade. The young ferns were spicy in the hollow. The wild cherry trees scattered over the valley, among the dark firs, were mistily white. The robins were whistling over in the maples behind Ingleside. Beyond, on the slopes of the Glen, were blossoming orchards, sweet and mystic and wonderful, veiled in dusk. It was spring, and young things MUST be glad in spring. Everybody was glad in Rainbow Valley that evening — until Mary Vance froze their blood with the story of Henry Warren's ghost.

Jem was not there. Jem spent his evenings now studying for his entrance examination in the Ingleside garret. Jerry was down near the pond, trouting. Walter had been reading Longfellow's sea poems to the others and they were steeped in the beauty and mystery of the ships. Then they talked of what they would do when they were grown up — where they would travel — the far, fair shores they would see. Nan and Di meant to go to Europe. Walter longed for the Nile moaning past its Egyptian sands, and a glimpse of the sphinx. Faith opined rather dismally that she supposed she would have to be a missionary — old Mrs. Taylor told her she ought to be — and then she would at least see India or China, those mysterious lands of the Orient. Carl's heart was set on African jungles. Una said nothing. She thought she would just like to stay at home. It was prettier here than anywhere else. It would be dreadful when they were all grown up and had to scatter over the world. The very idea made Una feel lonesome and homesick. But the others dreamed on delightedly until Mary Vance arrived and vanished poesy and dreams at one fell swoop.

“Laws, but I’m out of puff,” she exclaimed. “I’ve run down that hill like sixty. I got an awful scare up there at the old Bailey place.”

“What frightened you?” asked Di.

“I dunno. I was poking about under them lilacs in the old garden, trying to see if there was any lilies-of-the-valley out yet. It was dark as a pocket there — and all at once I seen something stirring and rustling round at the other side of the garden, in those cherry bushes. It was WHITE. I tell you I didn’t stop for a second look. I flew over the dyke quicker than quick. I was sure it was Henry Warren’s ghost.”

“Who was Henry Warren?” asked Di.

“And why should he have a ghost?” asked Nan.

“Laws, did you never hear the story? And you brought up in the Glen. Well, wait a minute till I get by breath all back and I’ll tell you.”

Walter shivered delightfully. He loved ghost stories. Their mystery, their dramatic climaxes, their eeriness gave him a fearful, exquisite pleasure. Longfellow instantly grew tame and commonplace. He threw the book aside and stretched himself out, propped upon his elbows to listen wholeheartedly, fixing his great luminous eyes on Mary’s face. Mary wished he wouldn’t look at her so. She felt she could make a better job of the ghost story if Walter were not looking at her. She could put on several frills and invent a few artistic details to enhance the horror. As it was, she had to stick to the bare truth — or what had been told her for the truth.

“Well,” she began, “you know old Tom Bailey and his wife used to live in that house up there thirty years ago. He was an awful old rip, they say, and his wife wasn’t much better. They’d no children of their own, but a sister of old Tom’s died and left a little boy — this Henry Warren — and they took him. He was about twelve when he came to them, and kind of undersized and delicate. They say Tom and his wife used him awful from the start — whipped him and starved him. Folks said they wanted him to die so’s they could get the little bit of money his mother had left for him. Henry didn’t die right off, but he begun having fits — epileps, they called

‘em — and he grew up kind of simple, till he was about eighteen. His uncle used to thrash him in that garden up there ‘cause it was back of the house where no one could see him. But folks could hear, and they say it was awful sometimes hearing poor Henry plead with his uncle not to kill him. But nobody dared interfere ‘cause old Tom was such a reprobate he’d have been sure to get square with ‘em some way. He burned the barns of a man at Harbour Head who offended him. At last Henry died and his uncle and aunt give out he died in one of his fits and that was all anybody ever knowed, but everybody said Tom had just up and killed him for keeps at last. And it wasn’t long till it got around that Henry WALKED. That old garden was HA’NTED. He was heard there at nights, moaning and crying. Old Tom and his wife got out — went out West and never came back. The place got such a bad name nobody’d buy or rent it. That’s why it’s all gone to ruin. That was thirty years ago, but Henry Warren’s ghost ha’nts it yet.”

“Do you believe that?” asked Nan scornfully. “I don’t.”

“Well, GOOD people have seen him — and heard him.” retorted Mary. “They say he appears and grovels on the ground and holds you by the legs and gibbers and moans like he did when he was alive. I thought of that as soon as I seen that white thing in the bushes and thought if it caught me like that and moaned I’d drop down dead on the spot. So I cut and run. It MIGHTN’T have been his ghost, but I wasn’t going to take any chances with a ha’nt.”

“It was likely old Mrs. Stimson’s white calf,” laughed Di. “It pastures in that garden — I’ve seen it.”

“Maybe so. But I’M not going home through the Bailey garden any more. Here’s Jerry with a big string of trout and it’s my turn to cook them. Jem and Jerry both say I’m the best cook in the Glen. And Cornelia told me I could bring up this batch of cookies. I all but dropped them when I saw Henry’s ghost.”

Jerry hooted when he heard the ghost story — which Mary repeated as she fried the fish, touching it up a trifle or so, since Walter had gone to help Faith to set the table. It made no impression on Jerry, but Faith and Una and Carl had been secretly much frightened, though they would never have

given in to it. It was all right as long as the others were with them in the valley: but when the feast was over and the shadows fell they quaked with remembrance. Jerry went up to Ingleside with the Blythes to see Jem about something, and Mary Vance went around that way home. So Faith and Una and Carl had to go back to the manse alone. They walked very close together and gave the old Bailey garden a wide berth. They did not believe that it was haunted, of course, but they would not go near it for all that.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GHOST ON THE DYKE

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Somehow, Faith and Carl and Una could not shake off the hold which the story of Henry Warren's ghost had taken upon their imaginations. They had never believed in ghosts. Ghost tales they had heard aplenty — Mary Vance had told some far more bloodcurdling than this; but those tales were all of places and people and spooks far away and unknown. After the first half-awful, half-pleasant thrill of awe and terror they thought of them no more. But this story came home to them. The old Bailey garden was almost at their very door — almost in their beloved Rainbow Valley. They had passed and repassed it constantly; they had hunted for flowers in it; they had made short cuts through it when they wished to go straight from the village to the valley. But never again! After the night when Mary Vance told them its gruesome tale they would not have gone through or near it on pain of death. Death! What was death compared to the unearthly possibility of falling into the clutches of Henry Warren's grovelling ghost?

One warm July evening the three of them were sitting under the Tree Lovers, feeling a little lonely. Nobody else had come near the valley that evening. Jem Blythe was away in Charlottetown, writing on his entrance examinations. Jerry and Walter Blythe were off for a sail on the harbour with old Captain Crawford. Nan and Di and Rilla and Shirley had gone down the harbour road to visit Kenneth and Persis Ford, who had come with their parents for a flying visit to the little old House of Dreams. Nan had asked Faith to go with them, but Faith had declined. She would never have admitted it, but she felt a little secret jealousy of Persis Ford, concerning whose wonderful beauty and city glamour she had heard a great deal. No, she wasn't going to go down there and play second fiddle to anybody. She and Una took their story books to Rainbow Valley and read, while Carl investigated bugs along the banks of the brook, and all three were happy until they suddenly realized that it was twilight and that the

old Bailey garden was uncomfortably near by. Carl came and sat down close to the girls. They all wished they had gone home a little sooner, but nobody said anything.

Great, velvety, purple clouds heaped up in the west and spread over the valley. There was no wind and everything was suddenly, strangely, dreadfully still. The marsh was full of thousands of fireflies. Surely some fairy parliament was being convened that night. Altogether, Rainbow Valley was not a canny place just then.

Faith looked fearfully up the valley to the old Bailey garden. Then, if anybody's blood ever did freeze, Faith Meredith's certainly froze at that moment. The eyes of Carl and Una followed her entranced gaze and chills began galloping up and down their spines also. For there, under the big tamarack tree on the tumbledown, grass-grown dyke of the Bailey garden, was something white — shapelessly white in the gathering gloom. The three Merediths sat and gazed as if turned to stone.

"It's — it's the — calf," whispered Una at last.

"It's — too — big — for the calf," whispered Faith. Her mouth and lips were so dry she could hardly articulate the words.

Suddenly Carl gasped,

"It's coming here."

The girls gave one last agonized glance. Yes, it was creeping down over the dyke, as no calf ever did or could creep. Reason fled before sudden, overmastering panic. For the moment every one of the trio was firmly convinced that what they saw was Henry Warren's ghost. Carl sprang to his feet and bolted blindly. With a simultaneous shriek the girls followed him. Like mad creatures they tore up the hill, across the road and into the manse. They had left Aunt Martha sewing in the kitchen. She was not there. They rushed to the study. It was dark and tenantless. As with one impulse, they swung around and made for Ingleside — but not across Rainbow Valley. Down the hill and through the Glen street they flew on the wings of their wild terror, Carl in the lead, Una bringing up the rear.

Nobody tried to stop them, though everybody who saw them wondered what fresh devilment those manse youngsters were up to now. But at the gate of Ingleside they ran into Rosemary West, who had just been in for a moment to return some borrowed books.

She saw their ghastly faces and staring eyes. She realized that their poor little souls were wrung with some awful and real fear, whatever its cause. She caught Carl with one arm and Faith with the other. Una stumbled against her and held on desperately.

“Children, dear, what has happened?” she said. “What has frightened you?”

“Henry Warren’s ghost,” answered Carl, through his chattering teeth.

“Henry — Warren’s — ghost!” said amazed Rosemary, who had never heard the story.

“Yes,” sobbed Faith hysterically. “It’s there — on the Bailey dyke — we saw it — and it started to — chase us.”

Rosemary herded the three distracted creatures to the Ingleside veranda. Gilbert and Anne were both away, having also gone to the House of Dreams, but Susan appeared in the doorway, gaunt and practical and unghostlike.

“What is all this rumpus about?” she inquired.

Again the children gasped out their awful tale, while Rosemary held them close to her and soothed them with wordless comfort.

“Likely it was an owl,” said Susan, unstirred.

An owl! The Meredith children never had any opinion of Susan’s intelligence after that!

“It was bigger than a million owls,” said Carl, sobbing — oh, how ashamed Carl was of that sobbing in after days—”and it — it

GROVELLED just as Mary said — and it was crawling down over the dyke to get at us. Do owls CRAWL?”

Rosemary looked at Susan.

“They must have seen something to frighten them so,” she said.

“I will go and see,” said Susan coolly. “Now, children, calm yourselves. Whatever you have seen, it was not a ghost. As for poor Henry Warren, I feel sure he would be only too glad to rest quietly in his peaceful grave once he got there. No fear of HIM venturing back, and that you may tie to. If you can make them see reason, Miss West, I will find out the truth of the matter.”

Susan departed for Rainbow Valley, valiantly grasping a pitchfork which she found leaning against the back fence where the doctor had been working in his little hayfield. A pitchfork might not be of much use against “ha’nts,” but it was a comforting sort of weapon. There was nothing to be seen in Rainbow Valley when Susan reached it. No white visitants appeared to be lurking in the shadowy, tangled old Bailey garden. Susan marched boldly through it and beyond it, and rapped with her pitchfork on the door of the little cottage on the other side, where Mrs. Stimson lived with her two daughters.

Back at Ingleside Rosemary had succeeded in calming the children. They still sobbed a little from shock, but they were beginning to feel a lurking and salutary suspicion that they had made dreadful geese of themselves. This suspicion became a certainty when Susan finally returned.

“I have found out what your ghost was,” she said, with a grim smile, sitting down on a rocker and fanning herself. “Old Mrs. Stimson has had a pair of factory cotton sheets bleaching in the Bailey garden for a week. She spread them on the dyke under the tamarack tree because the grass was clean and short there. This evening she went out to take them in. She had her knitting in her hands so she hung the sheets over her shoulders by way of carrying them. And then she must have dropped one of her needles and find it she could not and has not yet. But she went down on her knees and crept about to hunt for it, and she was at that when she heard awful

yells down in the valley and saw the three children tearing up the hill past her. She thought they had been bit by something and it gave her poor old heart such a turn that she could not move or speak, but just crouched there till they disappeared. Then she staggered back home and they have been applying stimulants to her ever since, and her heart is in a terrible condition and she says she will not get over this fright all summer.”

The Merediths sat, crimson with a shame that even Rosemary’s understanding sympathy could not remove. They sneaked off home, met Jerry at the manse gate and made remorseful confession. A session of the Good-Conduct Club was arranged for next morning.

“Wasn’t Miss West sweet to us tonight?” whispered Faith in bed.

“Yes,” admitted Una. “It is such a pity it changes people so much to be made stepmothers.”

“I don’t believe it does,” said Faith loyally.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CARL DOES PENANCE

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“I don’t see why we should be punished at all,” said Faith, rather sulkily. “We didn’t do anything wrong. We couldn’t help being frightened. And it won’t do father any harm. It was just an accident.”

“You were cowards,” said Jerry with judicial scorn, “and you gave way to your cowardice. That is why you should be punished. Everybody will laugh at you about this, and that is a disgrace to the family.”

“If you knew how awful the whole thing was,” said Faith with a shiver, “you would think we had been punished enough already. I wouldn’t go through it again for anything in the whole world.”

“I believe you’d have run yourself if you’d been there,” muttered Carl.

“From an old woman in a cotton sheet,” mocked Jerry. “Ho, ho, ho!”

“It didn’t look a bit like an old woman,” cried Faith. “It was just a great, big, white thing crawling about in the grass just as Mary Vance said Henry Warren did. It’s all very fine for you to laugh, Jerry Meredith, but you’d have laughed on the other side of your mouth if you’d been there. And how are we to be punished? I don’t think it’s fair, but let’s know what we have to do, Judge Meredith!”

“The way I look at it,” said Jerry, frowning, “is that Carl was the most to blame. He bolted first, as I understand it. Besides, he was a boy, so he should have stood his ground to protect you girls, whatever the danger was. You know that, Carl, don’t you?”

“I s’pose so,” growled Carl shamefacedly.

“Very well. This is to be your punishment. Tonight you’ll sit on Mr. Hezekiah Pollock’s tombstone in the graveyard alone, until twelve o’clock.”

Carl gave a little shudder. The graveyard was not so very far from the old Bailey garden. It would be a trying ordeal, but Carl was anxious to wipe out his disgrace and prove that he was not a coward after all.

“All right,” he said sturdily. “But how’ll I know when it is twelve?”

“The study windows are open and you’ll hear the clock striking. And mind you that you are not to budge out of that graveyard until the last stroke. As for you girls, you’ve got to go without jam at supper for a week.”

Faith and Una looked rather blank. They were inclined to think that even Carl’s comparatively short though sharp agony was lighter punishment than this long drawn-out ordeal. A whole week of soggy bread without the saving grace of jam! But no shirking was permitted in the club. The girls accepted their lot with such philosophy as they could summon up.

That night they all went to bed at nine, except Carl, who was already keeping vigil on the tombstone. Una slipped in to bid him good night. Her tender heart was wrung with sympathy.

“Oh, Carl, are you much scared?” she whispered.

“Not a bit,” said Carl airily.

“I won’t sleep a wink till after twelve,” said Una. “If you get lonesome just look up at our window and remember that I’m inside, awake, and thinking about you. That will be a little company, won’t it?”

“I’ll be all right. Don’t you worry about me,” said Carl.

But in spite of his dauntless words Carl was a pretty lonely boy when the lights went out in the manse. He had hoped his father would be in the study as he so often was. He would not feel alone then. But that night Mr.

Meredith had been summoned to the fishing village at the harbour mouth to see a dying man. He would not likely be back until after midnight. Carl must dree his weird alone.

A Glen man went past carrying a lantern. The mysterious shadows caused by the lantern-light went hurtling madly over the graveyard like a dance of demons or witches. Then they passed and darkness fell again. One by one the lights in the Glen went out. It was a very dark night, with a cloudy sky, and a raw east wind that was cold in spite of the calendar. Far away on the horizon was the low dim lustre of the Charlottetown lights. The wind wailed and sighed in the old fir-trees. Mr. Alec Davis' tall monument gleamed whitely through the gloom. The willow beside it tossed long, writhing arms spectrally. At times, the gyrations of its boughs made it seem as if the monument were moving, too.

Carl curled himself up on the tombstone with his legs tucked under him. It wasn't precisely pleasant to hang them over the edge of the stone. Just suppose — just suppose — bony hands should reach up out of Mr. Pollock's grave under it and clutch him by the ankles. That had been one of Mary Vance's cheerful speculations one time when they had all been sitting there. It returned to haunt Carl now. He didn't believe those things; he didn't even really believe in Henry Warren's ghost. As for Mr. Pollock, he had been dead sixty years, so it wasn't likely he cared who sat on his tombstone now. But there is something very strange and terrible in being awake when all the rest of the world is asleep. You are alone then with nothing but your own feeble personality to pit against the mighty principalities and powers of darkness. Carl was only ten and the dead were all around him — and he wished, oh, he wished that the clock would strike twelve. Would it NEVER strike twelve? Surely Aunt Martha must have forgotten to wind it.

And then it struck eleven — only eleven! He must stay yet another hour in that grim place. If only there were a few friendly stars to be seen! The darkness was so thick it seemed to press against his face. There was a sound as of stealthy passing footsteps all over the graveyard. Carl shivered, partly with prickling terror, partly with real cold.

Then it began to rain — a chill, penetrating drizzle. Carl's thin little cotton blouse and shirt were soon wet through. He felt chilled to the bone. He forgot mental terrors in his physical discomfort. But he must stay there till twelve — he was punishing himself and he was on his honour. Nothing had been said about rain — but it did not make any difference. When the study clock finally struck twelve a drenched little figure crept stiffly down off Mr. Pollock's tombstone, made its way into the manse and upstairs to bed. Carl's teeth were chattering. He thought he would never get warm again.

He was warm enough when morning came. Jerry gave one startled look at his crimson face and then rushed to call his father. Mr. Meredith came hurriedly, his own face ivory white from the pallor of his long night vigil by a death bed. He had not got home until daylight. He bent over his little lad anxiously.

“Carl, are you sick?” he said.

“That — tombstone — over here,” said Carl, “it's — moving — about — it's coming — at — me — keep it — away — please.”

Mr. Meredith rushed to the telephone. In ten minutes Dr. Blythe was at the manse. Half an hour later a wire was sent to town for a trained nurse, and all the Glen knew that Carl Meredith was very ill with pneumonia and that Dr. Blythe had been seen to shake his head.

Gilbert shook his head more than once in the fortnight that followed. Carl developed double pneumonia. There was one night when Mr. Meredith paced his study floor, and Faith and Una huddled in their bedroom and cried, and Jerry, wild with remorse, refused to budge from the floor of the hall outside Carl's door. Dr. Blythe and the nurse never left the bedside. They fought death gallantly until the red dawn and they won the victory. Carl rallied and passed the crisis in safety. The news was phoned about the waiting Glen and people found out how much they really loved their minister and his children.

“I haven't had one decent night's sleep since I heard the child was sick,” Miss Cornelia told Anne, “and Mary Vance has cried until those queer

eyes of hers looked like burnt holes in a blanket. Is it true that Carl got pneumonia from straying out in the graveyard that wet night for a dare?"

"No. He was staying there to punish himself for cowardice in that affair of the Warren ghost. It seems they have a club for bringing themselves up, and they punish themselves when they do wrong. Jerry told Mr. Meredith all about it."

"The poor little souls," said Miss Cornelia.

Carl got better rapidly, for the congregation took enough nourishing things to the manse to furnish forth a hospital. Norman Douglas drove up every evening with a dozen fresh eggs and a jar of Jersey cream. Sometimes he stayed an hour and belabored arguments on predestination with Mr. Meredith in the study; oftener he drove on up to the hill that overlooked the Glen.

When Carl was able to go again to Rainbow Valley they had a special feast in his honour and the doctor came down and helped them with the fireworks. Mary Vance was there, too, but she did not tell any ghost stories. Miss Cornelia had given her a talking on that subject which Mary would not forget in a hurry.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO STUBBORN PEOPLE

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Rosemary West, on her way home from a music lesson at Ingleside, turned aside to the hidden spring in Rainbow Valley. She had not been there all summer; the beautiful little spot had no longer any allurements for her. The spirit of her young lover never came to the tryst now; and the memories connected with John Meredith were too painful and poignant. But she had happened to glance backward up the valley and had seen Norman Douglas vaulting as airily as a stripling over the old stone dyke of the Bailey garden and thought he was on his way up the hill. If he overtook her she would have to walk home with him and she was not going to do that. So she slipped at once behind the maples of the spring, hoping he had not seen her and would pass on.

But Norman had seen her and, what was more, was in pursuit of her. He had been wanting for some time to have talk with Rosemary, but she had always, so it seemed, avoided him. Rosemary had never, at any time, liked Norman Douglas very well. His bluster, his temper, his noisy hilarity, had always antagonized her. Long ago she had often wondered how Ellen could possibly be attracted to him. Norman Douglas was perfectly aware of her dislike and he chuckled over it. It never worried Norman if people did not like him. It did not even make him dislike them in return, for he took it as a kind of extorted compliment. He thought Rosemary a fine girl, and he meant to be an excellent, generous brother-in-law to her. But before he could be her brother-in-law he had to have a talk with her, so, having seen her leaving Ingleside as he stood in the doorway of a Glen store, he had straightway plunged into the valley to overtake her.

Rosemary was sitting pensively on the maple seat where John Meredith had been sitting on that evening nearly a year ago. The tiny spring shimmered and dimpled under its fringe of ferns. Ruby-red gleams of

sunset fell through the arching boughs. A tall clump of perfect asters grew at her side. The little spot was as dreamy and witching and evasive as any retreat of fairies and dryads in ancient forests. Into it Norman Douglas bounced, scattering and annihilating its charm in a moment. His personality seemed to swallow the place up. There was simply nothing there but Norman Douglas, big, red-bearded, complacent.

“Good evening,” said Rosemary coldly, standing up.

““Evening, girl. Sit down again — sit down again. I want to have a talk with you. Bless the girl, what’s she looking at me like that for? I don’t want to eat you — I’ve had my supper. Sit down and be civil.”

“I can hear what you have to say quite as well here,” said Rosemary.

“So you can, girl, if you use your ears. I only wanted you to be comfortable. You look so durned uncomfortable, standing there. Well, I’LL sit anyway.”

Norman accordingly sat down in the very place John Meredith had once sat. The contrast was so ludicrous that Rosemary was afraid she would go off into a peal of hysterical laughter over it. Norman cast his hat aside, placed his huge, red hands on his knees, and looked up at her with his eyes a-twinkle.

“Come, girl, don’t be so stiff,” he said, ingratiatingly. When he liked he could be very ingratiating. “Let’s have a reasonable, sensible, friendly chat. There’s something I want to ask you. Ellen says she won’t, so it’s up to me to do it.”

Rosemary looked down at the spring, which seemed to have shrunk to the size of a dewdrop. Norman gazed at her in despair.

“Durn it all, you might help a fellow out a bit,” he burst forth.

“What is it you want me to help you say?” asked Rosemary scornfully.

“You know as well as I do, girl. Don’t be putting on your tragedy airs. No wonder Ellen was scared to ask you. Look here, girl, Ellen and I want to marry each other. That’s plain English, isn’t it? Got that? And Ellen says she can’t unless you give her back some tomfool promise she made. Come now, will you do it? Will you do it?”

“Yes,” said Rosemary.

Norman bounced up and seized her reluctant hand.

“Good! I knew you would — I told Ellen you would. I knew it would only take a minute. Now, girl, you go home and tell Ellen, and we’ll have a wedding in a fortnight and you’ll come and live with us. We shan’t leave you to roost on that hilltop like a lonely crow — don’t you worry. I know you hate me, but, Lord, it’ll be great fun living with some one that hates me. Life’ll have some spice in it after this. Ellen will roast me and you’ll freeze me. I won’t have a dull moment.”

Rosemary did not condescend to tell him that nothing would ever induce her to live in his house. She let him go striding back to the Glen, oozing delight and complacency, and she walked slowly up the hill home. She had known this was coming ever since she had returned from Kingsport, and found Norman Douglas established as a frequent evening caller. His name was never mentioned between her and Ellen, but the very avoidance of it was significant. It was not in Rosemary’s nature to feel bitter, or she would have felt very bitter. She was coldly civil to Norman, and she made no difference in any way with Ellen. But Ellen had not found much comfort in her second courtship.

She was in the garden, attended by St. George, when Rosemary came home. The two sisters met in the dahlia walk. St. George sat down on the gravel walk between them and folded his glossy black tail gracefully around his white paws, with all the indifference of a well-fed, well-bred, well-groomed cat.

“Did you ever see such dahlias?” demanded Ellen proudly. “They are just the finest we’ve ever had.”

Rosemary had never cared for dahlias. Their presence in the garden was her concession to Ellen's taste. She noticed one huge mottled one of crimson and yellow that lorded it over all the others.

"That dahlia," she said, pointing to it, "is exactly like Norman Douglas. It might easily be his twin brother."

Ellen's dark-browed face flushed. She admired the dahlia in question, but she knew Rosemary did not, and that no compliment was intended. But she dared not resent Rosemary's speech — poor Ellen dared not resent anything just then. And it was the first time Rosemary had ever mentioned Norman's name to her. She felt that this portended something.

"I met Norman Douglas in the valley," said Rosemary, looking straight at her sister, "and he told me you and he wanted to be married — if I would give you permission."

"Yes? What did you say?" asked Ellen, trying to speak naturally and offhandedly, and failing completely. She could not meet Rosemary's eyes. She looked down at St. George's sleek back and felt horribly afraid. Rosemary had either said she would or she wouldn't. If she would Ellen would feel so ashamed and remorseful that she would be a very uncomfortable bride-elect; and if she wouldn't — well, Ellen had once learned to live without Norman Douglas, but she had forgotten the lesson and felt that she could never learn it again.

"I said that as far as I was concerned you were at full liberty to marry each other as soon as you liked," said Rosemary.

"Thank you," said Ellen, still looking at St. George.

Rosemary's face softened.

"I hope you'll be happy, Ellen," she said gently.

"Oh, Rosemary," Ellen looked up in distress, "I'm so ashamed — I don't deserve it — after all I said to you—"

“We won’t speak about that,” said Rosemary hurriedly and decidedly.

“But — but,” persisted Ellen, “you are free now, too — and it’s not too late — John Meredith—”

“Ellen West!” Rosemary had a little spark of temper under all her sweetness and it flashed forth now in her blue eyes. “Have you quite lost your senses in EVERY respect? Do you suppose for an instant that I am going to go to John Meredith and say meekly, ‘Please, sir, I’ve changed my mind and please, sir, I hope you haven’t changed yours.’ Is that what you want me to do?”

“No — no — but a little — encouragement — he would come back—”

“Never. He despises me — and rightly. No more of this, Ellen. I bear you no grudge — marry whom you like. But no meddling in my affairs.”

“Then you must come and live with me,” said Ellen. “I shall not leave you here alone.”

“Do you really think that I would go and live in Norman Douglas’s house?”

“Why not?” cried Ellen, half angrily, despite her humiliation.

Rosemary began to laugh.

“Ellen, I thought you had a sense of humour. Can you see me doing it?”

“I don’t see why you wouldn’t. His house is big enough — you’d have your share of it to yourself — he wouldn’t interfere.”

“Ellen, the thing is not to be thought of. Don’t bring this up again.”

“Then,” said Ellen coldly, and determinedly, “I shall not marry him. I shall not leave you here alone. That is all there is to be said about it.”

“Nonsense, Ellen.”

“It is not nonsense. It is my firm decision. It would be absurd for you to think of living here by yourself — a mile from any other house. If you won’t come with me I’ll stay with you. Now, we won’t argue the matter, so don’t try”

“I shall leave Norman to do the arguing,” said Rosemary.

“I’LL deal with Norman. I can manage HIM. I would never have asked you to give me back my promise — never — but I had to tell Norman why I couldn’t marry him and he said HE would ask you. I couldn’t prevent him. You need not suppose you are the only person in the world who possesses self-respect. I never dreamed of marrying and leaving you here alone. And you’ll find I can be as determined as yourself.”

Rosemary turned away and went into the house, with a shrug of her shoulders. Ellen looked down at St. George, who had never blinked an eyelash or stirred a whisker during the whole interview.

“St. George, this world would be a dull place without the men, I’ll admit, but I’m almost tempted to wish there wasn’t one of ‘em in it. Look at the trouble and bother they’ve made right here, George — torn our happy old life completely up by the roots, Saint. John Meredith began it and Norman Douglas has finished it. And now both of them have to go into limbo. Norman is the only man I ever met who agrees with me that the Kaiser of Germany is the most dangerous creature alive on this earth — and I can’t marry this sensible person because my sister is stubborn and I’m stubborn. Mark my words, St. George, the minister would come back if she raised her little finger. But she won’t George — she’ll never do it — she won’t even crook it — and I don’t dare meddle, Saint. I won’t sulk, George; Rosemary didn’t sulk, so I’m determined I won’t either, Saint; Norman will tear up the turf, but the long and short of it is, St. George, that all of us old fools must just stop thinking of marrying. Well, well, ‘despair is a free man, hope is a slave,’ Saint. So now come into the house, George, and I’ll solace you with a saucerful of cream. Then there will be one happy and contented creature on this hill at least.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CARL IS — NOT — WHIPPED

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“There is something I think I ought to tell you,” said Mary Vance mysteriously.

She and Faith and Una were walking arm in arm through the village, having foregathered at Mr. Flagg’s store. Una and Faith exchanged looks which said, “NOW something disagreeable is coming.” When Mary Vance thought she ought to tell them things there was seldom much pleasure in the hearing. They often wondered why they kept on liking Mary Vance — for like her they did, in spite of everything. To be sure, she was generally a stimulating and agreeable companion. If only she would not have those convictions that it was her duty to tell them things!

“Do you know that Rosemary West won’t marry your pa because she thinks you are such a wild lot? She’s afraid she couldn’t bring you up right and so she turned him down.”

Una’s heart thrilled with secret exultation. She was very glad to hear that Miss West would not marry her father. But Faith was rather disappointed.

“How do you know?” she asked.

“Oh, everybody’s saying it. I heard Mrs. Elliott talking it over with Mrs. Doctor. They thought I was too far away to hear, but I’ve got ears like a cat’s. Mrs. Elliott said she hadn’t a doubt that Rosemary was afraid to try stepmothering you because you’d got such a reputation. Your pa never goes up the hill now. Neither does Norman Douglas. Folks say Ellen has jilted him just to get square with him for jilting her ages ago. But Norman is going about declaring he’ll get her yet. And I think you ought to know you’ve spoiled your pa’s match and I think it’s a pity, for he’s bound to

marry somebody before long, and Rosemary West would have been the best wife I know of for him.”

“You told me all stepmothers were cruel and wicked,” said Una.

“Oh — well,” said Mary rather confusedly, “they’re mostly awful cranky, I know. But Rosemary West couldn’t be very mean to any one. I tell you if your pa turns round and marries Emmeline Drew you’ll wish you’d behaved yourselves better and not frightened Rosemary out of it. It’s awful that you’ve got such a reputation that no decent woman’ll marry your pa on account of you. Of course, I know that half the yarns that are told about you ain’t true. But give a dog a bad name. Why, some folks are saying that it was Jerry and Carl that threw the stones through Mrs. Stimson’s window the other night when it was really them two Boyd boys. But I’m afraid it was Carl that put the eel in old Mrs. Carr’s buggy, though I said at first I wouldn’t believe it until I’d better proof than old Kitty Alec’s word. I told Mrs. Elliott so right to her face.”

“What did Carl do?” cried Faith.

“Well, they say — now, mind, I’m only telling you what people say — so there’s no use in your blaming me for it — that Carl and a lot of other boys were fishing eels over the bridge one evening last week. Mrs. Carr drove past in that old rattletrap buggy of hers with the open back. And Carl he just up and threw a big eel into the back. When poor old Mrs. Carr was driving up the hill by Ingleside that eel came squirming out between her feet. She thought it was a snake and she just give one awful screech and stood up and jumped clean over the wheels. The horse bolted, but it went home and no damage was done. But Mrs. Carr jarred her legs most terrible, and has had nervous spasms ever since whenever she thinks of the eel. Say, it was a rotten trick to play on the poor old soul. She’s a decent body, if she is as queer as Dick’s hat band.”

Faith and Una looked at each other again. This was a matter for the Good-Conduct Club. They would not talk it over with Mary.

“There goes your pa,” said Mary as Mr. Meredith passed them, “and never seeing us no more’n if we weren’t here. Well, I’m getting so’s I don’t mind

it. But there are folks who do.”

Mr. Meredith had not seen them, but he was not walking along in his usual dreamy and abstracted fashion. He strode up the hill in agitation and distress. Mrs. Alec Davis had just told him the story of Carl and the eel. She had been very indignant about it. Old Mrs. Carr was her third cousin. Mr. Meredith was more than indignant. He was hurt and shocked. He had not thought Carl would do anything like this. He was not inclined to be hard on pranks of heedlessness or forgetfulness, but THIS was different. THIS had a nasty tang in it. When he reached home he found Carl on the lawn, patiently studying the habits and customs of a colony of wasps. Calling him into the study Mr. Meredith confronted him, with a sterner face than any of his children had ever seen before, and asked him if the story were true.

“Yes,” said Carl, flushing, but meeting his father’s eyes bravely.

Mr. Meredith groaned. He had hoped that there had been at least exaggeration.

“Tell me the whole matter,” he said.

“The boys were fishing for eels over the bridge,” said Carl. “Link Drew had caught a whopper — I mean an awful big one — the biggest eel I ever saw. He caught it right at the start and it had been lying in his basket a long time, still as still. I thought it was dead, honest I did. Then old Mrs. Carr drove over the bridge and she called us all young varmints and told us to go home. And we hadn’t said a word to her, father, truly. So when she drove back again, after going to the store, the boys dared me to put Link’s eel in her buggy. I thought it was so dead it couldn’t hurt her and I threw it in. Then the eel came to life on the hill and we heard her scream and saw her jump out. I was awful sorry. That’s all, father.”

It was not quite as bad as Mr. Meredith had feared, but it was quite bad enough. “I must punish you, Carl,” he said sorrowfully.

“Yes, I know, father.”

“I — I must whip you.”

Carl winced. He had never been whipped. Then, seeing how badly his father felt, he said cheerfully,

“All right, father.”

Mr. Meredith misunderstood his cheerfulness and thought him insensible. He told Carl to come to the study after supper, and when the boy had gone out he flung himself into his chair and groaned again. He dreaded the evening sevenfold more than Carl did. The poor minister did not even know what he should whip his boy with. What was used to whip boys? Rods? Canes? No, that would be too brutal. A timber switch, then? And he, John Meredith, must hie him to the woods and cut one. It was an abominable thought. Then a picture presented itself unbidden to his mind. He saw Mrs. Carr’s wizened, nutcracker little face at the appearance of that reviving eel — he saw her sailing witchlike over the buggy wheels. Before he could prevent himself the minister laughed. Then he was angry with himself and angrier still with Carl. He would get that switch at once — and it must not be too limber, after all.

Carl was talking the matter over in the graveyard with Faith and Una, who had just come home. They were horrified at the idea of his being whipped — and by father, who had never done such a thing! But they agreed soberly that it was just.

“You know it was a dreadful thing to do,” sighed Faith. “And you never owned up in the club.”

“I forgot,” said Carl. “Besides, I didn’t think any harm came of it. I didn’t know she jarred her legs. But I’m to be whipped and that will make things square.”

“Will it hurt — very much?” said Una, slipping her hand into Carl’s.

“Oh, not so much, I guess,” said Carl gamely. “Anyhow, I’m not going to cry, no matter how much it hurts. It would make father feel so bad, if I did.

He's all cut up now. I wish I could whip myself hard enough and save him doing it."

After supper, at which Carl had eaten little and Mr. Meredith nothing at all, both went silently into the study. The switch lay on the table. Mr. Meredith had had a bad time getting a switch to suit him. He cut one, then felt it was too slender. Carl had done a really indefensible thing. Then he cut another — it was far too thick. After all, Carl had thought the eel was dead. The third one suited him better; but as he picked it up from the table it seemed very thick and heavy — more like a stick than a switch.

"Hold out your hand," he said to Carl.

Carl threw back his head and held out his hand unflinchingly. But he was not very old and he could not quite keep a little fear out of his eyes. Mr. Meredith looked down into those eyes — why, they were Cecilia's eyes — her very eyes — and in them was the selfsame expression he had once seen in Cecilia's eyes when she had come to him to tell him something she had been a little afraid to tell him. Here were her eyes in Carl's little, white face — and six weeks ago he had thought, through one endless, terrible night, that his little lad was dying.

John Meredith threw down the switch.

"Go," he said, "I cannot whip you."

Carl fled to the graveyard, feeling that the look on his father's face was worse than any whipping.

"Is it over so soon?" asked Faith. She and Una had been holding hands and setting teeth on the Pollock tombstone.

"He — he didn't whip me at all," said Carl with a sob, "and — I wish he had — and he's in there, feeling just awful."

Una slipped away. Her heart yearned to comfort her father. As noiselessly as a little gray mouse she opened the study door and crept in. The room was dark with twilight. Her father was sitting at his desk. His back was

towards her — his head was in his hands. He was talking to himself — broken, anguished words — but Una heard — heard and understood, with the sudden illumination that comes to sensitive, unmothered children. As silently as she had come in she slipped out and closed the door. John Meredith went on talking out his pain in what he deemed his undisturbed solitude.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

UNA VISITS THE HILL

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Una went upstairs. Carl and Faith were already on their way through the early moonlight to Rainbow Valley, having heard therefrom the elfin lilt of Jerry's jews-harp and having guessed that the Blythes were there and fun afoot. Una had no wish to go. She sought her own room first where she sat down on her bed and had a little cry. She did not want anybody to come in her dear mother's place. She did not want a stepmother who would hate her and make her father hate her. But father was so desperately unhappy — and if she could do any anything to make him happier she **MUST** do it. There was only one thing she could do — and she had known the moment she had left the study that she must do it. But it was a very hard thing to do.

After Una cried her heart out she wiped her eyes and went to the spare room. It was dark and rather musty, for the blind had not been drawn up nor the window opened for a long time. Aunt Martha was no fresh-air fiend. But as nobody ever thought of shutting a door in the manse this did not matter so much, save when some unfortunate minister came to stay all night and was compelled to breathe the spare room atmosphere.

There was a closet in the spare room and far back in the closet a gray silk dress was hanging. Una went into the closet and shut the door, went down on her knees and pressed her face against the soft silken folds. It had been her mother's wedding-dress. It was still full of a sweet, faint, haunting perfume, like lingering love. Una always felt very close to her mother there — as if she were kneeling at her feet with head in her lap. She went there once in a long while when life was **TOO** hard.

"Mother," she whispered to the gray silk gown, " I will never forget you, mother, and I'll **ALWAYS** love you best. But I have to do it, mother,

because father is so very unhappy. I know you wouldn't want him to be unhappy. And I will be very good to her, mother, and try to love her, even if she is like Mary Vance said stepmothers always were."

Una carried some fine, spiritual strength away from her secret shrine. She slept peacefully that night with the tear stains still glistening on her sweet, serious, little face.

The next afternoon she put on her best dress and hat. They were shabby enough. Every other little girl in the Glen had new clothes that summer except Faith and Una. Mary Vance had a lovely dress of white embroidered lawn, with scarlet silk sash and shoulder bows. But to-day Una did not mind her shabbiness. She only wanted to be very neat. She washed her face carefully. She brushed her black hair until it was as smooth as satin. She tied her shoelaces carefully, having first sewed up two runs in her one pair of good stockings. She would have liked to black her shoes, but she could not find any blacking. Finally, she slipped away from the manse, down through Rainbow Valley, up through the whispering woods, and out to the road that ran past the house on the hill. It was quite a long walk and Una was tired and warm when she got there.

She saw Rosemary West sitting under a tree in the garden and stole past the dahlia beds to her. Rosemary had a book in her lap, but she was gazing afar across the harbour and her thoughts were sorrowful enough. Life had not been pleasant lately in the house on the hill. Ellen had not sulked — Ellen had been a brick. But things can be felt that are never said and at times the silence between the two women was intolerably eloquent. All the many familiar things that had once made life sweet had a flavour of bitterness now. Norman Douglas made periodical irruptions also, bullying and coaxing Ellen by turns. It would end, Rosemary believed, by his dragging Ellen off with him some day, and Rosemary felt that she would be almost glad when it happened. Existence would be horribly lonely then, but it would be no longer charged with dynamite.

She was roused from her unpleasant reverie by a timid little touch on her shoulder. Turning, she saw Una Meredith.

"Why, Una, dear, did you walk up here in all this heat?"

“Yes,” said Una, “I came to — I came to—”

But she found it very hard to say what she had come to do. Her voice failed — her eyes filled with tears.

“Why, Una, little girl, what is the trouble? Don’t be afraid to tell me.”

Rosemary put her arm around the thin little form and drew the child close to her. Her eyes were very beautiful — her touch so tender that Una found courage.

“I came — to ask you — to marry father,” she gasped.

Rosemary was silent for a moment from sheer dumbfounderment. She stared at Una blankly.

“Oh, don’t be angry, please, dear Miss West,” said Una, pleadingly. “You see, everybody is saying that you wouldn’t marry father because we are so bad. He is VERY unhappy about it. So I thought I would come and tell you that we are never bad ON PURPOSE. And if you will only marry father we will all try to be good and do just what you tell us. I’m SURE you won’t have any trouble with us. PLEASE, Miss West.”

Rosemary had been thinking rapidly. Gossiping surmise, she saw, had put this mistaken idea into Una’s mind. She must be perfectly frank and sincere with the child.

“Una, dear,” she said softly. “It isn’t because of you poor little souls that I cannot be your father’s wife. I never thought of such a thing. You are not bad — I never supposed you were. There — there was another reason altogether, Una.”

“Don’t you like father?” asked Una, lifting reproachful eyes. “Oh, Miss West, you don’t know how nice he is. I’m sure he’d make you a GOOD husband.”

Even in the midst of her perplexity and distress Rosemary couldn’t help a twisted, little smile.

“Oh, don’t laugh, Miss West,” Una cried passionately. “Father feels DREADFUL about it.”

“I think you’re mistaken, dear,” said Rosemary.

“I’m not. I’m SURE I’m not. Oh, Miss West, father was going to whip Carl yesterday — Carl had been naughty — and father couldn’t do it because you see he had no PRACTICE in whipping. So when Carl came out and told us father felt so bad, I slipped into the study to see if I could help him — he LIKES me to comfort him, Miss West — and he didn’t hear me come in and I heard what he was saying. I’ll tell you, Miss West, if you’ll let me whisper it in your ear.”

Una whispered earnestly. Rosemary’s face turned crimson. So John Meredith still cared. HE hadn’t changed his mind. And he must care intensely if he had said that — care more than she had ever supposed he did. She sat still for a moment, stroking Una’s hair. Then she said,

“Will you take a little letter from me to your father, Una?”

“Oh, are you going to marry him, Miss West?” asked Una eagerly.

“Perhaps — if he really wants me to,” said Rosemary, blushing again.

“I’m glad — I’m glad,” said Una bravely. Then she looked up, with quivering lips. “Oh, Miss West, you won’t turn father against us — you won’t make him hate us, will you?” she said beseechingly.

Rosemary stared again.

“Una Meredith! Do you think I would do such a thing? Whatever put such an idea into your head?”

“Mary Vance said stepmothers were all like that — and that they all hated their stepchildren and made their father hate them — she said they just couldn’t help it — just being stepmothers made them like that” —

“You poor child! And yet you came up here and asked me to marry your father because you wanted to make him happy? You’re a darling — a

heroine — as Ellen would say, you're a brick. Now listen to me, very closely, dearest. Mary Vance is a silly little girl who doesn't know very much and she is dreadfully mistaken about some things. I would never dream of trying to turn your father against you. I would love you all dearly. I don't want to take your own mother's place — she must always have that in your hearts. But neither have I any intention of being a stepmother. I want to be your friend and helper and CHUM. Don't you think that would be nice, Una — if you and Faith and Carl and Jerry could just think of me as a good jolly chum — a big older sister?"

"Oh, it would be lovely," cried Una, with a transfigured face. She flung her arms impulsively round Rosemary's neck. She was so happy that she felt as if she could fly on wings.

"Do the others — do Faith and the boys have the same idea you had about stepmothers?"

"No. Faith never believed Mary Vance. I was dreadfully foolish to believe her, either. Faith loves you already — she has loved you ever since poor Adam was eaten. And Jerry and Carl will think it is jolly. Oh, Miss West, when you come to live with us, will you — could you — teach me to cook — a little — and sew — and — and — and do things? I don't know anything. I won't be much trouble — I'll try to learn fast."

"Darling, I'll teach you and help you all I can. Now, you won't say a word to anybody about this, will you — not even to Faith, until your father himself tells you you may? And you'll stay and have tea with me?"

"Oh, thank you — but — but — I think I'd rather go right back and take the letter to father," faltered Una. "You see, he'll be glad that much SOONER, Miss West."

"I see," said Rosemary. She went to the house, wrote a note and gave it to Una. When that small damsel had run off, a palpitating bundle of happiness, Rosemary went to Ellen, who was shelling peas on the back porch.

“Ellen,” she said, “Una Meredith has just been here to ask me to marry her father.”

Ellen looked up and read her sister’s face.

“And you’re going to?” she said.

“It’s quite likely.”

Ellen went on shelling peas for a few minutes. Then she suddenly put her hands up to her own face. There were tears in her black-browed eyes.

“I — I hope we’ll all be happy,” she said between a sob and a laugh.

Down at the manse Una Meredith, warm, rosy, triumphant, marched boldly into her father’s study and laid a letter on the desk before him. His pale face flushed as he saw the clear, fine handwriting he knew so well. He opened the letter. It was very short — but he shed twenty years as he read it. Rosemary asked him if he could meet her that evening at sunset by the spring in Rainbow Valley.

CHAPTER XXXV.

“LET THE PIPER COME”

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“And so,” said Miss Cornelia, “the double wedding is to be sometime about the middle of this month.”

There was a faint chill in the air of the early September evening, so Anne had lighted her ever ready fire of driftwood in the big living room, and she and Miss Cornelia basked in its fairy flicker.

“It is so delightful — especially in regard to Mr. Meredith and Rosemary,” said Anne. “I’m as happy in the thought of it, as I was when I was getting married myself. I felt exactly like a bride again last evening when I was up on the hill seeing Rosemary’s trousseau.”

“They tell me her things are fine enough for a princess,” said Susan from a shadowy corner where she was cuddling her brown boy. “I have been invited up to see them also and I intend to go some evening. I understand that Rosemary is to wear white silk and a veil, but Ellen is to be married in navy blue. I have no doubt, Mrs. Dr. dear, that that is very sensible of her, but for my own part I have always felt that if I were ever married I would prefer the white and the veil, as being more bride-like.”

A vision of Susan in “white and a veil” presented itself before Anne’s inner vision and was almost too much for her.

“As for Mr. Meredith,” said Miss Cornelia, “even his engagement has made a different man of him. He isn’t half so dreamy and absentminded, believe me. I was so relieved when I heard that he had decided to close the manse and let the children visit round while he was away on his honeymoon. If he had left them and old Aunt Martha there alone for a

month I should have expected to wake every morning and see the place burned down.”

“Aunt Martha and Jerry are coming here,” said Anne. “Carl is going to Elder Clow’s. I haven’t heard where the girls are going.”

“Oh, I’m going to take them,” said Miss Cornelia. “Of course, I was glad to, but Mary would have given me no peace till I asked them any way. The Ladies’ Aid is going to clean the manse from top to bottom before the bride and groom come back, and Norman Douglas has arranged to fill the cellar with vegetables. Nobody ever saw or heard anything quite like Norman Douglas these days, believe ME. He’s so tickled that he’s going to marry Ellen West after wanting her all his life. If I was Ellen — but then, I’m not, and if she is satisfied I can very well be. I heard her say years ago when she was a schoolgirl that she didn’t want a tame puppy for a husband. There’s nothing tame about Norman, believe ME.”

The sun was setting over Rainbow Valley. The pond was wearing a wonderful tissue of purple and gold and green and crimson. A faint blue haze rested on the eastern hill, over which a great, pale, round moon was just floating up like a silver bubble.

They were all there, squatted in the little open glade — Faith and Una, Jerry and Carl, Jem and Walter, Nan and Di, and Mary Vance. They had been having a special celebration, for it would be Jem’s last evening in Rainbow Valley. On the morrow he would leave for Charlottetown to attend Queen’s Academy. Their charmed circle would be broken; and, in spite of the jollity of their little festival, there was a hint of sorrow in every gay young heart.

“See — there is a great golden palace over there in the sunset,” said Walter, pointing. “Look at the shining tower — and the crimson banners streaming from them. Perhaps a conqueror is riding home from battle — and they are hanging them out to do honour to him.”

“Oh, I wish we had the old days back again,” exclaimed Jem. “I’d love to be a soldier — a great, triumphant general. I’d give EVERYTHING to see a big battle.”

Well, Jem was to be a soldier and see a greater battle than had ever been fought in the world; but that was as yet far in the future; and the mother, whose firstborn son he was, was wont to look on her boys and thank God that the “brave days of old,” which Jem longed for, were gone for ever, and that never would it be necessary for the sons of Canada to ride forth to battle “for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods.”

The shadow of the Great Conflict had not yet made felt any forerunner of its chill. The lads who were to fight, and perhaps fall, on the fields of France and Flanders, Gallipoli and Palestine, were still roguish schoolboys with a fair life in prospect before them: the girls whose hearts were to be wrung were yet fair little maidens a-star with hopes and dreams.

Slowly the banners of the sunset city gave up their crimson and gold; slowly the conqueror’s pageant faded out. Twilight crept over the valley and the little group grew silent. Walter had been reading again that day in his beloved book of myths and he remembered how he had once fancied the Pied Piper coming down the valley on an evening just like this.

He began to speak dreamily, partly because he wanted to thrill his companions a little, partly because something apart from him seemed to be speaking through his lips.

“The Piper is coming nearer,” he said, “he is nearer than he was that evening I saw him before. His long, shadowy cloak is blowing around him. He pipes — he pipes — and we must follow — Jem and Carl and Jerry and I — round and round the world. Listen — listen — can’t you hear his wild music?”

The girls shivered.

“You know you’re only pretending,” protested Mary Vance, “and I wish you wouldn’t. You make it too real. I hate that old Piper of yours.”

But Jem sprang up with a gay laugh. He stood up on a little hillock, tall and splendid, with his open brow and his fearless eyes. There were thousands like him all over the land of the maple.

“Let the Piper come and welcome,” he cried, waving his hand.
“I’LL follow him gladly round and round the world.”

THE END

RILLA OF INGLESI DE (1921)

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CHAPTER I

GLEN “NOTES” AND OTHER MATTERS

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It was a warm, golden-cloudy, lovable afternoon. In the big livingroom at Ingleside Susan Baker sat down with a certain grim satisfaction hovering about her like an aura; it was four o'clock and Susan, who had been working incessantly since six that morning, felt that she had fairly earned an hour of repose and gossip. Susan just then was perfectly happy; everything had gone almost uncannily well in the kitchen that day. Dr. Jekyll had not been Mr. Hyde and so had not grated on her nerves; from where she sat she could see the pride of her heart — the bed of peonies of her own planting and culture, blooming as no other peony plot in Glen St. Mary ever did or could bloom, with peonies crimson, peonies silvery pink, peonies white as drifts of winter snow.

Susan had on a new black silk blouse, quite as elaborate as anything Mrs. Marshall Elliott ever wore, and a white starched apron, trimmed with complicated crocheted lace fully five inches wide, not to mention insertion to match. Therefore Susan had all the comfortable consciousness of a well-dressed woman as she opened her copy of the Daily Enterprise and prepared to read the Glen “Notes” which, as Miss Cornelia had just informed her, filled half a column of it and mentioned almost everybody at Ingleside. There was a big, black headline on the front page of the Enterprise, stating that some Archduke Ferdinand or other had been assassinated at a place bearing the weird name of Sarajevo, but Susan tarried not over uninteresting, immaterial stuff like that; she was in quest of something really vital. Oh, here it was—”Jottings from Glen St. Mary.” Susan settled down keenly, reading each one over aloud to extract all possible gratification from it.

Mrs. Blythe and her visitor, Miss Cornelia — alias Mrs. Marshall Elliott — were chatting together near the open door that led to the veranda,

through which a cool, delicious breeze was blowing, bringing whiffs of phantom perfume from the garden, and charming gay echoes from the vine-hung corner where Rilla and Miss Oliver and Walter were laughing and talking. Wherever Rilla Blythe was, there was laughter.

There was another occupant of the livingroom, curled up on a couch, who must not be overlooked, since he was a creature of marked individuality, and, moreover, had the distinction of being the only living thing whom Susan really hated.

All cats are mysterious but Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde—"Doc" for short — was trebly so. He was a cat of double personality — or else, as Susan vowed, he was possessed by the devil. To begin with, there had been something uncanny about the very dawn of his existence. Four years previously Rilla Blythe had had a treasured darling of a kitten, white as snow, with a saucy black tip to its tail, which she called Jack Frost. Susan disliked Jack Frost, though she could not or would not give any valid reason therefor.

"Take my word for it, Mrs. Dr. dear," she was wont to say ominously, "that cat will come to no good."

"But why do you think so?" Mrs. Blythe would ask.

"I do not think — I know," was all the answer Susan would vouchsafe.

With the rest of the Ingleside folk Jack Frost was a favourite; he was so very clean and well groomed, and never allowed a spot or stain to be seen on his beautiful white suit; he had endearing ways of purring and snuggling; he was scrupulously honest.

And then a domestic tragedy took place at Ingleside. Jack Frost had kittens!

It would be vain to try to picture Susan's triumph. Had she not always insisted that that cat would turn out to be a delusion and a snare? Now they could see for themselves!

Rilla kept one of the kittens, a very pretty one, with peculiarly sleek glossy fur of a dark yellow crossed by orange stripes, and large, satiny, golden ears. She called it Goldie and the name seemed appropriate enough to the little frolicsome creature which, during its kittenhood, gave no indication of the sinister nature it really possessed. Susan, of course, warned the family that no good could be expected from any offspring of that diabolical Jack Frost; but Susan's Cassandra-like croakings were unheeded.

The Blythes had been so accustomed to regard Jack Frost as a member of the male sex that they could not get out of the habit. So they continually used the masculine pronoun, although the result was ludicrous. Visitors used to be quite electrified when Rilla referred casually to "Jack and his kitten," or told Goldie sternly, "Go to your mother and get him to wash your fur."

"It is not decent, Mrs. Dr. dear," poor Susan would say bitterly. She herself compromised by always referring to Jack as "it" or "the white beast," and one heart at least did not ache when "it" was accidentally poisoned the following winter.

In a year's time "Goldie" became so manifestly an inadequate name for the orange kitten that Walter, who was just then reading Stevenson's story, changed it to Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde. In his Dr. Jekyll mood the cat was a drowsy, affectionate, domestic, cushion-loving puss, who liked petting and gloried in being nursed and patted. Especially did he love to lie on his back and have his sleek, cream-coloured throat stroked gently while he purred in somnolent satisfaction. He was a notable purrer; never had there been an Ingleside cat who purred so constantly and so ecstatically.

"The only thing I envy a cat is its purr," remarked Dr. Blythe once, listening to Doc's resonant melody. "It is the most contented sound in the world."

Doc was very handsome; his every movement was grace; his poses magnificent. When he folded his long, dusky-ringed tail about his feet and sat him down on the veranda to gaze steadily into space for long intervals

the Blythes felt that an Egyptian sphinx could not have made a more fitting Deity of the Portal.

When the Mr. Hyde mood came upon him — which it invariably did before rain, or wind — he was a wild thing with changed eyes. The transformation always came suddenly. He would spring fiercely from a reverie with a savage snarl and bite at any restraining or caressing hand. His fur seemed to grow darker and his eyes gleamed with a diabolical light. There was really an unearthly beauty about him. If the change happened in the twilight all the Ingleside folk felt a certain terror of him. At such times he was a fearsome beast and only Rilla defended him, asserting that he was “such a nice prowly cat.” Certainly he prowled.

Dr. Jekyll loved new milk; Mr. Hyde would not touch milk and growled over his meat. Dr. Jekyll came down the stairs so silently that no one could hear him. Mr. Hyde made his tread as heavy as a man's. Several evenings, when Susan was alone in the house, he “scared her stiff,” as she declared, by doing this. He would sit in the middle of the kitchen floor, with his terrible eyes fixed unwinkingly upon hers for an hour at a time. This played havoc with her nerves, but poor Susan really held him in too much awe to try to drive him out. Once she had dared to throw a stick at him and he had promptly made a savage leap towards her. Susan rushed out of doors and never attempted to meddle with Mr. Hyde again — though she visited his misdeeds upon the innocent Dr. Jekyll, chasing him ignominiously out of her domain whenever he dared to poke his nose in and denying him certain savoury tidbits for which he yearned.

““The many friends of Miss Faith Meredith, Gerald Meredith and James Blythe,”” read Susan, rolling the names like sweet morsels under her tongue, ““were very much pleased to welcome them home a few weeks ago from Redmond College. James Blythe, who was graduated in Arts in 1913, had just completed his first year in medicine.””

“Faith Meredith has really got to be the most handsomest creature I ever saw,” commented Miss Cornelia above her filet crochet. “It's amazing how those children came on after Rosemary West went to the manse. People have almost forgotten what imps of mischief they were once. Anne, dearie, will you ever forget the way they used to carry on? It's really surprising

how well Rosemary got on with them. She's more like a chum than a stepmother. They all love her and Una adores her. As for that little Bruce, Una just makes a perfect slave of herself to him. Of course, he is a darling. But did you ever see any child look as much like an aunt as he looks like his Aunt Ellen? He's just as dark and just as emphatic. I can't see a feature of Rosemary in him. Norman Douglas always vows at the top of his voice that the stork meant Bruce for him and Ellen and took him to the manse by mistake."

"Bruce adores Jem," said Mrs Blythe. "When he comes over here he follows Jem about silently like a faithful little dog, looking up at him from under his black brows. He would do anything for Jem, I verily believe."

"Are Jem and Faith going to make a match of it?"

Mrs. Blythe smiled. It was well known that Miss Cornelia, who had been such a virulent man-hater at one time, had actually taken to matchmaking in her declining years.

"They are only good friends yet, Miss Cornelia."

"Very good friends, believe me," said Miss Cornelia emphatically. "I hear all about the doings of the young fry."

"I have no doubt that Mary Vance sees that you do, Mrs. Marshall Elliott," said Susan significantly, "but I think it is a shame to talk about children making matches."

"Children! Jem is twenty-one and Faith is nineteen," retorted Miss Cornelia. "You must not forget, Susan, that we old folks are not the only grownup people in the world."

Outraged Susan, who detested any reference to her age — not from vanity but from a haunting dread that people might come to think her too old to work — returned to her "Notes."

"“Carl Meredith and Shirley Blythe came home last Friday evening from Queen's Academy. We understand that Carl will be in charge of the school

at Harbour Head next year and we are sure he will be a popular and successful teacher.’”

“He will teach the children all there is to know about bugs, anyhow,” said Miss Cornelia. “He is through with Queen’s now and Mr. Meredith and Rosemary wanted him to go right on to Redmond in the fall, but Carl has a very independent streak in him and means to earn part of his own way through college. He’ll be all the better for it.”

““Walter Blythe, who has been teaching for the past two years at Lowbridge, has resigned,” read Susan. ““He intends going to Redmond this fall.’”

“Is Walter quite strong enough for Redmond yet?” queried Miss Cornelia anxiously.

“We hope that he will be by the fall,” said Mrs. Blythe. “An idle summer in the open air and sunshine will do a great deal for him.”

“Typhoid is a hard thing to get over,” said Miss Cornelia emphatically, “especially when one has had such a close shave as Walter had. I think he’d do well to stay out of college another year. But then he’s so ambitious. Are Di and Nan going too?”

“Yes. They both wanted to teach another year but Gilbert thinks they had better go to Redmond this fall.”

“I’m glad of that. They’ll keep an eye on Walter and see that he doesn’t study too hard. I suppose,” continued Miss Cornelia, with a side glance at Susan, “that after the snub I got a few minutes ago it will not be safe for me to suggest that Jerry Meredith is making sheep’s eyes at Nan.”

Susan ignored this and Mrs. Blythe laughed again.

“Dear Miss Cornelia, I have my hands full, haven’t I? — with all these boys and girls sweethearting around me? If I took it seriously it would quite crush me. But I don’t — it is too hard yet to realize that they’re grown up. When I look at those two tall sons of mine I wonder if they can

possibly be the fat, sweet, dimpled babies I kissed and cuddled and sang to slumber the other day — only the other day, Miss Cornelia. Wasn't Jem the dearest baby in the old House of Dreams? and now he's a B.A. and accused of courting."

"We're all growing older," sighed Miss Cornelia.

"The only part of me that feels old," said Mrs. Blythe, "is the ankle I broke when Josie Pye dared me to walk the Barry ridgepole in the Green Gables days. I have an ache in it when the wind is east. I won't admit that it is rheumatism, but it does ache. As for the children, they and the Merediths are planning a gay summer before they have to go back to studies in the fall. They are such a fun-loving little crowd. They keep this house in a perpetual whirl of merriment."

"Is Rilla going to Queen's when Shirley goes back?"

"It isn't decided yet. I rather fancy not. Her father thinks she is not quite strong enough — she has rather outgrown her strength — she's really absurdly tall for a girl not yet fifteen. I am not anxious to have her go — why, it would be terrible not to have a single one of my babies home with me next winter. Susan and I would fall to fighting with each other to break the monotony."

Susan smiled at this pleasantry. The idea of her fighting with "Mrs. Dr. dear!"

"Does Rilla herself want to go?" asked Miss Cornelia.

"No. The truth is, Rilla is the only one of my flock who isn't ambitious. I really wish she had a little more ambition. She has no serious ideals at all — her sole aspiration seems to be to have a good time."

"And why should she not have it, Mrs. Dr. dear?" cried Susan, who could not bear to hear a single word against anyone of the Ingleside folk, even from one of themselves. "A young girl should have a good time, and that I will maintain. There will be time enough for her to think of Latin and Greek."

“I should like to see a little sense of responsibility in her, Susan. And you know yourself that she is abominably vain.”

“She has something to be vain about,” retorted Susan. “She is the prettiest girl in Glen St. Mary. Do you think that all those over-harbour MacAllisters and Crawfords and Elliotts could scare up a skin like Rilla’s in four generations? They could not. No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I know my place but I cannot allow you to run down Rilla. Listen to this, Mrs. Marshall Elliott.”

Susan had found a chance to get square with Miss Cornelia for her digs at the children’s love affairs. She read the item with gusto.

““Miller Douglas has decided not to go West. He says old P.E.I. is good enough for him and he will continue to farm for his aunt, Mrs. Alec Davis.””

Susan looked keenly at Miss Cornelia.

“I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Miller is courting Mary Vance.”

This shot pierced Miss Cornelia’s armour. Her sonsy face flushed.

“I won’t have Miller Douglas hanging round Mary,” she said crisply. “He comes of a low family. His father was a sort of outcast from the Douglasses — they never really counted him in — and his mother was one of those terrible Dillons from the Harbour Head.”

“I think I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Mary Vance’s own parents were not what you could call aristocratic.”

“Mary Vance has had a good bringing up and she is a smart, clever, capable girl,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “She is not going to throw herself away on Miller Douglas, believe me! She knows my opinion on the matter and Mary has never disobeyed me yet.”

“Well, I do not think you need worry, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, for Mrs. Alec Davis is as much against it as you could be, and says no nephew of hers is

ever going to marry a nameless nobody like Mary Vance.”

Susan returned to her mutton, feeling that she had got the best of it in this passage of arms, and read another “note.”

““We are pleased to hear that Miss Oliver has been engaged as teacher for another year. Miss Oliver will spend her well-earned vacation at her home in Lowbridge.””

“I’m so glad Gertrude is going to stay,” said Mrs. Blythe. “We would miss her horribly. And she has an excellent influence over Rilla who worships her. They are chums, in spite of the difference in their ages.”

“I thought I heard she was going to be married?”

“I believe it was talked of but I understand it is postponed for a year.”

“Who is the young man?”

“Robert Grant. He is a young lawyer in Charlottetown. I hope Gertrude will be happy. She has had a sad life, with much bitterness in it, and she feels things with a terrible keenness. Her first youth is gone and she is practically alone in the world. This new love that has come into her life seems such a wonderful thing to her that I think she hardly dares believe in its permanence. When her marriage had to be put off she was quite in despair — though it certainly wasn’t Mr. Grant’s fault. There were complications in the settlement of his father’s estate — his father died last winter — and he could not marry till the tangles were unravelled. But I think Gertrude felt it was a bad omen and that her happiness would somehow elude her yet.”

“It does not do, Mrs. Dr. dear, to set your affections too much on a man,” remarked Susan solemnly.

“Mr. Grant is quite as much in love with Gertrude as she is with him, Susan. It is not he whom she distrusts — it is fate. She has a little mystic streak in her — I suppose some people would call her superstitious. She has an odd belief in dreams and we have not been able to laugh it out of

her. I must own, too, that some of her dreams — but there, it would not do to let Gilbert hear me hinting such heresy. What have you found of much interest, Susan?”

Susan had given an exclamation.

“Listen to this, Mrs. Dr. dear. ‘Mrs. Sophia Crawford has given up her house at Lowbridge and will make her home in future with her niece, Mrs. Albert Crawford.’ Why that is my own cousin Sophia, Mrs. Dr. dear. We quarrelled when we were children over who should get a Sunday-school card with the words ‘God is Love,’ wreathed in rosebuds, on it, and have never spoken to each other since. And now she is coming to live right across the road from us.”

“You will have to make up the old quarrel, Susan. It will never do to be at outs with your neighbours.”

“Cousin Sophia began the quarrel, so she can begin the making up also, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan loftily. “If she does I hope I am a good enough Christian to meet her halfway. She is not a cheerful person and has been a wet blanket all her life. The last time I saw her, her face had a thousand wrinkles — maybe more, maybe less — from worrying and foreboding. She howled dreadful at her first husband’s funeral but she married again in less than a year. The next note, I see, describes the special service in our church last Sunday night and says the decorations were very beautiful.”

“Speaking of that reminds me that Mr. Pryor strongly disapproves of flowers in church,” said Miss Cornelia. “I always said there would be trouble when that man moved here from Lowbridge. He should never have been put in as elder — it was a mistake and we shall live to rue it, believe me! I have heard that he has said that if the girls continue to ‘mess up the pulpit with weeds’ that he will not go to church.”

“The church got on very well before old Whiskers-on-the-moon came to the Glen and it is my opinion it will get on without him after he is gone,” said Susan.

“Who in the world ever gave him that ridiculous nickname?” asked Mrs. Blythe.

“Why, the Lowbridge boys have called him that ever since I can remember, Mrs. Dr. dear — I suppose because his face is so round and red, with that fringe of sandy whisker about it. It does not do for anyone to call him that in his hearing, though, and that you may tie to. But worse than his whiskers, Mrs. Dr. dear, he is a very unreasonable man and has a great many queer ideas. He is an elder now and they say he is very religious; but I can well remember the time, Mrs. Dr. dear, twenty years ago, when he was caught pasturing his cow in the Lowbridge graveyard. Yes, indeed, I have not forgotten that, and I always think of it when he is praying in meeting. Well, that is all the notes and there is not much else in the paper of any importance. I never take much interest in foreign parts. Who is this Archduke man who has been murdered?”

“What does it matter to us?” asked Miss Cornelia, unaware of the hideous answer to her question which destiny was even then preparing. “Somebody is always murdering or being murdered in those Balkan States. It’s their normal condition and I don’t really think that our papers ought to print such shocking things. The Enterprise is getting far too sensational with its big headlines. Well, I must be getting home. No, Anne dearie, it’s no use asking me to stay to supper. Marshall has got to thinking that if I’m not home for a meal it’s not worth eating — just like a man. So off I go. Merciful goodness, Anne dearie, what is the matter with that cat? Is he having a fit?” — this, as Doc suddenly bounded to the rug at Miss Cornelia’s feet, laid back his ears, swore at her, and then disappeared with one fierce leap through the window.

“Oh, no. He’s merely turning into Mr. Hyde — which means that we shall have rain or high wind before morning. Doc is as good as a barometer.”

“Well, I am thankful he has gone on the rampage outside this time and not into my kitchen,” said Susan. “And I am going out to see about supper. With such a crowd as we have at Ingleside now it behooves us to think about our meals betimes.”

CHAPTER I I

DEW OF MORNING

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Outside, the Ingleside lawn was full of golden pools of sunshine and plots of alluring shadows. Rilla Blythe was swinging in the hammock under the big Scotch pine, Gertrude Oliver sat at its roots beside her, and Walter was stretched at full length on the grass, lost in a romance of chivalry wherein old heroes and beauties of dead and gone centuries lived vividly again for him.

Rilla was the “baby” of the Blythe family and was in a chronic state of secret indignation because nobody believed she was grown up. She was so nearly fifteen that she called herself that, and she was quite as tall as Di and Nan; also, she was nearly as pretty as Susan believed her to be. She had great, dreamy, hazel eyes, a milky skin dappled with little golden freckles, and delicately arched eyebrows, giving her a demure, questioning look which made people, especially lads in their teens, want to answer it. Her hair was ripely, ruddily brown and a little dent in her upper lip looked as if some good fairy had pressed it in with her finger at Rilla’s christening. Rilla, whose best friends could not deny her share of vanity, thought her face would do very well, but worried over her figure, and wished her mother could be prevailed upon to let her wear longer dresses. She, who had been so plump and roly-poly in the old Rainbow Valley days, was incredibly slim now, in the arms-and-legs period. Jem and Shirley harrowed her soul by calling her “Spider.” Yet she somehow escaped awkwardness. There was something in her movements that made you think she never walked but always danced. She had been much petted and was a wee bit spoiled, but still the general opinion was that Rilla Blythe was a very sweet girl, even if she were not so clever as Nan and Di.

Miss Oliver, who was going home that night for vacation, had boarded for a year at Ingleside. The Blythes had taken her to please Rilla who was

fathoms deep in love with her teacher and was even willing to share her room, since no other was available. Gertrude Oliver was twenty-eight and life had been a struggle for her. She was a striking-looking girl, with rather sad, almond-shaped brown eyes, a clever, rather mocking mouth, and enormous masses of black hair twisted about her head. She was not pretty but there was a certain charm of interest and mystery in her face, and Rilla found her fascinating. Even her occasional moods of gloom and cynicism had allurements for Rilla. These moods came only when Miss Oliver was tired. At all other times she was a stimulating companion, and the gay set at Ingleside never remembered that she was so much older than themselves. Walter and Rilla were her favourites and she was the confidante of the secret wishes and aspirations of both. She knew that Rilla longed to be “out” — to go to parties as Nan and Di did, and to have dainty evening dresses and — yes, there is no mincing matters — beaux! In the plural, at that! As for Walter, Miss Oliver knew that he had written a sequence of sonnets “to Rosamond” — i.e., Faith Meredith — and that he aimed at a Professorship of English literature in some big college. She knew his passionate love of beauty and his equally passionate hatred of ugliness; she knew his strength and his weakness.

Walter was, as ever, the handsomest of the Ingleside boys. Miss Oliver found pleasure in looking at him for his good looks — he was so exactly like what she would have liked her own son to be. Glossy black hair, brilliant dark grey eyes, faultless features. And a poet to his fingertips! That sonnet sequence was really a remarkable thing for a lad of twenty to write. Miss Oliver was no partial critic and she knew that Walter Blythe had a wonderful gift.

Rilla loved Walter with all her heart. He never teased her as Jem and Shirley did. He never called her “Spider.” His pet name for her was “Rilla-my-Rilla” — a little pun on her real name, Marilla. She had been named after Aunt Marilla of Green Gables, but Aunt Marilla had died before Rilla was old enough to know her very well, and Rilla detested the name as being horribly old-fashioned and prim. Why couldn’t they have called her by her first name, Bertha, which was beautiful and dignified, instead of that silly “Rilla”? She did not mind Walter’s version, but nobody else was allowed to call her that, except Miss Oliver now and then. “Rilla-my-

Rilla” in Walter’s musical voice sounded very beautiful to her — like the lilt and ripple of some silvery brook. She would have died for Walter if it would have done him any good, so she told Miss Oliver. Rilla was as fond of italics as most girls of fifteen are — and the bitterest drop in her cup was her suspicion that he told Di more of his secrets than he told her.

“He thinks I’m not grown up enough to understand,” she had once lamented rebelliously to Miss Oliver, “but I am! And I would never tell them to a single soul — not even to you, Miss Oliver. I tell you all my own — I just couldn’t be happy if I had any secret from you, dearest — but I would never betray his. I tell him everything — I even show him my diary. And it hurts me dreadfully when he doesn’t tell me things. He shows me all his poems, though — they are marvellous, Miss Oliver. Oh, I just live in the hope that some day I shall be to Walter what Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy was to him. Wordsworth never wrote anything like Walter’s poems — nor Tennyson, either.”

“I wouldn’t say just that. Both of them wrote a great deal of trash,” said Miss Oliver dryly. Then, repenting, as she saw a hurt look in Rilla’s eye, she added hastily,

“But I believe Walter will be a great poet, too — some day — and you will have more of his confidence as you grow older.”

“When Walter was in the hospital with typhoid last year I was almost crazy,” sighed Rilla, a little importantly. “They never told me how ill he really was until it was all over — father wouldn’t let them. I’m glad I didn’t know — I couldn’t have borne it. I cried myself to sleep every night as it was. But sometimes,” concluded Rilla bitterly — she liked to speak bitterly now and then in imitation of Miss Oliver— “sometimes I think Walter cares more for Dog Monday than he does for me.”

Dog Monday was the Ingleside dog, so called because he had come into the family on a Monday when Walter had been reading Robinson Crusoe. He really belonged to Jem but was much attached to Walter also. He was lying beside Walter now with nose snuggled against his arm, thumping his tail rapturously whenever Walter gave him an absent pat. Monday was not a collie or a setter or a hound or a Newfoundland. He was just, as Jem said,

“plain dog” — very plain dog, uncharitable people added. Certainly, Monday’s looks were not his strong point. Black spots were scattered at random over his yellow carcass, one of them, apparently, blotting out an eye. His ears were in tatters, for Monday was never successful in affairs of honour. But he possessed one talisman. He knew that not all dogs could be handsome or eloquent or victorious, but that every dog could love. Inside his homely hide beat the most affectionate, loyal, faithful heart of any dog since dogs were; and something looked out of his brown eyes that was nearer akin to a soul than any theologian would allow. Everybody at Ingleside was fond of him, even Susan, although his one unfortunate propensity of sneaking into the spare room and going to sleep on the bed tried her affection sorely.

On this particular afternoon Rilla had no quarrel on hand with existing conditions.

“Hasn’t June been a delightful month?” she asked, looking dreamily afar at the little quiet silvery clouds hanging so peacefully over Rainbow Valley. “We’ve had such lovely times — and such lovely weather. It has just been perfect every way.”

“I don’t half like that,” said Miss Oliver, with a sigh. “It’s ominous — somehow. A perfect thing is a gift of the gods — a sort of compensation for what is coming afterwards. I’ve seen that so often that I don’t care to hear people say they’ve had a perfect time. June has been delightful, though.”

“Of course, it hasn’t been very exciting,” said Rilla. “The only exciting thing that has happened in the Glen for a year was old Miss Mead fainting in Church. Sometimes I wish something dramatic would happen once in a while.”

“Don’t wish it. Dramatic things always have a bitterness for some one. What a nice summer all you gay creatures will have! And me moping at Lowbridge!”

“You’ll be over often, won’t you? I think there’s going to be lots of fun this summer, though I’ll just be on the fringe of things as usual, I suppose.

Isn't it horrid when people think you're a little girl when you're not?"

"There's plenty of time for you to be grown up, Rilla. Don't wish your youth away. It goes too quickly. You'll begin to taste life soon enough."

"Taste life! I want to eat it," cried Rilla, laughing. "I want everything — everything a girl can have. I'll be fifteen in another month, and then nobody can say I'm a child any longer. I heard someone say once that the years from fifteen to nineteen are the best years in a girl's life. I'm going to make them perfectly splendid — just fill them with fun."

"There's no use thinking about what you're going to do — you are tolerably sure not to do it."

"Oh, but you do get a lot of fun out of the thinking," cried Rilla.

"You think of nothing but fun, you monkey," said Miss Oliver indulgently, reflecting that Rilla's chin was really the last word in chins. "Well, what else is fifteen for? But have you any notion of going to college this fall?"

"No — nor any other fall. I don't want to. I never cared for all those ologies and isms Nan and Di are so crazy about. And there's five of us going to college already. Surely that's enough. There's bound to be one dunce in every family. I'm quite willing to be a dunce if I can be a pretty, popular, delightful one. I can't be clever. I have no talent at all, and you can't imagine how comfortable it is. Nobody expects me to do anything so I'm never pestered to do it. And I can't be a housewifely, cookly creature, either. I hate sewing and dusting, and when Susan couldn't teach me to make biscuits nobody could. Father says I toil not neither do I spin. Therefore, I must be a lily of the field," concluded Rilla, with another laugh.

"You are too young to give up your studies altogether, Rilla."

"Oh, mother will put me through a course of reading next winter. It will polish up her B.A. degree. Luckily I like reading. Don't look at me so sorrowfully and so disapprovingly, dearest. I can't be sober and serious — everything looks so rosy and rainbowy to me. Next month I'll be fifteen —

and next year sixteen — and the year after that seventeen. Could anything be more enchanting?”

“Rap wood,” said Gertrude Oliver, half laughingly, half seriously. “Rap wood, Rilla-my-Rilla.”

CHAPTER II I

MOONLIT MIRTH

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Rilla, who still buttoned up her eyes when she went to sleep so that she always looked as if she were laughing in her slumber, yawned, stretched, and smiled at Gertrude Oliver. The latter had come over from Lowbridge the previous evening and had been prevailed upon to remain for the dance at the Four Winds lighthouse the next night.

“The new day is knocking at the window. What will it bring us, I wonder.”

Miss Oliver shivered a little. She never greeted the days with Rilla’s enthusiasm. She had lived long enough to know that a day may bring a terrible thing.

“I think the nicest thing about days is their unexpectedness,” went on Rilla. “It’s jolly to wake up like this on a golden-fine morning and wonder what surprise packet the day will hand you. I always daydream for ten minutes before I get up, imagining the heaps of splendid things that may happen before night.”

“I hope something very unexpected will happen today,” said Gertrude. “I hope the mail will bring us news that war has been averted between Germany and France.”

“Oh — yes,” said Rilla vaguely. “It will be dreadful if it isn’t, I suppose. But it won’t really matter much to us, will it? I think a war would be so exciting. The Boer war was, they say, but I don’t remember anything about it, of course. Miss Oliver, shall I wear my white dress tonight or my new green one? The green one is by far the prettier, of course, but I’m almost afraid to wear it to a shore dance for fear something will happen to it. And

will you do my hair the new way? None of the other girls in the Glen wear it yet and it will make such a sensation.”

“How did you induce your mother to let you go to the dance?”

“Oh, Walter coaxed her over. He knew I would be heartbroken if I didn’t go. It’s my first really-truly grownup party, Miss Oliver, and I’ve just lain awake at nights for a week thinking it over. When I saw the sun shining this morning I wanted to whoop for joy. It would be simply terrible if it rained tonight. I think I’ll wear the green dress and risk it. I want to look my nicest at my first party. Besides, it’s an inch longer than my white one. And I’ll wear my silver slippers too. Mrs. Ford sent them to me last Christmas and I’ve never had a chance to wear them yet. They’re the dearest things. Oh, Miss Oliver, I do hope some of the boys will ask me to dance. I shall die of mortification — truly I will, if nobody does and I have to sit stuck up against the wall all the evening. Of course Carl and Jerry can’t dance because they’re the minister’s sons, or else I could depend on them to save me from utter disgrace.”

“You’ll have plenty of partners — all the over-harbour boys are coming — there’ll be far more boys than girls.”

“I’m glad I’m not a minister’s daughter,” laughed Rilla. “Poor Faith is so furious because she won’t dare to dance tonight. Una doesn’t care, of course. She has never hankered after dancing. Somebody told Faith there would be a taffy-pull in the kitchen for those who didn’t dance and you should have seen the face she made. She and Jem will sit out on the rocks most of the evening, I suppose. Did you know that we are all to walk down as far as that little creek below the old House of Dreams and then sail to the lighthouse? Won’t it just be absolutely divine?”

“When I was fifteen I talked in italics and superlatives too,” said Miss Oliver sarcastically. “I think the party promises to be pleasant for young fry. I expect to be bored. None of those boys will bother dancing with an old maid like me. Jem and Walter will take me out once out of charity. So you can’t expect me to look forward to it with your touching young rapture.”

“Didn’t you have a good time at your first party, though, Miss Oliver?”

“No. I had a hateful time. I was shabby and homely and nobody asked me to dance except one boy, homelier and shabbier than myself. He was so awkward I hated him — and even he didn’t ask me again. I had no real girlhood, Rilla. It’s a sad loss. That’s why I want you to have a splendid, happy girlhood. And I hope your first party will be one you’ll remember all your life with pleasure.”

“I dreamed last night I was at the dance and right in the middle of things I discovered I was dressed in my kimono and bedroom shoes,” sighed Rilla. “I woke up with a gasp of horror.”

“Speaking of dreams — I had an odd one,” said Miss Oliver absently. “It was one of those vivid dreams I sometimes have — they are not the vague jumble of ordinary dreams — they are as clear cut and real as life.”

“What was your dream?”

“I was standing on the veranda steps, here at Ingleside, looking down over the fields of the Glen. All at once, far in the distance, I saw a long, silvery, glistening wave breaking over them. It came nearer and nearer — just a succession of little white waves like those that break on the sandshore sometimes. The Glen was being swallowed up. I thought, ‘Surely the waves will not come near Ingleside’ — but they came nearer and nearer — so rapidly — before I could move or call they were breaking right at my feet — and everything was gone — there was nothing but a waste of stormy water where the Glen had been. I tried to draw back — and I saw that the edge of my dress was wet with blood — and I woke — shivering. I don’t like the dream. There was some sinister significance in it. That kind of vivid dream always ‘comes true’ with me.”

“I hope it doesn’t mean there’s a storm coming up from the east to spoil the party,” murmured Rilla.

“Incorrigible fifteen!” said Miss Oliver dryly. “No, Rilla-my-Rilla, I don’t think there is any danger that it foretells anything so awful as that.”

There had been an undercurrent of tension in the Ingleside existence for several days. Only Rilla, absorbed in her own budding life, was unaware of it. Dr. Blythe had taken to looking grave and saying little over the daily paper. Jem and Walter were keenly interested in the news it brought. Jem sought Walter out in excitement that evening.

“Oh, boy, Germany has declared war on France. This means that England will fight too, probably — and if she does — well, the Piper of your old fancy will have come at last.”

“It wasn’t a fancy,” said Walter slowly. “It was a presentiment — a vision — Jem, I really saw him for a moment that evening long ago. Suppose England does fight?”

“Why, we’ll all have to turn in and help her,” cried Jem gaily. “We couldn’t let the ‘old grey mother of the northern sea’ fight it out alone, could we? But you can’t go — the typhoid has done you out of that. Sort of a shame, eh?”

Walter did not say whether it was a shame or not. He looked silently over the Glen to the dimpling blue harbour beyond.

“We’re the cubs — we’ve got to pitch in tooth and claw if it comes to a family row,” Jem went on cheerfully, rumpling up his red curls with a strong, lean, sensitive brown hand — the hand of the born surgeon, his father often thought. “What an adventure it would be! But I suppose Grey or some of those wary old chaps will patch matters up at the eleventh hour. It’ll be a rotten shame if they leave France in the lurch, though. If they don’t, we’ll see some fun. Well, I suppose it’s time to get ready for the spree at the light.”

Jem departed whistling “Wi’ a hundred pipers and a’ and a’,” and Walter stood for a long time where he was. There was a little frown on his forehead. This had all come up with the blackness and suddenness of a thundercloud. A few days ago nobody had even thought of such a thing. It was absurd to think of it now. Some way out would be found. War was a hellish, horrible, hideous thing — too horrible and hideous to happen in the twentieth century between civilized nations. The mere thought of it

was hideous, and made Walter unhappy in its threat to the beauty of life. He would not think of it — he would resolutely put it out of his mind. How beautiful the old Glen was, in its August ripeness, with its chain of bowery old homesteads, tilled meadows and quiet gardens. The western sky was like a great golden pearl. Far down the harbour was frosted with a dawning moonlight. The air was full of exquisite sounds — sleepy robin whistles, wonderful, mournful, soft murmurs of wind in the twilit trees, rustle of aspen poplars talking in silvery whispers and shaking their dainty, heart-shaped leaves, lilting young laughter from the windows of rooms where the girls were making ready for the dance. The world was steeped in maddening loveliness of sound and colour. He would think only of these things and of the deep, subtle joy they gave him. “Anyhow, no one will expect me to go,” he thought. “As Jem says, typhoid has seen to that.”

Rilla was leaning out of her room window, dressed for the dance. A yellow pansy slipped from her hair and fell out over the sill like a falling star of gold. She caught at it vainly — but there were enough left. Miss Oliver had woven a little wreath of them for her pet’s hair.

“It’s so beautifully calm — isn’t that splendid? We’ll have a perfect night. Listen, Miss Oliver — I can hear those old bells in Rainbow Valley quite clearly. They’ve been hanging there for over ten years.”

“Their wind chime always makes me think of the aerial, celestial music Adam and Eve heard in Milton’s Eden,” responded Miss Oliver.

“We used to have such fun in Rainbow Valley when we were children,” said Rilla dreamily.

Nobody ever played in Rainbow Valley now. It was very silent on summer evenings. Walter liked to go there to read. Jem and Faith trysted there considerably; Jerry and Nan went there to pursue uninterruptedly the ceaseless wrangles and arguments on profound subjects that seemed to be their preferred method of sweethearting. And Rilla had a beloved little sylvan dell of her own there where she liked to sit and dream.

“I must run down to the kitchen before I go and show myself off to Susan. She would never forgive me if I didn’t.”

Rilla whirled into the shadowy kitchen at Ingleside, where Susan was prosaically darning socks, and lighted it up with her beauty. She wore her green dress with its little pink daisy garlands, her silk stockings and silver slippers. She had golden pansies in her hair and at her creamy throat. She was so pretty and young and glowing that even Cousin Sophia Crawford was compelled to admire her — and Cousin Sophia Crawford admired few transient earthly things. Cousin Sophia and Susan had made up, or ignored, their old feud since the former had come to live in the Glen, and Cousin Sophia often came across in the evenings to make a neighbourly call. Susan did not always welcome her rapturously for Cousin Sophia was not what could be called an exhilarating companion. “Some calls are visits and some are visitations, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan said once, and left it to be inferred that Cousin Sophia’s were the latter.

Cousin Sophia had a long, pale, wrinkled face, a long, thin nose, a long, thin mouth, and very long, thin, pale hands, generally folded resignedly on her black calico lap. Everything about her seemed long and thin and pale. She looked mournfully upon Rilla Blythe and said sadly,

“Is your hair all your own?”

“Of course it is,” cried Rilla indignantly.

“Ah, well!” Cousin Sophia sighed. “It might be better for you if it wasn’t! Such a lot of hair takes from a person’s strength. It’s a sign of consumption, I’ve heard, but I hope it won’t turn out like that in your case. I s’pose you’ll all be dancing tonight — even the minister’s boys most likely. I s’pose his girls won’t go that far. Ah, well, I never held with dancing. I knew a girl once who dropped dead while she was dancing. How any one could ever dance aga’ after a judgment like that I cannot comprehend.”

“Did she ever dance again?” asked Rilla pertly.

“I told you she dropped dead. Of course she never danced again, poor creature. She was a Kirke from Lowbridge. You ain’t a-going off like that with nothing on your bare neck, are you?”

“It’s a hot evening,” protested Rilla. “But I’ll put on a scarf when we go on the water.”

“I knew of a boat load of young folks who went sailing on that harbour forty years ago just such a night as this — just exactly such a night as this,” said Cousin Sophia lugubriously, “and they were upset and drowned — every last one of them. I hope nothing like that’ll happen to you tonight. Do you ever try anything for the freckles? I used to find plantain juice real good.”

“You certainly should be a judge of freckles, Cousin Sophia,” said Susan, rushing to Rilla’s defence. “You were more speckled than any toad when you was a girl. Rilla’s only come in summer but yours stayed put, season in and season out; and you had not a ground colour like hers behind them neither. You look real nice, Rilla, and that way of fixing your hair is becoming. But you are not going to walk to the harbour in those slippers, are you?”

“Oh, no. We’ll all wear our old shoes to the harbour and carry our slippers. Do you like my dress, Susan?”

“It minds me of a dress I wore when I was a girl,” sighed Cousin Sophia before Susan could reply. “It was green with pink posies on it, too, and it was flounced from the waist to the hem. We didn’t wear the skimpy things girls wear nowadays. Ah me, times has changed and not for the better I’m afraid. I tore a big hole in it that night and someone spilled a cup of tea all over it. Ruined it completely. But I hope nothing will happen to your dress. It orter to be a bit longer I’m thinking — your legs are so terrible long and thin.”

“Mrs. Dr. Blythe does not approve of little girls dressing like grownup ones,” said Susan stiffly, intending merely a snub to Cousin Sophia. But Rilla felt insulted. A little girl indeed! She whisked out of the kitchen in high dudgeon. Another time she wouldn’t go down to show herself off to Susan — Susan, who thought nobody was grown up until she was sixty! And that horrid Cousin Sophia with her digs about freckles and legs! What business had an old — an old beanpole like that to talk of anybody else being long and thin? Rilla felt all her pleasure in herself and her evening

clouded and spoiled. The very teeth of her soul were set on edge and she could have sat down and cried.

But later on her spirits rose again when she found herself one of the gay crowd bound for the Four Winds light.

The Blythes left Ingleside to the melancholy music of howls from Dog Monday, who was locked up in the barn lest he make an uninvited guest at the light. They picked up the Merediths in the village, and others joined them as they walked down the old harbour road. Mary Vance, resplendent in blue crepe, with lace overdress, came out of Miss Cornelia's gate and attached herself to Rilla and Miss Oliver who were walking together and who did not welcome her over-warmly. Rilla was not very fond of Mary Vance. She had never forgotten the humiliating day when Mary had chased her through the village with a dried codfish. Mary Vance, to tell the truth, was not exactly popular with any of her set. Still, they enjoyed her society — she had such a biting tongue that it was stimulating. "Mary Vance is a habit of ours — we can't do without her even when we are furious with her," Di Blythe had once said.

Most of the little crowd were paired off after a fashion. Jem walked with Faith Meredith, of course, and Jerry Meredith with Nan Blythe. Di and Walter were together, deep in confidential conversation which Rilla envied.

Carl Meredith was walking with Miranda Pryor, more to torment Joe Milgrave than for any other reason. Joe was known to have a strong hankering for the said Miranda, which shyness prevented him from indulging on all occasions. Joe might summon enough courage to amble up beside Miranda if the night were dark, but here, in this moonlit dusk, he simply could not do it. So he trailed along after the procession and thought things not lawful to be uttered of Carl Meredith. Miranda was the daughter of Whiskers-on-the-moon; she did not share her father's unpopularity but she was not much run after, being a pale, neutral little creature, somewhat addicted to nervous giggling. She had silvery blonde hair and her eyes were big china blue orbs that looked as if she had been badly frightened when she was little and had never got over it. She would much rather have walked with Joe than with Carl, with whom she did not feel in the least at

home. Yet it was something of an honour, too, to have a college boy beside her, and a son of the manse at that.

Shirley Blythe was with Una Meredith and both were rather silent because such was their nature. Shirley was a lad of sixteen, sedate, sensible, thoughtful, full of a quiet humour. He was Susan's "little brown boy" yet, with his brown hair, brown eyes, and clear brown skin. He liked to walk with Una Meredith because she never tried to make him talk or badgered him with chatter. Una was as sweet and shy as she had been in the Rainbow Valley days, and her large, dark-blue eyes were as dreamy and wistful. She had a secret, carefully-hidden fancy for Walter Blythe that nobody but Rilla ever suspected. Rilla sympathized with it and wished Walter would return it. She liked Una better than Faith, whose beauty and aplomb rather overshadowed other girls — and Rilla did not enjoy being overshadowed.

But just now she was very happy. It was so delightful to be tripping with her friends down that dark, gleaming road sprinkled with its little spruces and firs, whose balsam made all the air resinous around them. Meadows of sunset afterlight were behind the westerning hills. Before them was the shining harbour. A bell was ringing in the little church over-harbour and the lingering dream-notes died around the dim, amethystine points. The gulf beyond was still silvery blue in the afterlight. Oh, it was all glorious — the clear air with its salt tang, the balsam of the firs, the laughter of her friends. Rilla loved life — its bloom and brilliance; she loved the ripple of music, the hum of merry conversation; she wanted to walk on forever over this road of silver and shadow. It was her first party and she was going to have a splendid time. There was nothing in the world to worry about — not even freckles and overlong legs — nothing except one little haunting fear that nobody would ask her to dance. It was beautiful and satisfying just to be alive — to be fifteen — to be pretty. Rilla drew a long breath of rapture — and caught it midway rather sharply. Jem was telling some story to Faith — something that had happened in the Balkan War.

"The doctor lost both his legs — they were smashed to pulp — and he was left on the field to die. And he crawled about from man to man, to all the wounded men round him, as long as he could, and did everything possible

to relieve their sufferings — never thinking of himself — he was tying a bit of bandage round another man's leg when he went under. They found them there, the doctor's dead hands still held the bandage tight, the bleeding was stopped and the other man's life was saved. Some hero, wasn't he, Faith? I tell you when I read that—"

Jem and Faith moved on out of hearing. Gertrude Oliver suddenly shivered. Rilla pressed her arm sympathetically.

"Wasn't it dreadful, Miss Oliver? I don't know why Jem tells such gruesome things at a time like this when we're all out for fun."

"Do you think it dreadful, Rilla? I thought it wonderful — beautiful. Such a story makes one ashamed of ever doubting human nature. That man's action was godlike. And how humanity responds to the ideal of self-sacrifice. As for my shiver, I don't know what caused it. The evening is certainly warm enough. Perhaps someone is walking over the dark, starshiny spot that is to be my grave. That is the explanation the old superstition would give. Well, I won't think of that on this lovely night. Do you know, Rilla, that when night-time comes I'm always glad I live in the country. We know the real charm of night here as town dwellers never do. Every night is beautiful in the country — even the stormy ones. I love a wild night storm on this old gulf shore. As for a night like this, it is almost too beautiful — it belongs to youth and dreamland and I'm half afraid of it."

"I feel as if I were part of it," said Rilla.

"Ah yes, you're young enough not to be afraid of perfect things. Well, here we are at the House of Dreams. It seems lonely this summer. The Fords didn't come?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Ford and Persis didn't. Kenneth did — but he stayed with his mother's people over-harbour. We haven't seen a great deal of him this summer. He's a little lame, so didn't go about very much."

"Lame? What happened to him?"

“He broke his ankle in a football game last fall and was laid up most of the winter. He has limped a little ever since but it is getting better all the time and he expects it will be all right before long. He has been up to Ingleside only twice.”

“Ethel Reese is simply crazy about him,” said Mary Vance. “She hasn’t got the sense she was born with where he is concerned. He walked home with her from the over-harbour church last prayer-meeting night and the airs she has put on since would really make you weary of life. As if a Toronto boy like Ken Ford would ever really think of a country girl like Ethel!”

Rilla flushed. It did not matter to her if Kenneth Ford walked home with Ethel Reese a dozen times — it did not! Nothing that he did mattered to her. He was ages older than she was. He chummed with Nan and Di and Faith, and looked upon her, Rilla, as a child whom he never noticed except to tease. And she detested Ethel Reese and Ethel Reese hated her — always had hated her since Walter had pummelled Dan so notoriously in Rainbow Valley days; but why need she be thought beneath Kenneth Ford’s notice because she was a country girl, pray? As for Mary Vance, she was getting to be an out-and-out gossip and thought of nothing but who walked home with people!

There was a little pier on the harbour shore below the House of Dreams, and two boats were moored there. One boat was skippered by Jem Blythe, the other by Joe Milgrave, who knew all about boats and was nothing loth to let Miranda Pryor see it. They raced down the harbour and Joe’s boat won. More boats were coming down from the Harbour Head and across the harbour from the western side. Everywhere there was laughter. The big white tower on Four Winds Point was overflowing with light, while its revolving beacon flashed overhead. A family from Charlottetown, relatives of the light’s keeper, were summering at the light, and they were giving the party to which all the young people of Four Winds and Glen St. Mary and over-harbour had been invited. As Jem’s boat swung in below the lighthouse Rilla desperately snatched off her shoes and donned her silver slippers behind Miss Oliver’s screening back. A glance had told her that the rock-cut steps climbing up to the light were lined with boys, and lighted by Chinese lanterns, and she was determined she would not walk

up those steps in the heavy shoes her mother had insisted on her wearing for the road. The slippers pinched abominably, but nobody would have suspected it as Rilla tripped smilingly up the steps, her soft dark eyes glowing and questioning, her colour deepening richly on her round, creamy cheeks. The very minute she reached the top of the steps an over-harbour boy asked her to dance and the next moment they were in the pavilion that had been built seaward of the lighthouse for dances. It was a delightful spot, roofed over with fir-boughs and hung with lanterns. Beyond was the sea in a radiance that glowed and shimmered, to the left the moonlit crests and hollows of the sand-dunes, to the right the rocky shore with its inky shadows and its crystalline coves. Rilla and her partner swung in among the dancers; she drew a long breath of delight; what witching music Ned Burr of the Upper Glen was coaxing from his fiddle — it was really like the magical pipes of the old tale which compelled all who heard them to dance. How cool and fresh the gulf breeze blew; how white and wonderful the moonlight was over everything! This was life — enchanting life. Rilla felt as if her feet and her soul both had wings.

CHAPTER I V

THE PIPER PIPES

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Rilla's first party was a triumph — or so it seemed at first. She had so many partners that she had to split her dances. Her silver slippers seemed verily to dance of themselves and though they continued to pinch her toes and blister her heels that did not interfere with her enjoyment in the least. Ethel Reese gave her a bad ten minutes by beckoning her mysteriously out of the pavilion and whispering, with a Reese-like smirk, that her dress gaped behind and that there was a stain on the flounce. Rilla rushed miserably to the room in the lighthouse which was fitted up for a temporary ladies' dressing-room, and discovered that the stain was merely a tiny grass smear and that the gap was equally tiny where a hook had pulled loose. Irene Howard fastened it up for her and gave her some over-sweet, condescending compliments. Rilla felt flattered by Irene's condescension. She was an Upper Glen girl of nineteen who seemed to like the society of the younger girls — spiteful friends said because she could queen it over them without rivalry. But Rilla thought Irene quite wonderful and loved her for her patronage. Irene was pretty and stylish; she sang divinely and spent every winter in Charlottetown taking music lessons. She had an aunt in Montreal who sent her wonderful things to wear; she was reported to have had a sad love affair — nobody knew just what, but its very mystery allured. Rilla felt that Irene's compliments crowned her evening. She ran gaily back to the pavilion and lingered for a moment in the glow of the lanterns at the entrance looking at the dancers. A momentary break in the whirling throng gave her a glimpse of Kenneth Ford standing at the other side.

Rilla's heart skipped a beat — or, if that be a physiological impossibility, she thought it did. So he was here, after all. She had concluded he was not coming — not that it mattered in the least. Would he see her? Would he take any notice of her? Of course, he wouldn't ask her to dance — that

couldn't be hoped for. He thought her just a mere child. He had called her "Spider" not three weeks ago when he had been at Ingleside one evening. She had cried about it upstairs afterwards and hated him. But her heart skipped a beat when she saw that he was edging his way round the side of the pavilion towards her. Was he coming to her — was he? — was he? — yes, he was! He was looking for her — he was here beside her — he was gazing down at her with something in his dark grey eyes that Rilla had never seen in them. Oh, it was almost too much to bear! and everything was going on as before — the dancers were spinning round, the boys who couldn't get partners were hanging about the pavilion, canoodling couples were sitting out on the rocks — nobody seemed to realize what a stupendous thing had happened.

Kenneth was a tall lad, very good looking, with a certain careless grace of bearing that somehow made all the other boys seem stiff and awkward by contrast. He was reported to be awesomely clever, with the glamour of a faraway city and a big university hanging around him. He had also the reputation of being a bit of a lady-killer. But that probably accrued to him from his possession of a laughing, velvety voice which no girl could hear without a heartbeat, and a dangerous way of listening as if she were saying something that he had longed all his life to hear.

"Is this Rilla-my-Rilla?" he asked in a low tone.

"Yeth," said Rilla, and immediately wished she could throw herself headlong down the lighthouse rock or otherwise vanish from a jeering world.

Rilla had lisped in early childhood; but she had grown out of it. Only on occasions of stress and strain did the tendency reassert itself. She hadn't lisped for a year; and now at this very moment, when she was so especially desirous of appearing grown up and sophisticated, she must go and lisp like a baby! It was too mortifying; she felt as if tears were going to come into her eyes; the next minute she would be — blubbering — yes, just blubbering — she wished Kenneth would go away — she wished he had never come. The party was spoiled. Everything had turned to dust and ashes.

And he had called her “Rilla-my-Rilla” — not “Spider” or “Kid” or “Puss,” as he had been used to call her when he took any notice whatever of her. She did not at all resent his using Walter’s pet name for her; it sounded beautifully in his low caressing tones, with just the faintest suggestion of emphasis on the “my.” It would have been so nice if she had not made a fool of herself. She dared not look up lest she should see laughter in his eyes. So she looked down; and as her lashes were very long and dark and her lids very thick and creamy, the effect was quite charming and provocative, and Kenneth reflected that Rilla Blythe was going to be the beauty of the Ingleside girls after all. He wanted to make her look up — to catch again that little, demure, questioning glance. She was the prettiest thing at the party, there was no doubt of that.

What was he saying? Rilla could hardly believe her ears.

“Can we have a dance?”

“Yes,” said Rilla. She said it with such a fierce determination not to lisp that she fairly blurted the word out. Then she writhed in spirit again. It sounded so bold — so eager — as if she were fairly jumping at him! What would he think of her? Oh, why did dreadful things like this happen, just when a girl wanted to appear at her best?

Kenneth drew her in among the dancers.

“I think this game ankle of mine is good for one hop around, at least,” he said.

“How is your ankle?” said Rilla. Oh, why couldn’t she think of something else to say? She knew he was sick of inquiries about his ankle. She had heard him say so at Ingleside — heard him tell Di he was going to wear a placard on his breast announcing to all and sundry that the ankle was improving, *etc.* And now she must go and ask this stale question again.

Kenneth was tired of inquiries about his ankle. But then he had not often been asked about it by lips with such an adorable kissable dent just above them. Perhaps that was why he answered very patiently that it was getting

on well and didn't trouble him much, if he didn't walk or stand too long at a time.

“They tell me it will be as strong as ever in time, but I'll have to cut football out this fall.”

They danced together and Rilla knew every girl in sight envied her. After the dance they went down the rock steps and Kenneth found a little flat and they rowed across the moonlit channel to the sandshore; they walked on the sand till Kenneth's ankle made protest and then they sat down among the dunes. Kenneth talked to her as he had talked to Nan and Di. Rilla, overcome with a shyness she did not understand, could not talk much, and thought he would think her frightfully stupid; but in spite of this it was all very wonderful — the exquisite moonlit night, the shining sea, the tiny little wavelets swishing on the sand, the cool and freakish wind of night crooning in the stiff grasses on the crest of the dunes, the music sounding faintly and sweetly over the channel.

“‘A merry lilt o' moonlight for mermaiden revelry,’” quoted Kenneth softly from one of Walter's poems.

And just he and she alone together in the glamour of sound and sight! If only her slippers didn't bite so! and if only she could talk cleverly like Miss Oliver — nay, if she could only talk as she did herself to other boys! But words would not come, she could only listen and murmur little commonplace sentences now and again. But perhaps her dreamy eyes and her dented lip and her slender throat talked eloquently for her. At any rate Kenneth seemed in no hurry to suggest going back and when they did go back supper was in progress. He found a seat for her near the window of the lighthouse kitchen and sat on the sill beside her while she ate her ices and cake. Rilla looked about her and thought how lovely her first party had been. She would never forget it. The room reechoed to laughter and jest. Beautiful young eyes sparkled and shone. From the pavilion outside came the lilt of the fiddle and the rhythmic steps of the dancers.

There was a little disturbance among a group of boys crowded about the door; a young fellow pushed through and halted on the threshold, looking about him rather sombrely. It was Jack Elliott from over-harbour — a

McGill medical student, a quiet chap not much addicted to social doings. He had been invited to the party but had not been expected to come since he had to go to Charlottetown that day and could not be back until late. Yet here he was — and he carried a folded paper in his hand.

Gertrude Oliver looked at him from her corner and shivered again. She had enjoyed the party herself, after all, for she had foregathered with a Charlottetown acquaintance who, being a stranger and much older than most of the guests, felt himself rather out of it, and had been glad to fall in with this clever girl who could talk of world doings and outside events with the zest and vigour of a man. In the pleasure of his society she had forgotten some of her misgivings of the day. Now they suddenly returned to her. What news did Jack Elliott bring? Lines from an old poem flashed unbidden into her mind—”there was a sound of revelry by night”—”Hush! Hark! A deep sound strikes like a rising knell” — why should she think of that now? Why didn’t Jack Elliott speak — if he had anything to tell? Why did he just stand there, glowering importantly?

“Ask him — ask him,” she said feverishly to Allan Daly. But somebody else had already asked him. The room grew very silent all at once. Outside the fiddler had stopped for a rest and there was silence there too. Afar off they heard the low moan of the gulf — the presage of a storm already on its way up the Atlantic. A girl’s laugh drifted up from the rocks and died away as if frightened out of existence by the sudden stillness.

“England declared war on Germany today,” said Jack Elliott slowly. “The news came by wire just as I left town.”

“God help us,” whispered Gertrude Oliver under her breath. “My dream — my dream! The first wave has broken.” She looked at Allan Daly and tried to smile.

“Is this Armageddon?” she asked.

“I am afraid so,” he said gravely.

A chorus of exclamations had arisen round them — light surprise and idle interest for the most part. Few there realized the import of the message —

fewer still realized that it meant anything to them. Before long the dancing was on again and the hum of pleasure was as loud as ever. Gertrude and Allan Daly talked the news over in low, troubled tones. Walter Blythe had turned pale and left the room. Outside he met Jem, hurrying up the rock steps.

“Have you heard the news, Jem?”

“Yes. The Piper has come. Hurrah! I knew England wouldn’t leave France in the lurch. I’ve been trying to get Captain Josiah to hoist the flag but he says it isn’t the proper caper till sunrise. Jack says they’ll be calling for volunteers tomorrow.”

“What a fuss to make over nothing,” said Mary Vance disdainfully as Jem dashed off. She was sitting out with Miller Douglas on a lobster trap which was not only an unromantic but an uncomfortable seat. But Mary and Miller were both supremely happy on it. Miller Douglas was a big, strapping, uncouth lad, who thought Mary Vance’s tongue uncommonly gifted and Mary Vance’s white eyes stars of the first magnitude; and neither of them had the least inkling why Jem Blythe wanted to hoist the lighthouse flag. “What does it matter if there’s going to be a war over there in Europe? I’m sure it doesn’t concern us.”

Walter looked at her and had one of his odd visitations of prophecy.

“Before this war is over,” he said — or something said through his lips — “every man and woman and child in Canada will feel it — you, Mary, will feel it — feel it to your heart’s core. You will weep tears of blood over it. The Piper has come — and he will pipe until every corner of the world has heard his awful and irresistible music. It will be years before the dance of death is over — years, Mary. And in those years millions of hearts will break.”

“Fancy now!” said Mary who always said that when she couldn’t think of anything else to say. She didn’t know what Walter meant but she felt uncomfortable. Walter Blythe was always saying odd things. That old Piper of his — she hadn’t heard anything about him since their playdays in

Rainbow Valley — and now here he was bobbing up again. She didn't like it, and that was the long and short of it.

“Aren't you painting it rather strong, Walter?” asked Harvey Crawford, coming up just then. “This war won't last for years — it'll be over in a month or two. England will just wipe Germany off the map in no time.”

“Do you think a war for which Germany has been preparing for twenty years will be over in a few weeks?” said Walter passionately. “This isn't a paltry struggle in a Balkan corner, Harvey. It is a death grapple. Germany comes to conquer or to die. And do you know what will happen if she conquers? Canada will be a German colony.”

“Well, I guess a few things will happen before that,” said Harvey shrugging his shoulders. “The British navy would have to be licked for one; and for another, Miller here, now, and I, we'd raise a dust, wouldn't we, Miller? No Germans need apply for this old country, eh?”

Harvey ran down the steps laughing.

“I declare, I think all you boys talk the craziest stuff,” said Mary Vance in disgust. She got up and dragged Miller off to the rock-shore. It didn't happen often that they had a chance for a talk together; Mary was determined that this one shouldn't be spoiled by Walter Blythe's silly blather about Pipers and Germans and such like absurd things. They left Walter standing alone on the rock steps, looking out over the beauty of Four Winds with brooding eyes that saw it not.

The best of the evening was over for Rilla, too. Ever since Jack Elliott's announcement, she had sensed that Kenneth was no longer thinking about her. She felt suddenly lonely and unhappy. It was worse than if he had never noticed her at all. Was life like this — something delightful happening and then, just as you were revelling in it, slipping away from you? Rilla told herself pathetically that she felt years older than when she had left home that evening. Perhaps she did — perhaps she was. Who knows? It does not do to laugh at the pangs of youth. They are very terrible because youth has not yet learned that “this, too, will pass away.” Rilla sighed and wished she were home, in bed, crying into her pillow.

“Tired?” said Kenneth, gently but absently — oh, so absently. He really didn’t care a bit whether she were tired or not, she thought.

“Kenneth,” she ventured timidly, “you don’t think this war will matter much to us in Canada, do you?”

“Matter? Of course it will matter to the lucky fellows who will be able to take a hand. I won’t — thanks to this confounded ankle. Rotten luck, I call it.”

“I don’t see why we should fight England’s battles,” cried Rilla. “She’s quite able to fight them herself.”

“That isn’t the point. We are part of the British Empire. It’s a family affair. We’ve got to stand by each other. The worst of it is, it will be over before I can be of any use.”

“Do you mean that you would really volunteer to go if it wasn’t for your ankle?” asked Rilla incredulously.

“Sure I would. You see they’ll go by thousands. Jem’ll be off, I’ll bet a cent — Walter won’t be strong enough yet, I suppose. And Jerry Meredith — he’ll go! And I was worrying about being out of football this year!”

Rilla was too startled to say anything. Jem — and Jerry! Nonsense! Why father and Mr. Meredith wouldn’t allow it. They weren’t through college. Oh, why hadn’t Jack Elliott kept his horrid news to himself?

Mark Warren came up and asked her to dance. Rilla went, knowing Kenneth didn’t care whether she went or stayed. An hour ago on the sandshore he had been looking at her as if she were the only being of any importance in the world. And now she was nobody. His thoughts were full of this Great Game which was to be played out on bloodstained fields with empires for stakes — a Game in which womenkind could have no part. Women, thought Rilla miserably, just had to sit and cry at home. But all this was foolishness. Kenneth couldn’t go — he admitted that himself — and Walter couldn’t — thank goodness for that — and Jem and Jerry would have more sense. She wouldn’t worry — she would enjoy herself.

But how awkward Mark Warren was! How he bungled his steps! Why, for mercy's sake, did boys try to dance who didn't know the first thing about dancing; and who had feet as big as boats? There, he had bumped her into somebody! She would never dance with him again!

She danced with others, though the zest was gone out of the performance and she had begun to realize that her slippers hurt her badly. Kenneth seemed to have gone — at least nothing was to be seen of him. Her first party was spoiled, though it had seemed so beautiful at one time. Her head ached — her toes burned. And worse was yet to come. She had gone down with some over-harbour friends to the rock-shore where they all lingered as dance after dance went on above them. It was cool and pleasant and they were tired. Rilla sat silent, taking no part in the gay conversation. She was glad when someone called down that the over-harbour boats were leaving. A laughing scramble up the lighthouse rock followed. A few couples still whirled about in the pavilion but the crowd had thinned out. Rilla looked about her for the Glen group. She could not see one of them. She ran into the lighthouse. Still, no sign of anybody. In dismay she ran to the rock steps, down which the over-harbour guests were hurrying. She could see the boats below — where was Jem's — where was Joe's?

"Why, Rilla Blythe, I thought you'd be gone home long ago," said Mary Vance, who was waving her scarf at a boat skimming up the channel, skippered by Miller Douglas.

"Where are the rest?" gasped Rilla.

"Why, they're gone — Jem went an hour ago — Una had a headache. And the rest went with Joe about fifteen minutes ago. See — they're just going around Birch Point. I didn't go because it's getting rough and I knew I'd be seasick. I don't mind walking home from here. It's only a mile and a half. I s'posed you'd gone. Where were you?"

"Down on the rocks with Jem and Mollie Crawford. Oh, why didn't they look for me?"

"They did — but you couldn't be found. Then they concluded you must have gone in the other boat. Don't worry. You can stay all night with me

and we'll 'phone up to Ingleside where you are."

Rilla realized that there was nothing else to do. Her lips trembled and tears came into her eyes. She blinked savagely — she would not let Mary Vance see her crying. But to be forgotten like this! To think nobody had thought it worth while to make sure where she was — not even Walter. Then she had a sudden dismayed recollection.

"My shoes," she exclaimed. "I left them in the boat."

"Well, I never," said Mary. "You're the most thoughtless kid I ever saw. You'll have to ask Hazel Lewison to lend you a pair of shoes."

"I won't," cried Rilla, who didn't like the said Hazel. "I'll go barefoot first."

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

"Just as you like. Pride must suffer pain. It'll teach you to be more careful. Well, let's hike."

Accordingly they hiked. But to "hike" along a deep-rutted, pebbly lane in frail, silver-hued slippers with high French heels, is not an exhilarating performance. Rilla managed to limp and totter along until they reached the harbour road; but she could go no farther in those detestable slippers. She took them and her dear silk stockings off and started barefoot. That was not pleasant either; her feet were very tender and the pebbles and ruts of the road hurt them. Her blistered heels smarted. But physical pain was almost forgotten in the sting of humiliation. This was a nice predicament! If Kenneth Ford could see her now, limping along like a little girl with a stone bruise! Oh, what a horrid way for her lovely party to end! She just had to cry — it was too terrible. Nobody cared for her — nobody bothered about her at all. Well, if she caught cold from walking home barefoot on a dew-wet road and went into a decline perhaps they would be sorry. She furtively wiped her tears away with her scarf — handkerchiefs seemed to have vanished like shoes! — but she could not help sniffing. Worse and worse!

“You’ve got a cold, I see,” said Mary. “You ought to have known you would, sitting down in the wind on those rocks. Your mother won’t let you go out again in a hurry I can tell you. It’s certainly been something of a party. The Lewisons know how to do things, I’ll say that for them, though Hazel Lewison is no choice of mine. My, how black she looked when she saw you dancing with Ken Ford. And so did that little hussy of an Ethel Reese. What a flirt he is!”

“I don’t think he’s a flirt,” said Rilla as defiantly as two desperate sniffs would let her.

“You’ll know more about men when you’re as old as I am,” said Mary patronizingly. “Mind you, it doesn’t do to believe all they tell you. Don’t let Ken Ford think that all he has to do to get you on a string is to drop his handkerchief. Have more spirit than that, child.”

To be thus hectored and patronized by Mary Vance was unendurable! And it was unendurable to walk on stony roads with blistered heels and bare feet! And it was unendurable to be crying and have no handkerchief and not to be able to stop crying!

“I’m not thinking” — sniff—”about Kenneth” — sniff—”Ford” — two sniffs—”at all,” cried tortured Rilla.

“There’s no need to fly off the handle, child. You ought to be willing to take advice from older people. I saw how you slipped over to the sands with Ken and stayed there ever so long with him. Your mother wouldn’t like it if she knew.”

“I’ll tell my mother all about it — and Miss Oliver — and Walter,” Rilla gasped between sniffs. “You sat for hours with Miller Douglas on that lobster trap, Mary Vance! What would Mrs. Elliott say to that if she knew?”

“Oh, I’m not going to quarrel with you,” said Mary, suddenly retreating to high and lofty ground. “All I say is, you should wait until you’re grownup before you do things like that.”

Rilla gave up trying to hide the fact that she was crying. Everything was spoiled — even that beautiful, dreamy, romantic, moonlit hour with Kenneth on the sands was vulgarized and cheapened. She loathed Mary Vance.

“Why, whatever’s wrong?” cried mystified Mary. “What are you crying for?”

“My feet — hurt so—” sobbed Rilla clinging to the last shred of her pride. It was less humiliating to admit crying because of your feet than because — because somebody had been amusing himself with you, and your friends had forgotten you, and other people patronized you.

“I daresay they do,” said Mary, not unkindly. “Never mind. I know where there’s a pot of goose-grease in Cornelia’s tidy pantry and it beats all the fancy cold creams in the world. I’ll put some on your heels before you go to bed.”

Goose-grease on your heels! So this was what your first party and your first beau and your first moonlit romance ended in!

Rilla gave over crying in sheer disgust at the futility of tears and went to sleep in Mary Vance’s bed in the calm of despair. Outside, the dawn came greyly in on wings of storm; Captain Josiah, true to his word, ran up the Union Jack at the Four Winds Light and it streamed on the fierce wind against the clouded sky like a gallant unquenchable beacon.

CHAPTER V

“THE SOUND OF A GOING”

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Rilla ran down through the sunlit glory of the maple grove behind Ingleside, to her favourite nook in Rainbow Valley. She sat down on a green-mossed stone among the fern, propped her chin on her hands and stared unseeingly at the dazzling blue sky of the August afternoon — so blue, so peaceful, so unchanged, just as it had arched over the valley in the mellow days of late summer ever since she could remember.

She wanted to be alone — to think things out — to adjust herself, if it were possible, to the new world into which she seemed to have been transplanted with a suddenness and completeness that left her half bewildered as to her own identity. Was she — could she be — the same Rilla Blythe who had danced at Four Winds Light six days ago — only six days ago? It seemed to Rilla that she had lived as much in those six days as in all her previous life — and if it be true that we should count time by heart-throbs she had. That evening, with its hopes and fears and triumphs and humiliations, seemed like ancient history now. Could she really ever have cried just because she had been forgotten and had to walk home with Mary Vance? Ah, thought Rilla sadly, how trivial and absurd such a cause of tears now appeared to her. She could cry now with a right good will — but she would not — she must not. What was it mother had said, looking, with her white lips and stricken eyes, as Rilla had never seen her mother look before,

“When our women fail in courage,
Shall our men be fearless still?”

Yes, that was it. She must be brave — like mother — and Nan — and Faith — Faith, who had cried with flashing eyes, “Oh, if I were only a man, to go too!” Only, when her eyes ached and her throat burned like this she had

to hide herself in Rainbow Valley for a little, just to think things out and remember that she wasn't a child any longer — she was grownup and women had to face things like this. But it was — nice — to get away alone now and then, where nobody could see her and where she needn't feel that people thought her a little coward if some tears came in spite of her.

How sweet and woodsey the ferns smelled! How softly the great feathery boughs of the firs waved and murmured over her! How elfinly rang the bells of the "Tree Lovers" — just a tinkle now and then as the breeze swept by! How purple and elusive the haze where incense was being offered on many an altar of the hills! How the maple leaves whitened in the wind until the grove seemed covered with pale silvery blossoms! Everything was just the same as she had seen it hundreds of times; and yet the whole face of the world seemed changed.

"How wicked I was to wish that something dramatic would happen!" she thought. "Oh, if we could only have those dear, monotonous, pleasant days back again! I would never, never grumble about them again."

Rilla's world had tumbled to pieces the very day after the party. As they lingered around the dinner table at Ingleside, talking of the war, the telephone had rung. It was a long-distance call from Charlottetown for Jem. When he had finished talking he hung up the receiver and turned around, with a flushed face and glowing eyes. Before he had said a word his mother and Nan and Di had turned pale. As for Rilla, for the first time in her life she felt that every one must hear her heart beating and that something had clutched at her throat.

"They are calling for volunteers in town, father," said Jem. "Scores have joined up already. I'm going in tonight to enlist."

"Oh — Little Jem," cried Mrs. Blythe brokenly. She had not called him that for many years — not since the day he had rebelled against it. "Oh — no — no — Little Jem."

"I must, mother. I'm right — am I not, father?" said Jem.

Dr. Blythe had risen. He was very pale, too, and his voice was husky. But he did not hesitate.

“Yes, Jem, yes — if you feel that way, yes—”

Mrs. Blythe covered her face. Walter stared moodily at his plate. Nan and Di clasped each others’ hands. Shirley tried to look unconcerned. Susan sat as if paralysed, her piece of pie half-eaten on her plate. Susan never did finish that piece of pie — a fact which bore eloquent testimony to the upheaval in her inner woman for Susan considered it a cardinal offence against civilized society to begin to eat anything and not finish it. That was wilful waste, hence to the contrary notwithstanding.

Jem turned to the phone again. “I must ring the manse. Jerry will want to go, too.”

At this Nan had cried out “Oh!” as if a knife had been thrust into her, and rushed from the room. Di followed her. Rilla turned to Walter for comfort but Walter was lost to her in some reverie she could not share.

“All right,” Jem was saying, as coolly as if he were arranging the details of a picnic. “I thought you would — yes, tonight — the seven o’clock — meet me at the station. So long.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “I wish you would wake me up. Am I dreaming — or am I awake? Does that blessed boy realize what he is saying? Does he mean that he is going to enlist as a soldier? You do not mean to tell me that they want children like him! It is an outrage. Surely you and the doctor will not permit it.”

“We can’t stop him,” said Mrs. Blythe, chokingly. “Oh, Gilbert!”

Dr. Blythe came up behind his wife and took her hand gently, looking down into the sweet grey eyes that he had only once before seen filled with such imploring anguish as now. They both thought of that other time — the day years ago in the House of Dreams when little Joyce had died.

“Would you have him stay, Anne — when the others are going — when he thinks it his duty — would you have him so selfish and small-souled?”

“No — no! But — oh — our firstborn son — he’s only a lad — Gilbert — I’ll try to be brave after a while — just now I can’t. It’s all come so suddenly. Give me time.”

The doctor and his wife went out of the room. Jem had gone — Walter had gone — Shirley got up to go. Rilla and Susan remained staring at each other across the deserted table. Rilla had not yet cried — she was too stunned for tears. Then she saw that Susan was crying — Susan, whom she had never seen shed a tear before.

“Oh, Susan, will he really go?” she asked.

“It — it — it is just ridiculous, that is what it is,” said Susan.

She wiped away her tears, gulped resolutely and got up.

“I am going to wash the dishes. That has to be done, even if everybody has gone crazy. There now, dearie, do not you cry. Jem will go, most likely — but the war will be over long before he gets anywhere near it. Let us take a brace and not worry your poor mother.”

“In the Enterprise today it was reported that Lord Kitchener says the war will last three years,” said Rilla dubiously.

“I am not acquainted with Lord Kitchener,” said Susan, composedly, “but I dare say he makes mistakes as often as other people. Your father says it will be over in a few months and I have as much faith in his opinion as I have in Lord Anybody’s. So just let us be calm and trust in the Almighty and get this place tidied up. I am done with crying which is a waste of time and discourages everybody.”

Jem and Jerry went to Charlottetown that night and two days later they came back in khaki. The Glen hummed with excitement over it. Life at Ingleside had suddenly become a tense, strained, thrilling thing. Mrs. Blythe and Nan were brave and smiling and wonderful. Already Mrs.

Blythe and Miss Cornelia were organizing a Red Cross. The doctor and Mr. Meredith were rounding up the men for a Patriotic Society. Rilla, after the first shock, reacted to the romance of it all, in spite of her heartache. Jem certainly looked magnificent in his uniform. It was splendid to think of the lads of Canada answering so speedily and fearlessly and uncalculatingly to the call of their country. Rilla carried her head high among the girls whose brothers had not so responded. In her diary she wrote:

“He goes to do what I had done
Had Douglas’s daughter been his son,”

and was sure she meant it. If she were a boy of course she would go, too! She hadn’t the least doubt of that.

She wondered if it was very dreadful of her to feel glad that Walter hadn’t got strong as soon as they had wished after the fever.

“I couldn’t bear to have Walter go,” she wrote. “I love Jem ever so much but Walter means more to me than anyone in the world and I would die if he had to go. He seems so changed these days. He hardly ever talks to me. I suppose he wants to go, too, and feels badly because he can’t. He doesn’t go about with Jem and Jerry at all. I shall never forget Susan’s face when Jem came home in his khaki. It worked and twisted as if she were going to cry, but all she said was, ‘You look almost like a man in that, Jem.’ Jem laughed. He never minds because Susan thinks him just a child still. Everybody seems busy but me. I wish there was something I could do but there doesn’t seem to be anything. Mother and Nan and Di are busy all the time and I just wander about like a lonely ghost. What hurts me terribly, though, is that mother’s smiles, and Nan’s, just seem put on from the outside. Mother’s eyes never laugh now. It makes me feel that I shouldn’t laugh either — that it’s wicked to feel laughy. And it’s so hard for me to keep from laughing, even if Jem is going to be a soldier. But when I laugh I don’t enjoy it either, as I used to do. There’s something behind it all that keeps hurting me — especially when I wake up in the night. Then I cry because I am afraid that Kitchener of Khartoum is right and the war will last for years and Jem may be — but no, I won’t write it. It would make me feel as if it were really going to happen. The other day Nan said,

‘Nothing can ever be quite the same for any of us again.’ It made me feel rebellious. Why shouldn’t things be the same again — when everything is over and Jem and Jerry are back? We’ll all be happy and jolly again and these days will seem just like a bad dream.

“The coming of the mail is the most exciting event of every day now. Father just snatches the paper — I never saw father snatch before — and the rest of us crowd round and look at the headlines over his shoulder. Susan vows she does not and will not believe a word the papers say but she always comes to the kitchen door, and listens and then goes back, shaking her head. She is terribly indignant all the time, but she cooks up all the things Jem likes especially, and she did not make a single bit of fuss when she found Monday asleep on the spare-room bed yesterday right on top of Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s apple-leaf spread. ‘The Almighty only knows where your master will be having to sleep before long, you poor dumb beast,’ she said as she put him quite gently out. But she never relents towards Doc. She says the minute he saw Jem in khaki he turned into Mr. Hyde then and there and she thinks that ought to be proof enough of what he really is. Susan is funny, but she is an old dear. Shirley says she is one half angel and the other half good cook. But then Shirley is the only one of us she never scolds.

“Faith Meredith is wonderful. I think she and Jem are really engaged now. She goes about with a shining light in her eyes, but her smiles are a little stiff and starched, just like mother’s. I wonder if I could be as brave as she is if I had a lover and he was going to the war. It is bad enough when it is your brother. Bruce Meredith cried all night, Mrs. Meredith says, when he heard Jem and Jerry were going. And he wanted to know if the ‘K of K.’ his father talked about was the King of Kings. He is the dearest kiddy. I just love him — though I don’t really care much for children. I don’t like babies one bit — though when I say so people look at me as if I had said something perfectly shocking. Well, I don’t, and I’ve got to be honest about it. I don’t mind looking at a nice clean baby if somebody else holds it — but I wouldn’t touch it for anything and I don’t feel a single real spark of interest in it. Gertrude Oliver says she just feels the same. (She is the most honest person I know. She never pretends anything.) She says babies bore her until they are old enough to talk and then she likes them —

but still a good ways off. Mother and Nan and Di all adore babies and seem to think I'm unnatural because I don't.

"I haven't seen Kenneth since the night of the party. He was here one evening after Jem came back but I happened to be away. I don't think he mentioned me at all — at least nobody told me he did and I was determined I wouldn't ask — but I don't care in the least. All that matters absolutely nothing to me now. The only thing that does matter is that Jem has volunteered for active service and will be going to Valcartier in a few more days — my big, splendid brother Jem. Oh, I'm so proud of him!

"I suppose Kenneth would enlist too if it weren't for his ankle. I think that is quite providential. He is his mother's only son and how dreadful she would feel if he went. Only sons should never think of going!"

Walter came wandering through the valley as Rilla sat there, with his head bent and his hands clasped behind him. When he saw Rilla he turned abruptly away; then as abruptly he turned and came back to her.

"Rilla-my-Rilla, what are you thinking of?"

"Everything is so changed, Walter," said Rilla wistfully. "Even you — you're changed. A week ago we were all so happy — and — and — now I just can't find myself at all. I'm lost."

Walter sat down on a neighbouring stone and took Rilla's little appealing hand.

"I'm afraid our old world has come to an end, Rilla. We've got to face that fact."

"It's so terrible to think of Jem," pleaded Rilla. "Sometimes I forget for a little while what it really means and feel excited and proud — and then it comes over me again like a cold wind."

"I envy Jem!" said Walter moodily.

"Envy Jem! Oh, Walter you — you don't want to go too."

“No,” said Walter, gazing straight before him down the emerald vistas of the valley, “no, I don’t want to go. That’s just the trouble. Rilla, I’m afraid to go. I’m a coward.”

“You’re not!” Rilla burst out angrily. “Why, anybody would be afraid to go. You might be — why, you might be killed.”

“I wouldn’t mind that if it didn’t hurt,” muttered Walter. “I don’t think I’m afraid of death itself — it’s of the pain that might come before death — it wouldn’t be so bad to die and have it over — but to keep on dying! Rilla, I’ve always been afraid of pain — you know that. I can’t help it — I shudder when I think of the possibility of being mangled or — or blinded. Rilla, I cannot face that thought. To be blind — never to see the beauty of the world again — moonlight on Four Winds — the stars twinkling through the fir-trees — mist on the gulf. I ought to go — I ought to want to go — but I don’t — I hate the thought of it — I’m ashamed — ashamed.”

“But, Walter, you couldn’t go anyhow,” said Rilla piteously. She was sick with a new terror that Walter would go after all. “You’re not strong enough.”

“I am. I’ve felt as fit as ever I did this last month. I’d pass any examination — I know it. Everybody thinks I’m not strong yet — and I’m skulking behind that belief. I — I should have been a girl,” Walter concluded in a burst of passionate bitterness.

“Even if you were strong enough, you oughtn’t to go,” sobbed Rilla. “What would mother do? She’s breaking her heart over Jem. It would kill her to see you both go.”

“Oh, I’m not going — don’t worry. I tell you I’m afraid to go — afraid. I don’t mince the matter to myself. It’s a relief to own up even to you, Rilla. I wouldn’t confess it to anybody else — Nan and Di would despise me. But I hate the whole thing — the horror, the pain, the ugliness. War isn’t a khaki uniform or a drill parade — everything I’ve read in old histories haunts me. I lie awake at night and see things that have happened — see the blood and filth and misery of it all. And a bayonet charge! If I could face the other things I could never face that. It turns me sick to think of it

— sicker even to think of giving it than receiving it — to think of thrusting a bayonet through another man.” Walter writhed and shuddered. “I think of these things all the time — and it doesn’t seem to me that Jem and Jerry ever think of them. They laugh and talk about ‘potting Huns’! But it maddens me to see them in the khaki. And they think I’m grumpy because I’m not fit to go.”

Walter laughed bitterly. “It is not a nice thing to feel yourself a coward.” But Rilla got her arms about him and cuddled her head on his shoulder. She was so glad he didn’t want to go — for just one minute she had been horribly frightened. And it was so nice to have Walter confiding his troubles to her — to her, not Di. She didn’t feel so lonely and superfluous any longer.

“Don’t you despise me, Rilla-my-Rilla?” asked Walter wistfully. Somehow, it hurt him to think Rilla might despise him — hurt him as much as if it had been Di. He realized suddenly how very fond he was of this adoring kid sister with her appealing eyes and troubled, girlish face.

“No, I don’t. Why, Walter, hundreds of people feel just as you do. You know what that verse of Shakespeare in the old Fifth Reader says—’the brave man is not he who feels no fear.’”

“No — but it is ‘he whose noble soul its fear subdues.’ I don’t do that. We can’t gloss it over, Rilla. I’m a coward.”

“You’re not. Think of how you fought Dan Reese long ago.”

“One spurt of courage isn’t enough for a lifetime.”

“Walter, one time I heard father say that the trouble with you was a sensitive nature and a vivid imagination. You feel things before they really come — feel them all alone when there isn’t anything to help you bear them — to take away from them. It isn’t anything to be ashamed of. When you and Jem got your hands burned when the grass was fired on the sandhills two years ago Jem made twice the fuss over the pain that you did. As for this horrid old war, there’ll be plenty to go without you. It won’t last long.”

“I wish I could believe it. Well, it’s supertime, Rilla. You’d better run. I don’t want anything.”

“Neither do I. I couldn’t eat a mouthful. Let me stay here with you, Walter. It’s such a comfort to talk things over with someone. The rest all think that I’m too much of a baby to understand.”

So they two sat there in the old valley until the evening star shone through a pale-grey, gauzy cloud over the maple grove, and a fragrant dewy darkness filled their little sylvan dell. It was one of the evenings Rilla was to treasure in remembrance all her life — the first one on which Walter had ever talked to her as if she were a woman and not a child. They comforted and strengthened each other. Walter felt, for the time being at least, that it was not such a despicable thing after all to dread the horror of war; and Rilla was glad to be made the confidante of his struggles — to sympathize with and encourage him. She was of importance to somebody.

When they went back to Ingleside they found callers sitting on the veranda. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith had come over from the manse, and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Douglas had come up from the farm. Cousin Sophia was there also, sitting with Susan in the shadowy background. Mrs. Blythe and Nan and Di were away, but Dr. Blythe was home and so was Dr. Jekyll, sitting in golden majesty on the top step. And of course they were all talking of the war, except Dr. Jekyll who kept his own counsel and looked contempt as only a cat can. When two people foregathered in those days they talked of the war; and old Highland Sandy of the Harbour Head talked of it when he was alone and hurled anathemas at the Kaiser across all the acres of his farm. Walter slipped away, not caring to see or be seen, but Rilla sat down on the steps, where the garden mint was dewy and pungent. It was a very calm evening with a dim, golden afterlight irradiating the glen. She felt happier than at any time in the dreadful week that had passed. She was no longer haunted by the fear that Walter would go.

“I’d go myself if I was twenty years younger,” Norman Douglas was shouting. Norman always shouted when he was excited. “I’d show the Kaiser a thing or two! Did I ever say there wasn’t a hell? Of course there’s a hell — dozens of hells — hundreds of hells — where the Kaiser and all his brood are bound for.”

“I knew this war was coming,” said Mrs. Norman triumphantly. “I saw it coming right along. I could have told all those stupid Englishmen what was ahead of them. I told you, John Meredith, years ago what the Kaiser was up to but you wouldn’t believe it. You said he would never plunge the world in war. Who was right about the Kaiser, John? You — or I? Tell me that.”

“You were, I admit,” said Mr. Meredith.

“It’s too late to admit it now,” said Mrs. Norman, shaking her head, as if to intimate that if John Meredith had admitted it sooner there might have been no war.

“Thank God, England’s navy is ready,” said the doctor.

“Amen to that,” nodded Mrs. Norman. “Bat-blind as most of them were somebody had foresight enough to see to that.”

“Maybe England’ll manage not to get into trouble over it,” said Cousin Sophia plaintively. “I dunno. But I’m much afraid.”

“One would suppose that England was in trouble over it already, up to her neck, Sophia Crawford,” said Susan. “But your ways of thinking are beyond me and always were. It is my opinion that the British Navy will settle Germany in a jiffy and that we are all getting worked up over nothing.”

Susan spat out the words as if she wanted to convince herself more than anybody else. She had her little store of homely philosophies to guide her through life, but she had nothing to buckler her against the thunderbolts of the week that had just passed. What had an honest, hardworking, Presbyterian old maid of Glen St. Mary to do with a war thousands of miles away? Susan felt that it was indecent that she should have to be disturbed by it.

“The British army will settle Germany,” shouted Norman. “Just wait till it gets into line and the Kaiser will find that real war is a different thing from parading round Berlin with your moustaches cocked up.”

“Britain hasn’t got an army,” said Mrs. Norman emphatically. “You needn’t glare at me, Norman. Glaring won’t make soldiers out of timothy stalks. A hundred thousand men will just be a mouthful for Germany’s millions.”

“There’ll be some tough chewing in the mouthful, I reckon,” persisted Norman valiantly. “Germany’ll break her teeth on it. Don’t you tell me one Britisher isn’t a match for ten foreigners. I could polish off a dozen of ‘em myself with both hands tied behind my back!”

“I am told,” said Susan, “that old Mr. Pryor does not believe in this war. I am told that he says England went into it just because she was jealous of Germany and that she did not really care in the least what happened to Belgium.”

“I believe he’s been talking some such rot,” said Norman. “I haven’t heard him. When I do, Whiskers-on-the-moon won’t know what happened to him. That precious relative of mine, Kitty Alec, holds forth to the same effect, I understand. Not before me, though — somehow, folks don’t indulge in that kind of conversation in my presence. Lord love you, they’ve a kind of presentiment, so to speak, that it wouldn’t be healthy for their complaint.”

“I am much afraid that this war has been sent as a punishment for our sins,” said Cousin Sophia, unclasping her pale hands from her lap and reclasping them solemnly over her stomach. “‘The world is very evil — the times are waxing late.’”

“Parson here’s got something of the same idea,” chuckled Norman. “Haven’t you, Parson? That’s why you preached t’other night on the text ‘Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.’ I didn’t agree with you — wanted to get up in the pew and shout out that there wasn’t a word of sense in what you were saying, but Ellen, here, she held me down. I never have any fun sassing parsons since I got married.”

“Without shedding of blood there is no anything,” said Mr. Meredith, in the gentle dreamy way which had an unexpected trick of convincing his hearers. “Everything, it seems to me, has to be purchased by self-sacrifice.

Our race has marked every step of its painful ascent with blood. And now torrents of it must flow again. No, Mrs. Crawford, I don't think the war has been sent as a punishment for sin. I think it is the price humanity must pay for some blessing — some advance great enough to be worth the price — which we may not live to see but which our children's children will inherit."

"If Jerry is killed will you feel so fine about it?" demanded Norman, who had been saying things like that all his life and never could be made to see any reason why he shouldn't. "Now, never mind kicking me in the shins, Ellen. I want to see if Parson meant what he said or if it was just a pulpit frill."

Mr. Meredith's face quivered. He had had a terrible hour alone in his study on the night Jem and Jerry had gone to town. But he answered quietly.

"Whatever I felt, it could not alter my belief — my assurance that a country whose sons are ready to lay down their lives in her defence will win a new vision because of their sacrifice."

"You do mean it, Parson. I can always tell when people mean what they say. It's a gift that was born in me. Makes me a terror to most parsons, that! But I've never caught you yet saying anything you didn't mean. I'm always hoping I will — that's what reconciles me to going to church. It'd be such a comfort to me — such a weapon to batter Ellen here with when she tries to civilize me. Well, I'm off over the road to see Ab. Crawford a minute. The gods be good to you all."

"The old pagan!" muttered Susan, as Norman strode away. She did not care if Ellen Douglas did hear her. Susan could never understand why fire did not descend from heaven upon Norman Douglas when he insulted ministers the way he did. But the astonishing thing was Mr. Meredith seemed really to like his brother-in-law.

Rilla wished they would talk of something besides war. She had heard nothing else for a week and she was really a little tired of it. Now that she was relieved from her haunting fear that Walter would want to go it made

her quite impatient. But she supposed — with a sigh — that there would be three or four months of it yet.

CHAPTER V I

SUSAN, RILLA, AND DOG MONDAY MAKE A RESOLUTION

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The big livingroom at Ingleside was snowed over with drifts of white cotton. Word had come from Red Cross headquarters that sheets and bandages would be required. Nan and Di and Rilla were hard at work. Mrs. Blythe and Susan were upstairs in the boys' room, engaged in a more personal task. With dry, anguished eyes they were packing up Jem's belongings. He must leave for Valcartier the next morning. They had been expecting the word but it was none the less dreadful when it came.

Rilla was basting the hem of a sheet for the first time in her life. When the word had come that Jem must go she had her cry out among the pines in Rainbow Valley and then she had gone to her mother.

"Mother, I want to do something. I'm only a girl — I can't do anything to win the war — but I must do something to help at home."

"The cotton has come up for the sheets," said Mrs. Blythe. "You can help Nan and Di make them up. And Rilla, don't you think you could organize a Junior Red Cross among the young girls? I think they would like it better and do better work by themselves than if mixed up with the older people."

"But, mother — I've never done anything like that."

"We will all have to do a great many things in the months ahead of us that we have never done before, Rilla."

"Well" — Rilla took the plunge—"I'll try, mother — if you'll tell me how to begin. I have been thinking it all over and I have decided that I must be as brave and heroic and unselfish as I can possibly be."

Mrs. Blythe did not smile at Rilla's italics. Perhaps she did not feel like smiling or perhaps she detected a real grain of serious purpose behind Rilla's romantic pose. So here was Rilla hemming sheets and organizing a Junior Red Cross in her thoughts as she hemmed; moreover, she was enjoying it — the organizing that is, not the hemming. It was interesting and Rilla discovered a certain aptitude in herself for it that surprised her. Who would be president? Not she. The older girls would not like that. Irene Howard? No, somehow Irene was not quite as popular as she deserved to be. Marjorie Drew? No, Marjorie hadn't enough backbone. She was too prone to agree with the last speaker. Betty Mead — calm, capable, tactful Betty — the very one! And Una Meredith for treasurer; and, if they were very insistent, they might make her, Rilla, secretary. As for the various committees, they must be chosen after the Juniors were organized, but Rilla knew just who should be put on which. They would meet around — and there must be no eats — Rilla knew she would have a pitched battle with Olive Kirk over that — and everything should be strictly businesslike and constitutional. Her minute book should be covered in white with a Red Cross on the cover — and wouldn't it be nice to have some kind of uniform which they could all wear at the concerts they would have to get up to raise money — something simple but smart?

“You have basted the top hem of that sheet on one side and the bottom hem on the other,” said Di.

Rilla picked out her stitches and reflected that she hated sewing. Running the Junior Reds would be much more interesting.

Mrs. Blythe was saying upstairs, “Susan, do you remember that first day Jem lifted up his little arms to me and called me ‘mo’er’ — the very first word he ever tried to say?”

“You could not mention anything about that blessed baby that I do not and will not remember till my dying day,” said Susan drearily.

“Susan, I keep thinking today of once when he cried for me in the night. He was just a few months old. Gilbert didn't want me to go to him — he said the child was well and warm and that it would be fostering bad habits in him. But I went — and took him up — I can feel that tight clinging of

his little arms round my neck yet. Susan, if I hadn't gone that night, twenty-one years ago, and taken my baby up when he cried for me I couldn't face tomorrow morning."

"I do not know how we are going to face it anyhow, Mrs. Dr. dear. But do not tell me that it will be the final farewell. He will be back on leave before he goes overseas, will he not?"

"We hope so but we are not very sure. I am making up my mind that he will not, so that there will be no disappointment to bear. Susan, I am determined that I will send my boy off tomorrow with a smile. He shall not carry away with him the remembrance of a weak mother who had not the courage to send when he had the courage to go. I hope none of us will cry."

"I am not going to cry, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that you may tie to, but whether I shall manage to smile or not will be as Providence ordains and as the pit of my stomach feels. Have you room there for this fruitcake? And the shortbread? And the mince-pie? That blessed boy shall not starve, whether they have anything to eat in that Quebec place or not. Everything seems to be changing all at once, does it not? Even the old cat at the manse has passed away. He breathed his last at a quarter to ten last night and Bruce is quite heartbroken, they tell me."

"It's time that pussy went where good cats go. He must be at least fifteen years old. He has seemed so lonely since Aunt Martha died."

"I should not have lamented, Mrs. Dr. dear, if that Hyde-beast had died also. He has been Mr. Hyde most of the time since Jem came home in khaki, and that has a meaning I will maintain. I do not know what Monday will do when Jem is gone. The creature just goes about with a human look in his eyes that takes all the good out of me when I see it. Ellen West used to be always railing at the Kaiser and we thought her crazy, but now I see that there was a method in her madness. This tray is packed, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I will go down and put in my best licks preparing supper. I wish I knew when I would cook another supper for Jem but such things are hidden from our eyes."

Jem Blythe and Jerry Meredith left next morning. It was a dull day, threatening rain, and the clouds lay in heavy grey rolls over the sky; but almost everybody in the Glen and Four Winds and Harbour Head and Upper Glen and over-harbour — except Whiskers-on-the-moon — was there to see them off. The Blythe family and the Meredith family were all smiling. Even Susan, as Providence did ordain, wore a smile, though the effect was somewhat more painful than tears would have been. Faith and Nan were very pale and very gallant. Rilla thought she would get on very well if something in her throat didn't choke her, and if her lips didn't take such spells of trembling. Dog Monday was there, too. Jem had tried to say goodbye to him at Ingleside but Monday implored so eloquently that Jem relented and let him go to the station. He kept close to Jem's legs and watched every movement of his beloved master.

"I can't bear that dog's eyes," said Mrs. Meredith.

"The beast has more sense than most humans," said Mary Vance. "Well, did we any of us ever think we'd live to see this day? I bawled all night to think of Jem and Jerry going like this. I think they're plumb deranged. Miller got a maggot in his head about going but I soon talked him out of it — likewise his aunt said a few touching things. For once in our lives Kitty Alec and I agree. It's a miracle that isn't likely to happen again. There's Ken, Rilla."

Rilla knew Kenneth was there. She had been acutely conscious of it from the moment he had sprung from Leo West's buggy. Now he came up to her smiling.

"Doing the brave-smiling-sister-stunt, I see. What a crowd for the Glen to muster! Well, I'm off home in a few days myself."

A queer little wind of desolation that even Jem's going had not caused blew over Rilla's spirit.

"Why? You have another month of vacation."

"Yes — but I can't hang around Four Winds and enjoy myself when the world's on fire like this. It's me for little old Toronto where I'll find some

way of helping in spite of this bally ankle. I'm not looking at Jem and Jerry — makes me too sick with envy. You girls are great — no crying, no grim endurance. The boys'll go off with a good taste in their mouths. I hope Persis and mother will be as game when my turn comes."

"Oh, Kenneth — the war will be over before your turn cometh."

There! She had lisped again. Another great moment of life spoiled! Well, it was her fate. And anyhow, nothing mattered. Kenneth was off already — he was talking to Ethel Reese, who was dressed, at seven in the morning, in the gown she had worn to the dance, and was crying. What on earth had Ethel to cry about? None of the Reeses were in khaki. Rilla wanted to cry, too — but she would not. What was that horrid old Mrs. Drew saying to mother, in that melancholy whine of hers? "I don't know how you can stand this, Mrs. Blythe. I couldn't if it was my pore boy." And mother — oh, mother could always be depended on! How her grey eyes flashed in her pale face. "It might have been worse, Mrs. Drew. I might have had to urge him to go." Mrs. Drew did not understand but Rilla did. She flung up her head. Her brother did not have to be urged to go.

Rilla found herself standing alone and listening to disconnected scraps of talk as people walked up and down past her.

"I told Mark to wait and see if they asked for a second lot of men. If they did I'd let him go — but they won't," said Mrs. Palmer Burr.

"I think I'll have it made with a crush girdle of velvet," said Bessie Clow.

"I'm frightened to look at my husband's face for fear I'll see in it that he wants to go too," said a little over-harbour bride.

"I'm scared stiff," said whimsical Mrs. Jim Howard. "I'm scared Jim will enlist — and I'm scared he won't."

"The war will be over by Christmas," said Joe Vickers.

"Let them European nations fight it out between them," said Abner Reese.

“When he was a boy I gave him many a good trouncing,” shouted Norman Douglas, who seemed to be referring to some one high in military circles in Charlottetown. “Yes, sir, I walloped him well, big gun as he is now.”

“The existence of the British Empire is at stake,” said the Methodist minister.

“There’s certainly something about uniforms,” sighed Irene Howard.

“It’s a commercial war when all is said and done and not worth one drop of good Canadian blood,” said a stranger from the shore hotel.

“The Blythe family are taking it easy,” said Kate Drew.

“Them young fools are just going for adventure,” growled Nathan Crawford.

“I have absolute confidence in Kitchener,” said the over-harbour doctor.

In these ten minutes Rilla passed through a dizzying succession of anger, laughter, contempt, depression and inspiration. Oh, people were — funny! How little they understood. “Taking it easy,” indeed — when even Susan hadn’t slept a wink all night! Kate Drew always was a minx.

Rilla felt as if she were in some fantastic nightmare. Were these the people who, three weeks ago, were talking of crops and prices and local gossip?

There — the train was coming — mother was holding Jem’s hand — Dog Monday was licking it — everybody was saying goodbye — the train was in! Jem kissed Faith before everybody — old Mrs. Drew whooped hysterically — the men, led by Kenneth, cheered — Rilla felt Jem seize her hand — “Goodbye, Spider” — somebody kissed her cheek — she believed it was Jerry but never was sure — they were off — the train was pulling out — Jem and Jerry were waving to everybody — everybody was waving back — mother and Nan were smiling still, but as if they had just forgotten to take the smile off — Monday was howling dismally and being forcibly restrained by the Methodist minister from tearing after the train

— Susan was waving her best bonnet and hurraing like a man — had she gone crazy? — the train rounded a curve. They had gone.

Rilla came to herself with a gasp. There was a sudden quiet. Nothing to do now but to go home — and wait. The doctor and Mrs. Blythe walked off together — so did Nan and Faith — so did John Meredith and Rosemary. Walter and Una and Shirley and Di and Carl and Rilla went in a group. Susan had put her bonnet back on her head, hindside foremost, and stalked grimly off alone. Nobody missed Dog Monday at first. When they did Shirley went back for him. He found Dog Monday curled up in one of the shipping-sheds near the station and tried to coax him home. Dog Monday would not move. He wagged his tail to show he had no hard feelings but no blandishments availed to budge him.

“Guess Monday has made up his mind to wait there till Jem comes back,” said Shirley, trying to laugh as he rejoined the rest. This was exactly what Dog Monday had done. His dear master had gone — he, Monday, had been deliberately and of malice aforethought prevented from going with him by a demon disguised in the garb of a Methodist minister. Wherefore, he, Monday, would wait there until the smoking, snorting monster, which had carried his hero off, carried him back.

Ay, wait there, little faithful dog with the soft, wistful, puzzled eyes. But it will be many a long bitter day before your boyish comrade comes back to you.

The doctor was away on a case that night and Susan stalked into Mrs. Blythe’s room on her way to bed to see if her adored Mrs. Dr. dear were “comfortable and composed.” She paused solemnly at the foot of the bed and solemnly declared,

“Mrs. Dr. dear, I have made up my mind to be a heroine.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear” found herself violently inclined to laugh — which was manifestly unfair, since she had not laughed when Rilla had announced a similar heroic determination. To be sure, Rilla was a slim, white-robed thing, with a flowerlike face and starry young eyes aglow with feeling; whereas Susan was arrayed in a grey flannel nightgown of strait simplicity,

and had a strip of red woollen worsted tied around her grey hair as a charm against neuralgia. But that should not make any vital difference. Was it not the spirit that counted? Yet Mrs. Blythe was hard put to it not to laugh.

“I am not,” proceeded Susan firmly, “going to lament or whine or question the wisdom of the Almighty any more as I have been doing lately. Whining and shirking and blaming Providence do not get us anywhere. We have just got to grapple with whatever we have to do whether it is weeding the onion patch, or running the Government. I shall grapple. Those blessed boys have gone to war; and we women, Mrs. Dr. dear, must tarry by the stuff and keep a stiff upper lip.”

CHAPTER VI I

A WAR-BABY AND A SOUP TUREEN

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“Liege and Namur — and now Brussels!” The doctor shook his head. “I don’t like it — I don’t like it.”

“Do not you lose heart, Dr. dear; they were just defended by foreigners,” said Susan superbly. “Wait you till the Germans come against the British; there will be a very different story to tell and that you may tie to.”

The doctor shook his head again, but a little less gravely; perhaps they all shared subconsciously in Susan’s belief that “the thin grey line” was unbreakable, even by the victorious rush of Germany’s ready millions. At any rate, when the terrible day came — the first of many terrible days — with the news that the British army was driven back they stared at each other in blank dismay.

“It — it can’t be true,” gasped Nan, taking a brief refuge in temporary incredulity.

“I felt that there was to be bad news today,” said Susan, “for that cat-creature turned into Mr. Hyde this morning without rhyme or reason for it, and that was no good omen.”

““A broken, a beaten, but not a demoralized, army,”” muttered the doctor, from a London dispatch. “Can it be England’s army of which such a thing is said?”

“It will be a long time now before the war is ended,” said Mrs. Blythe despairingly.

Susan's faith, which had for a moment been temporarily submerged, now reappeared triumphantly.

"Remember, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the British army is not the British navy. Never forget that. And the Russians are on their way, too, though Russians are people I do not know much about and consequently will not tie to."

"The Russians will not be in time to save Paris," said Walter gloomily. "Paris is the heart of France — and the road to it is open. Oh, I wish" — he stopped abruptly and went out.

After a paralysed day the Ingleside folk found it was possible to "carry on" even in the face of ever-darkening bad news. Susan worked fiercely in her kitchen, the doctor went out on his round of visits, Nan and Di returned to their Red Cross activities; Mrs. Blythe went to Charlottetown to attend a Red Cross Convention; Rilla after relieving her feelings by a stormy fit of tears in Rainbow Valley and an outburst in her diary, remembered that she had elected to be brave and heroic. And, she thought, it really was heroic to volunteer to drive about the Glen and Four Winds one day, collecting promised Red Cross supplies with Abner Crawford's old grey horse. One of the Ingleside horses was lame and the doctor needed the other, so there was nothing for it but the Crawford nag, a placid, unhasting, thick-skinned creature with an amiable habit of stopping every few yards to kick a fly off one leg with the foot of the other. Rilla felt that this, coupled with the fact that the Germans were only fifty miles from Paris, was hardly to be endured. But she started off gallantly on an errand fraught with amazing results.

Late in the afternoon she found herself, with a buggy full of parcels, at the entrance to a grassy, deep-rutted lane leading to the harbour shore, wondering whether it was worth while to call down at the Anderson house. The Andersons were desperately poor and it was not likely Mrs. Anderson had anything to give. On the other hand, her husband, who was an Englishman by birth and who had been working in Kingsport when the war broke out, had promptly sailed for England to enlist there, without, it may be said, coming home or sending much hard cash to represent him. So possibly Mrs. Anderson might feel hurt if she were overlooked. Rilla

decided to call. There were times afterwards when she wished she hadn't, but in the long run she was very thankful that she did.

The Anderson house was a small and tumbledown affair, crouching in a grove of battered spruces near the shore as if rather ashamed of itself and anxious to hide. Rilla tied her grey nag to the rickety fence and went to the door. It was open; and the sight she saw bereft her temporarily of the power of speech or motion.

Through the open door of the small bedroom opposite her, Rilla saw Mrs. Anderson lying on the untidy bed; and Mrs. Anderson was dead. There was no doubt of that; neither was there any doubt that the big, frowzy, redheaded, red-faced, over-fat woman sitting near the doorway, smoking a pipe quite comfortably, was very much alive. She rocked idly back and forth amid her surroundings of squalid disorder, and paid no attention whatever to the piercing wails proceeding from a cradle in the middle of the room.

Rilla knew the woman by sight and reputation. Her name was Mrs. Conover; she lived down at the fishing village; she was a great-aunt of Mrs. Anderson; and she drank as well as smoked.

Rilla's first impulse was to turn and flee. But that would never do. Perhaps this woman, repulsive as she was, needed help — though she certainly did not look as if she were worrying over the lack of it.

"Come in," said Mrs. Conover, removing her pipe and staring at Rilla with her little, rat-like eyes.

"Is — is Mrs. Anderson really dead?" asked Rilla timidly, as she stepped over the sill.

"Dead as a door nail," responded Mrs. Conover cheerfully. "Kicked the bucket half an hour ago. I've sent Jen Conover to 'phone for the undertaker and get some help up from the shore. You're the doctor's miss, ain't ye? Have a cheer?"

Rilla did not see any chair which was not cluttered with something. She remained standing.

“Wasn’t it — very sudden?”

“Well, she’s been apining ever since that worthless Jim lit out for England — which I say it’s a pity as he ever left. It’s my belief she was took for death when she heard the news. That young un there was born a fortnight ago and since then she’s just gone down and today she up and died, without a soul expecting it.”

“Is there anything I can do to — to help?” hesitated Rilla.

“Bless yez, no — unless ye’ve a knack with kids. I haven’t. That young un there never lets up squalling, day or night. I’ve just got that I take no notice of it.”

Rilla tiptoed gingerly over to the cradle and more gingerly still pulled down the dirty blanket. She had no intention of touching the baby — she had no “knack with kids” either. She saw an ugly midget with a red, distorted little face, rolled up in a piece of dingy old flannel. She had never seen an uglier baby. Yet a feeling of pity for the desolate, orphaned mite which had “come out of the everywhere” into such a dubious “here”, took sudden possession of her.

“What is going to become of the baby?” she asked.

“Lord knows,” said Mrs. Conover candidly. “Min worried awful over that before she died. She kept on a-saying ‘Oh, what will become of my pore baby’ till it really got on my nerves. I ain’t a-going to trouble myself with it, I can tell yez. I brung up a boy that my sister left and he skinned out as soon as he got to be some good and won’t give me a mite o’ help in my old age, ungrateful whelp as he is. I told Min it’d have to be sent to an orphan asylum till we’d see if Jim ever came back to look after it. Would yez believe it, she didn’t relish the idee. But that’s the long and short of it.”

“But who will look after it until it can be taken to the asylum?” persisted Rilla. Somehow the baby’s fate worried her.

“S’pose I’ll have to,” grunted Mrs. Conover. She put away her pipe and took an unblushing swig from a black bottle she produced from a shelf near her. “It’s my opinion the kid won’t live long. It’s sickly. Min never had no gimp and I guess it hain’t either. Likely it won’t trouble any one long and good riddance, sez I.”

Rilla drew the blanket down a little farther.

“Why, the baby isn’t dressed!” she exclaimed, in a shocked tone.

“Who was to dress him I’d like to know,” demanded Mrs. Conover truculently. “I hadn’t time — took me all the time there was looking after Min. ‘Sides, as I told yez, I don’t know nithing about kids. Old Mrs. Billy Crawford, she was here when it was born and she washed it and rolled it up in that flannel, and Jen she’s tended it a bit since. The critter is warm enough. This weather would melt a brass monkey.”

Rilla was silent, looking down at the crying baby. She had never encountered any of the tragedies of life before and this one smote her to the core of her heart. The thought of the poor mother going down into the valley of the shadow alone, fretting about her baby, with no one near but this abominable old woman, hurt her terribly. If she had only come a little sooner! Yet what could she have done — what could she do now? She didn’t know, but she must do something. She hated babies — but she simply could not go away and leave that poor little creature with Mrs. Conover — who was applying herself again to her black bottle and would probably be helplessly drunk before anybody came.

“I can’t stay,” thought Rilla. “Mr. Crawford said I must be home by suppertime because he wanted the pony this evening himself. Oh, what can I do?”

She made a sudden, desperate, impulsive resolution.

“I’ll take the baby home with me,” she said. “Can I?”

“Sure, if yez wants to,” said Mrs. Conover amiably. “I hain’t any objection. Take it and welcome.”

“I — I can’t carry it,” said Rilla. “I have to drive the horse and I’d be afraid I’d drop it. Is there a — a basket anywhere that I could put it in?”

“Not as I knows on. There ain’t much here of anything, I kin tell yez. Min was pore and as shiftless as Jim. Ef ye opens that drawer over there yez’ll find a few baby clo’es. Best take them along.”

Rilla got the clothes — the cheap, sleazy garments the poor mother had made ready as best she could. But this did not solve the pressing problem of the baby's transportation. Rilla looked helplessly round. Oh, for mother — or Susan! Her eyes fell on an enormous blue soup tureen at the back of the dresser.

"May I have this to — to lay him in?" she asked.

"Well, 'tain't mine but I guess yez kin take it. Don't smash it if yez can help — Jim might make a fuss about it if he comes back alive — which he sure will, seein' he ain't any good. He brung that old tureen out from England with him — said it'd always been in the family. Him and Min never used it — never had enough soup to put in it — but Jim thought the world of it. He was mighty perticuler about some things but didn't worry him none that there weren't much in the way o' eatables to put in the dishes."

For the first time in her life Rilla Blythe touched a baby — lifted it — rolled it in a blanket, trembling with nervousness lest she drop it or — or — break it. Then she put it in the soup tureen.

"Is there any fear of it smothering?" she asked anxiously.

"Not much odds if it do," said Mrs. Conover.

Horried Rilla loosened the blanket round the baby's face a little. The mite had stopped crying and was blinking up at her. It had big dark eyes in its ugly little face.

"Better not let the wind blow on it," admonished Mrs. Conover. "Take its breath if it do."

Rilla wrapped the tattered little quilt around the soup tureen.

"Will you hand this to me after I get into the buggy, please?"

"Sure I will," said Mrs. Conover, getting up with a grunt.

And so it was that Rilla Blythe, who had driven to the Anderson house a self-confessed hater of babies, drove away from it carrying one in a soup tureen on her lap!

Rilla thought she would never get to Ingleside. In the soup tureen there was an uncanny silence. In one way she was thankful the baby did not cry but she wished it would give an occasional squeak to prove that it was alive. Suppose it were smothered! Rilla dared not unwrap it to see, lest the wind, which was now blowing a hurricane, should “take its breath,” whatever dreadful thing that might be. She was a thankful girl when at last she reached harbour at Ingleside.

Rilla carried the soup tureen to the kitchen, and set it on the table under Susan’s eyes. Susan looked into the tureen and for once in her life was so completely floored that she had not a word to say.

“What in the world is this?” asked the doctor, coming in.

Rilla poured out her story. “I just had to bring it, father,” she concluded. “I couldn’t leave it there.”

“What are you going to do with it?” asked the doctor coolly.

Rilla hadn’t exactly expected this kind of question.

“We — we can keep it here for awhile — can’t we — until something can be arranged?” she stammered confusedly.

Dr. Blythe walked up and down the kitchen for a moment or two while the baby stared at the white walls of the soup tureen and Susan showed signs of returning animation.

Presently the doctor confronted Rilla.

“A young baby means a great deal of additional work and trouble in a household, Rilla. Nan and Di are leaving for Redmond next week and neither your mother nor Susan is able to assume so much extra care under

present conditions. If you want to keep that baby here you must attend to it yourself.”

“Me!” Rilla was dismayed into being ungrammatical. “Why — father — I — I couldn’t!”

“Younger girls than you have had to look after babies. My advice and Susan’s is at your disposal. If you cannot, then the baby must go back to Meg Conover. Its lease of life will be short if it does for it is evident that it is a delicate child and requires particular care. I doubt if it would survive even if sent to an orphans’ home. But I cannot have your mother and Susan over-taxed.”

The doctor walked out of the kitchen, looking very stern and immovable. In his heart he knew quite well that the small inhabitant of the big soup tureen would remain at Ingleside, but he meant to see if Rilla could not be induced to rise to the occasion.

Rilla sat looking blankly at the baby. It was absurd to think she could take care of it. But — that poor little, frail, dead mother who had worried about it — that dreadful old Meg Conover.

“Susan, what must be done for a baby?” she asked dolefully.

“You must keep it warm and dry and wash it every day, and be sure the water is neither too hot nor too cold, and feed it every two hours. If it has colic, you put hot things on its stomach,” said Susan, rather feebly and flatly for her.

The baby began to cry again.

“It must be hungry — it has to be fed anyhow,” said Rilla desperately. “Tell me what to get for it, Susan, and I’ll get it.”

Under Susan’s directions a ration of milk and water was prepared, and a bottle obtained from the doctor’s office. Then Rilla lifted the baby out of the soup tureen and fed it. She brought down the old basket of her own

infancy from the attic and laid the now sleeping baby in it. She put the soup tureen away in the pantry. Then she sat down to think things over.

The result of her thinking things over was that she went to Susan when the baby woke.

“I’m going to see what I can do, Susan. I can’t let that poor little thing go back to Mrs. Conover. Tell me how to wash and dress it.”

Under Susan’s supervision Rilla bathed the baby. Susan dared not help, other than by suggestion, for the doctor was in the livingroom and might pop in at any moment. Susan had learned by experience that when Dr. Blythe put his foot down and said a thing must be, that thing was. Rilla set her teeth and went ahead. In the name of goodness, how many wrinkles and kinks did a baby have? Why, there wasn’t enough of it to take hold of. Oh, suppose she let it slip into the water — it was so wobbly! If it would only stop howling like that! How could such a tiny morsel make such an enormous noise. Its shrieks could be heard over Ingleside from cellar to attic.

“Am I really hurting it much, Susan, do you suppose?” she asked piteously.

“No, dearie. Most new babies hate like poison to be washed. You are real knacky for a beginner. Keep your hand under its back, whatever you do, and keep cool.”

Keep cool! Rilla was oozing perspiration at every pore. When the baby was dried and dressed and temporarily quieted with another bottle she was as limp as a rag.

“What must I do with it tonight, Susan?”

A baby by day was dreadful enough; a baby by night was unthinkable.

“Set the basket on a chair by your bed and keep it covered. You will have to feed it once or twice in the night, so you would better take the oil heater

upstairs. If you cannot manage it call me and I will go, doctor or no doctor.”

“But, Susan, if it cries?”

The baby, however, did not cry. It was surprisingly good — perhaps because its poor little stomach was filled with proper food. It slept most of the night but Rilla did not. She was afraid to go to sleep for fear something would happen to the baby. She prepared its three o’clock ration with a grim determination that she would not call Susan. Oh, was she dreaming? Was it really she, Rilla Blythe, who had got into this absurd predicament? She did not care if the Germans were near Paris — she did not care if they were in Paris — if only the baby wouldn’t cry or choke or smother or have convulsions. Babies did have convulsions, didn’t they? Oh, why had she forgotten to ask Susan what she must do if the baby had convulsions? She reflected rather bitterly that father was very considerate of mother’s and Susan’s health, but what about hers? Did he think she could continue to exist if she never got any sleep? But she was not going to back down now — not she. She would look after this detestable little animal if it killed her. She would get a book on baby hygiene and be beholden to nobody. She would never go to father for advice — she wouldn’t bother mother — and she would only condescend to Susan in dire extremity. They would all see!

Thus it came about that Mrs. Blythe, when she returned home two nights later and asked Susan where Rilla was, was electrified by Susan’s composed reply.

“She’s upstairs, Mrs. Dr. dear, putting her baby to bed.”

CHAPTER VII I

RILLA DECIDES

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Families and individuals alike soon become used to new conditions and accept them unquestioningly. By the time a week had elapsed it seemed as if the Anderson baby had always been at Ingleside. After the first three distracted nights Rilla began to sleep again, waking automatically to attend to her charge on schedule time. She bathed and fed and dressed it as skilfully as if she had been doing it all her life. She liked neither her job nor the baby any the better; she still handled it as gingerly as if it were some kind of a small lizard, and a breakable lizard at that; but she did her work thoroughly and there was not a cleaner, better-cared-for infant in Glen St. Mary. She even took to weighing the creature every day and jotting the result down in her diary; but sometimes she asked herself pathetically why unkind destiny had ever led her down the Anderson lane on that fatal day. Shirley, Nan, and Di did not tease her as much as she had expected. They all seemed rather stunned by the mere fact of Rilla adopting a war-baby; perhaps, too, the doctor had issued instructions. Walter, of course, never had teased her over anything; one day he told her she was a brick.

“It took more courage for you to tackle that five pounds of new infant, Rilla-my-Rilla, than it would be for Jem to face a mile of Germans. I wish I had half your pluck,” he said ruefully.

Rilla was very proud of Walter’s approval; nevertheless, she wrote gloomily in her diary that night: —

“I wish I could like the baby a little bit. It would make things easier. But I don’t. I’ve heard people say that when you took care of a baby you got fond of it — but you don’t — I don’t, anyway. And it’s a nuisance — it interferes with everything. It just ties me down — and now of all times

when I'm trying to get the Junior Reds started. And I couldn't go to Alice Clow's party last night and I was just dying to. Of course father isn't really unreasonable and I can always get an hour or two off in the evening when it's necessary; but I knew he wouldn't stand for my being out half the night and leaving Susan or mother to see to the baby. I suppose it was just as well, because the thing did take colic — or something — about one o'clock. It didn't kick or stiffen out, so I knew that, according to Morgan, it wasn't crying for temper; and it wasn't hungry and no pins were sticking in it. It screamed till it was black in the face; I got up and heated water and put the hot-water bottle on its stomach, and it howled worse than ever and drew up its poor wee thin legs. I was afraid I had burnt it but I don't believe I did. Then I walked the floor with it although 'Morgan on Infants' says that should never be done. I walked miles, and oh, I was so tired and discouraged and mad — yes, I was. I could have shaken the creature if it had been big enough to shake, but it wasn't. Father was out on a case, and mother had had a headache and Susan is squiffy because when she and Morgan differ I insist upon going by what Morgan says, so I was determined I wouldn't call her unless I had to.

“Finally, Miss Oliver came in. She has rooms with Nan now, not me, all because of the baby, and I am brokenhearted about it. I miss our long talks after we went to bed, so much. It was the only time I ever had her to myself. I hated to think the baby's yells had wakened her up, for she has so much to bear now. Mr. Grant is at Valcartier, too, and Miss Oliver feels it dreadfully, though she is splendid about it. She thinks he will never come back and her eyes just break my heart — they are so tragic. She said it wasn't the baby that woke her — she hadn't been able to sleep because the Germans are so near Paris; she took the little wretch and laid it flat on its stomach across her knee and thumped its back gently a few times, and it stopped shrieking and went right off to sleep and slept like a lamb the rest of the night. I didn't — I was too worn out.

“I'm having a perfectly dreadful time getting the Junior Reds started. I succeeded in getting Betty Mead as president, and I am secretary, but they put Jen Vickers in as treasurer and I despise her. She is the sort of girl who calls any clever, handsome, or distinguished people she knows slightly by their first names — behind their backs. And she is sly and two-faced. Una

doesn't mind, of course. She is willing to do anything that comes to hand and never minds whether she has an office or not. She is just a perfect angel, while I am only angelic in spots and demonic in other spots. I wish Walter would take a fancy to her, but he never seems to think about her in that way, although I heard him say once she was like a tea rose. She is too. And she gets imposed upon, just because she is so sweet and willing; but I don't allow people to impose on Rilla Blythe and 'that you may tie to,' as Susan says.

"Just as I expected, Olive was determined we should have lunch served at our meetings. We had a battle royal over it. The majority was against eats and now the minority is sulking. Irene Howard was on the eats side and she has been very cool to me ever since and it makes me feel miserable. I wonder if mother and Mrs. Elliott have problems in the Senior Society too. I suppose they have, but they just go on calmly in spite of everything. I go on — but not calmly — I rage and cry — but I do it all in private and blow off steam in this diary; and when it's over I vow I'll show them. I never sulk. I detest people who sulk. Anyhow, we've got the society started and we're to meet once a week, and we're all going to learn to knit.

"Shirley and I went down to the station again to try to induce Dog Monday to come home but we failed. All the family have tried and failed. Three days after Jem had gone Walter went down and brought Monday home by main force in the buggy and shut him up for three days. Then Monday went on a hunger strike and howled like a Banshee night and day. We had to let him out or he would have starved to death.

"So we have decided to let him alone and father has arranged with the butcher near the station to feed him with bones and scraps. Besides, one of us goes down nearly every day to take him something. He just lies curled up in the shipping-shed, and every time a train comes in he will rush over to the platform, wagging his tail expectantly, and tear around to every one who comes off the train. And then, when the train goes and he realizes that Jem has not come, he creeps dejectedly back to his shed, with his disappointed eyes, and lies down patiently to wait for the next train. Mr. Gray, the station master, says there are times when he can hardly help crying from sheer sympathy. One day some boys threw stones at Monday

and old Johnny Mead, who never was known to take notice of anything before, snatched up a meat axe in the butcher's shop and chased them through the village. Nobody has molested Monday since.

“Kenneth Ford has gone back to Toronto. He came up two evenings ago to say goodbye. I wasn't home — some clothes had to be made for the baby and Mrs. Meredith offered to help me, so I was over at the manse, and I didn't see Kenneth. Not that it matters; he told Nan to say goodbye to Spider for him and tell me not to forget him wholly in my absorbing maternal duties. If he could leave such a frivolous, insulting message as that for me it shows plainly that our beautiful hour on the sandshore meant nothing to him and I am not going to think about him or it again.

“Fred Arnold was at the manse and walked home with me. He is the new Methodist minister's son and very nice and clever, and would be quite handsome if it were not for his nose. It is a really dreadful nose. When he talks of commonplace things it does not matter so much, but when he talks of poetry and ideals the contrast between his nose and his conversation is too much for me and I want to shriek with laughter. It is really not fair, because everything he said was perfectly charming and if somebody like Kenneth had said it I would have been enraptured. When I listened to him with my eyes cast down I was quite fascinated; but as soon as I looked up and saw his nose the spell was broken. He wants to enlist, too, but can't because he is only seventeen. Mrs. Elliott met us as we were walking through the village and could not have looked more horrified if she caught me walking with the Kaiser himself. Mrs. Elliott detests the Methodists and all their works. Father says it is an obsession with her.”

About 1st September there was an exodus from Ingleside and the manse. Faith, Nan, Di and Walter left for Redmond; Carl betook himself to his Harbour Head school and Shirley was off to Queen's. Rilla was left alone at Ingleside and would have been very lonely if she had had time to be. She missed Walter keenly; since their talk in Rainbow Valley they had grown very near together and Rilla discussed problems with Walter which she never mentioned to others. But she was so busy with the Junior Reds and her baby that there was rarely a spare minute for loneliness; sometimes, after she went to bed, she cried a little in her pillow over

Walter's absence and Jem at Valcartier and Kenneth's unromantic farewell message, but she was generally asleep before the tears got fairly started.

"Shall I make arrangements to have the baby sent to Hopetown?" the doctor asked one day two weeks after the baby's arrival at Ingleside.

For a moment Rilla was tempted to say "Yes." The baby could be sent to Hopetown — it would be decently looked after — she could have her free days and untrammelled nights back again. But — but — that poor young mother who hadn't wanted it to go to the asylum! Rilla couldn't get that out of her thoughts. And that very morning she discovered that the baby had gained eight ounces since its coming to Ingleside. Rilla had felt such a thrill of pride over this.

"You — you said it mightn't live if it went to Hopetown," she said.

"It mightn't. Somehow, institutional care, no matter how good it may be, doesn't always succeed with delicate babies. But you know what it means if you want it kept here, Rilla."

"I've taken care of it for a fortnight — and it has gained half a pound," cried Rilla. "I think we'd better wait until we hear from its father anyhow. He mightn't want to have it sent to an orphan asylum, when he is fighting the battles of his country."

The doctor and Mrs. Blythe exchanged amused, satisfied smiles behind Rilla's back; and nothing more was said about Hopetown.

Then the smile faded from the doctor's face; the Germans were twenty miles from Paris. Horrible tales were beginning to appear in the papers of deeds done in martyred Belgium. Life was very tense at Ingleside for the older people.

"We eat up the war news," Gertrude Oliver told Mrs. Meredith, trying to laugh and failing. "We study the maps and nip the whole Hun army in a few well-directed strategic moves. But Papa Joffre hasn't the benefit of our advice — and so Paris — must — fall."

“Will they reach it — will not some mighty hand yet intervene?” murmured John Meredith.

“I teach school like one in a dream,” continued Gertrude; “then I come home and shut myself in my room and walk the floor. I am wearing a path right across Nan’s carpet. We are so horribly near this war.”

“Them German men are at Senlis. Nothing nor nobody can save Paris now,” wailed Cousin Sophia. Cousin Sophia had taken to reading the newspapers and had learned more about the geography of northern France, if not about the pronunciation of French names, in her seventy-first year than she had ever known in her schooldays.

“I have not such a poor opinion of the Almighty, or of Kitchener,” said Susan stubbornly. “I see there is a Bernstoff man in the States who says that the war is over and Germany has won — and they tell me Whiskers-on-the-moon says the same thing and is quite pleased about it, but I could tell them both that it is chancy work counting chickens even the day before they are hatched, and bears have been known to live long after their skins were sold.”

“Why ain’t the British navy doing more?” persisted Cousin Sophia.

“Even the British navy cannot sail on dry land, Sophia Crawford. I have not given up hope, and I shall not, Tomascow and Mobbage and all such barbarous names to the contrary notwithstanding. Mrs. Dr. dear, can you tell me if R-h-e-i-m-s is Rimes or Reems or Rames or Rems?”

“I believe it’s really more like ‘Rhangs,’ Susan.”

“Oh, those French names,” groaned Susan.

“They tell me the Germans has about ruined the church there,” sighed Cousin Sophia. “I always thought the Germans was Christians.”

“A church is bad enough but their doings in Belgium are far worse,” said Susan grimly. “When I heard the doctor reading about them bayonetting the babies, Mrs. Dr. dear, I just thought, ‘Oh, what if it were our little

Jem!’ I was stirring the soup when that thought came to me and I just felt that if I could have lifted that saucepan full of that boiling soup and thrown it at the Kaiser I would not have lived in vain.”

“Tomorrow — tomorrow — will bring the news that the Germans are in Paris,” said Gertrude Oliver, through her tense lips. She had one of those souls that are always tied to the stake, burning in the suffering of the world around them. Apart from her own personal interest in the war, she was racked by the thought of Paris falling into the ruthless hands of the hordes who had burned Louvain and ruined the wonder of Rheims.

But on the morrow and the next morrow came the news of the miracle of the Marne. Rilla rushed madly home from the office waving the Enterprise with its big red headlines. Susan ran out with trembling hands to hoist the flag. The doctor stalked about muttering “Thank God.” Mrs. Blythe cried and laughed and cried again.

“God just put out His hand and touched them—’thus far — no farther’,” said Mr. Meredith that evening.

Rilla was singing upstairs as she put the baby to bed. Paris was saved — the war was over — Germany had lost — there would soon be an end now — Jem and Jerry would be back. The black clouds had rolled by.

“Don’t you dare have colic this joyful night,” she told the baby. “If you do I’ll clap you back into your soup tureen and ship you off to Hopetown — by freight — on the early train. You have got beautiful eyes — and you’re not quite as red and wrinkled as you were — but you haven’t a speck of hair — and your hands are like little claws — and I don’t like you a bit better than I ever did. But I hope your poor little white mother knows that you’re tucked in a soft basket with a bottle of milk as rich as Morgan allows instead of perishing by inches with old Meg Conover. And I hope she doesn’t know that I nearly drowned you that first morning when Susan wasn’t there and I let you slip right out of my hands into the water. Why will you be so slippery? No, I don’t like you and I never will but for all that I’m going to make a decent, upstanding infant of you. You are going to get as fat as a self-respecting child should be, for one thing. I am not going to have people saying ‘what a puny little thing that baby of Rilla

Blythe's is' as old Mrs. Drew said at the senior Red Cross yesterday. If I can't love you I mean to be proud of you at least."

CHAPTER I X

DOC HAS A MISADVENTURE

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“The war will not be over before next spring now,” said Dr. Blythe, when it became apparent that the long battle of the Aisne had resulted in a stalemate.

Rilla was murmuring “knit four, purl one” under her breath, and rocking the baby’s cradle with one foot. Morgan disapproved of cradles for babies but Susan did not, and it was worth while to make some slight sacrifice of principle to keep Susan in good humour. She laid down her knitting for a moment and said, “Oh, how can we bear it so long?” — then picked up her sock and went on. The Rilla of two months before would have rushed off to Rainbow Valley and cried.

Miss Oliver sighed and Mrs. Blythe clasped her hands for a moment. Then Susan said briskly, “Well, we must just gird up our loins and pitch in. Business as usual is England’s motto, they tell me, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I have taken it for mine, not thinking I could easily find a better. I shall make the same kind of pudding today I always make on Saturday. It is a good deal of trouble to make, and that is well, for it will employ my thoughts. I will remember that Kitchener is at the helm and Joffer is doing very well for a Frenchman. I shall get that box of cake off to little Jem and finish that pair of socks today likewise. A sock a day is my allowance. Old Mrs. Albert Mead of Harbour Head manages a pair and a half a day but she has nothing to do but knit. You know, Mrs. Dr. dear, she has been bed-ridden for years and she has been worrying terrible because she was no good to anybody and a dreadful expense, and yet could not die and be out of the way. And now they tell me she is quite chirked up and resigned to living because there is something she can do, and she knits for the soldiers from daylight to dark. Even Cousin Sophia has taken to knitting, Mrs. Dr. dear, and it is a good thing, for she cannot think of quite so many doleful

speeches to make when her hands are busy with her needles instead of being folded on her stomach. She thinks we will all be Germans this time next year but I tell her it will take more than a year to make a German out of me. Do you know that Rick MacAllister has enlisted, Mrs. Dr. dear? And they say Joe Milgrave would too, only he is afraid that if he does that Whiskers-on-the-moon will not let him have Miranda. Whiskers says that he will believe the stories of German atrocities when he sees them, and that it is a good thing that Rangs Cathedral has been destroyed because it was a Roman Catholic church. Now, I am not a Roman Catholic, Mrs. Dr. dear, being born and bred a good Presbyterian and meaning to live and die one, but I maintain that the Catholics have as good a right to their churches as we have to ours and that the Huns had no kind of business to destroy them. Just think, Mrs. Dr. dear,” concluded Susan pathetically, “how we would feel if a German shell knocked down the spire of our church here in the glen, and I’m sure it is every bit as bad to think of Rangs cathedral being hammered to pieces.”

And, meanwhile, everywhere, the lads of the world rich and poor, low and high, white and brown, were following the Piper’s call.

“Even Billy Andrews’ boy is going — and Jane’s only son — and Diana’s little Jack,” said Mrs. Blythe. “Priscilla’s son has gone from Japan and Stella’s from Vancouver — and both the Rev. Jo’s boys. Philippa writes that her boys ‘went right away, not being afflicted with her indecision.’”

“Jem says that he thinks they will be leaving very soon now, and that he will not be able to get leave to come so far before they go, as they will have to start at a few hours’ notice,” said the doctor, passing the letter to his wife.

“That is not fair,” said Susan indignantly. “Has Sir Sam Hughes no regard for our feelings? The idea of whisking that blessed boy away to Europe without letting us even have a last glimpse of him! If I were you, doctor dear, I would write to the papers about it.”

“Perhaps it is as well,” said the disappointed mother. “I don’t believe I could bear another parting from him — now that I know the war will not be over as soon as we hoped when he left first. Oh, if only — but no, I

won't say it! Like Susan and Rilla," concluded Mrs. Blythe, achieving a laugh, "I am determined to be a heroine."

"You're all good stuff," said the doctor, "I'm proud of my women folk. Even Rilla here, my 'lily of the field,' is running a Red Cross Society full blast and saving a little life for Canada. That's a good piece of work. Rilla, daughter of Anne, what are you going to call your war-baby?"

"I'm waiting to hear from Jim Anderson," said Rilla. "He may want to name his own child."

But as the autumn weeks went by no word came from Jim Anderson, who had never been heard from since he sailed from Halifax, and to whom the fate of wife and child seemed a matter of indifference. Eventually Rilla decided to call the baby James, and Susan opined that Kitchener should be added thereto. So James Kitchener Anderson became the possessor of a name somewhat more imposing than himself. The Ingleside family promptly shortened it to Jims, but Susan obstinately called him "Little Kitchener" and nothing else.

"Jims is no name for a Christian child, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said disapprovingly. "Cousin Sophia says it is too flippant, and for once I consider she utters sense, though I would not please her by openly agreeing with her. As for the child, he is beginning to look something like a baby, and I must admit that Rilla is wonderful with him, though I would not pamper pride by saying so to her face. Mrs. Dr. dear, I shall never, no never, forget the first sight I had of that infant, lying in that big soup tureen, rolled up in dirty flannel. It is not often that Susan Baker is flabbergasted, but flabbergasted I was then, and that you may tie to. For one awful moment I thought my mind had given way and that I was seeing visions. Then thinks I, 'No, I never heard of anyone having a vision of a soup tureen, so it must be real at least,' and I plucked up confidence. When I heard the doctor tell Rilla that she must take care of the baby I thought he was joking, for I did not believe for a minute she would or could do it. But you see what has happened and it is making a woman of her. When we have to do a thing, Mrs. Dr. dear, we can do it."

Susan added another proof to this concluding dictum of hers one day in October. The doctor and his wife were away. Rilla was presiding over Jims' afternoon siesta upstairs, purling four and knitting one with ceaseless vim. Susan was seated on the back veranda, shelling beans, and Cousin Sophia was helping her. Peace and tranquility brooded over the Glen; the sky was fleeced over with silvery, shining clouds. Rainbow Valley lay in a soft, autumnal haze of fairy purple. The maple grove was a burning bush of colour and the hedge of sweetbriar around the kitchen yard was a thing of wonder in its subtle tintings. It did not seem that strife could be in the world, and Susan's faithful heart was lulled into a brief forgetfulness, although she had lain awake most of the preceding night thinking of little Jem far out on the Atlantic, where the great fleet was carrying Canada's first army across the ocean. Even Cousin Sophia looked less melancholy than usual and admitted that there was not much fault to be found in the day, although there was no doubt it was a weather-breeder and there would be an awful storm on its heels.

"Things is too calm to last," she said.

As if in confirmation of her assertion, a most unearthly din suddenly arose behind them. It was quite impossible to describe the confused medley of bangs and rattles and muffled shrieks and yowls that proceeded from the kitchen, accompanied by occasional crashes. Susan and Cousin Sophia stared at each other in dismay.

"What upon airth has bruk loose in there?" gasped Cousin Sophia.

"It must be that Hyde-cat gone clean mad at last," muttered Susan. "I have always expected it."

Rilla came flying out of the side door of the livingroom.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"It is beyond me to say, but that possessed beast of yours is evidently at the bottom of it," said Susan. "Do not go near him, at least. I will open the door and peep in. There goes some more of the crockery. I have always said that the devil was in him and that I will tie to."

“It is my opinion that the cat has hydrophobia,” said Cousin Sophia solemnly. “I once heard of a cat that went mad and bit three people — and they all died a most terrible death, and turned black as ink.”

Undismayed by this, Susan opened the door and looked in. The floor was littered with fragments of broken dishes, for it seemed that the fatal tragedy had taken place on the long dresser where Susan’s array of cooking bowls had been marshalled in shining state. Around the kitchen tore a frantic cat, with his head wedged tightly in an old salmon can. Blindly he careered about with shrieks and profanity commingled, now banging the can madly against anything he encountered, now trying vainly to wrench it off with his paws.

The sight was so funny that Rilla doubled up with laughter. Susan looked at her reproachfully.

“I see nothing to laugh at. That beast has broken your ma’s big blue mixing-bowl that she brought from Green Gables when she was married. That is no small calamity, in my opinion. But the thing to consider now is how to get that can off Hyde’s head.”

“Don’t you dast go touching it,” exclaimed Cousin Sophia, galvanized into animation. “It might be your death. Shut the kitchen up and send for Albert.”

“I am not in the habit of sending for Albert during family difficulties,” said Susan loftily. “That beast is in torment, and whatever my opinion of him may be, I cannot endure to see him suffering pain. You keep away, Rilla, for little Kitchener’s sake, and I will see what I can do.”

Susan stalked undauntedly into the kitchen, seized an old storm coat of the doctor’s and after a wild pursuit and several fruitless dashes and pounces, managed to throw it over the cat and can. Then she proceeded to saw the can loose with a can-opener, while Rilla held the squirming animal, rolled in the coat. Anything like Doc’s shrieks while the process was going on was never heard at Ingleside. Susan was in mortal dread that the Albert Crawfords would hear it and conclude she was torturing the creature to death. Doc was a wrathful and indignant cat when he was freed. Evidently

he thought the whole thing was a put-up job to bring him low. He gave Susan a baleful glance by way of gratitude and rushed out of the kitchen to take sanctuary in the jungle of the sweetbriar hedge, where he sulked for the rest of the day. Susan swept up her broken dishes grimly.

“The Huns themselves couldn’t have worked more havoc here,” she said bitterly. “But when people will keep a Satanic animal like that, in spite of all warnings, they cannot complain when their wedding bowls get broken. Things have come to a pretty pass when an honest woman cannot leave her kitchen for a few minutes without a fiend of a cat rampaging through it with his head in a salmon can.”

CHAPTER X

THE TROUBLES OF RILLA

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October passed out and the dreary days of November and December dragged by. The world shook with the thunder of contending armies; Antwerp fell — Turkey declared war — gallant little Serbia gathered herself together and struck a deadly blow at her oppressor; and in quiet, hill-girdled Glen St. Mary, thousands of miles away, hearts beat with hope and fear over the varying dispatches from day to day.

“A few months ago,” said Miss Oliver, “we thought and talked in terms of Glen St. Mary. Now, we think and talk in terms of military tactics and diplomatic intrigue.”

There was just one great event every day — the coming of the mail. Even Susan admitted that from the time the mail-courier’s buggy rumbled over the little bridge between the station and the village until the papers were brought home and read, she could not work properly.

“I must take up my knitting then and knit hard till the papers come, Mrs. Dr. dear. Knitting is something you can do, even when your heart is going like a trip-hammer and the pit of your stomach feels all gone and your thoughts are catawampus. Then when I see the headlines, be they good or be they bad, I calm down and am able to go about my business again. It is an unfortunate thing that the mail comes in just when our dinner rush is on, and I think the Government could arrange things better. But the drive on Calais has failed, as I felt perfectly sure it would, and the Kaiser will not eat his Christmas dinner in London this year. Do you know, Mrs. Dr. dear,” — Susan’s voice lowered as a token that she was going to impart a very shocking piece of information, — “I have been told on good authority — or else you may be sure I would not be repeating it when it concerns a minster — that the Rev. Mr. Arnold goes to Charlottetown every week and

takes a Turkish bath for his rheumatism. The idea of him doing that when we are at war with Turkey? One of his own deacons has always insisted that Mr. Arnold's theology was not sound and I am beginning to believe that there is some reason to fear it. Well, I must bestir myself this afternoon and get little Jem's Christmas cake packed up for him. He will enjoy it, if the blessed boy is not drowned in mud before that time."

Jem was in camp on Salisbury Plain and was writing gay, cheery letters home in spite of the mud. Walter was at Redmond and his letters to Rilla were anything but cheerful. She never opened one without a dread tugging at her heart that it would tell her he had enlisted. His unhappiness made her unhappy. She wanted to put her arm round him and comfort him, as she had done that day in Rainbow Valley. She hated everybody who was responsible for Walter's unhappiness.

"He will go yet," she murmured miserably to herself one afternoon, as she sat alone in Rainbow Valley, reading a letter from him, "he will go yet — and if he does I just can't bear it."

Walter wrote that some one had sent him an envelope containing a white feather.

"I deserved it, Rilla. I felt that I ought to put it on and wear it — proclaiming myself to all Redmond the coward I know I am. The boys of my year are going — going. Every day two or three of them join up. Some days I almost make up my mind to do it — and then I see myself thrusting a bayonet through another man — some woman's husband or sweetheart or son — perhaps the father of little children — I see myself lying alone torn and mangled, burning with thirst on a cold, wet field, surrounded by dead and dying men — and I know I never can. I can't face even the thought of it. How could I face the reality? There are times when I wish I had never been born. Life has always seemed such a beautiful thing to me — and now it is a hideous thing. Rilla-my-Rilla, if it weren't for your letters — your dear, bright, merry, funny, comical, believing letters — I think I'd give up. And Una's! Una is really a little brick, isn't she? There's a wonderful fineness and firmness under all that shy, wistful girlishness of her. She hasn't your knack of writing laugh-provoking epistles, but there's something in her letters — I don't know what — that makes me feel at

least while I'm reading them, that I could even go to the front. Not that she ever says a word about my going — or hints that I ought to go — she isn't that kind. It's just the spirit of them — the personality that is in them.

Well, I can't go. You have a brother and Una has a friend who is a coward."

"Oh, I wish Walter wouldn't write such things," sighed Rilla. "It hurts me. He isn't a coward — he isn't — he isn't!"

She looked wistfully about her — at the little woodland valley and the grey, lonely fallows beyond. How everything reminded her of Walter! The red leaves still clung to the wild sweetbriars that overhung a curve of the brook; their stems were gemmed with the pearls of the gentle rain that had fallen a little while before. Walter had once written a poem describing them. The wind was sighing and rustling among the frosted brown bracken ferns, then lessening sorrowfully away down the brook. Walter had said once that he loved the melancholy of the autumn wind on a November day. The old Tree Lovers still clasped each other in a faithful embrace, and the White Lady, now a great white-branched tree, stood out beautifully fine, against the grey velvet sky. Walter had named them long ago; and last November, when he had walked with her and Miss Oliver in the Valley, he had said, looking at the leafless Lady, with a young silver moon hanging over her, "A white birch is a beautiful Pagan maiden who has never lost the Eden secret of being naked and unashamed." Miss Oliver had said, "Put that into a poem, Walter," and he had done so, and read it to them the next day — just a short thing with goblin imagination in every line of it. Oh, how happy they had been then!

Well — Rilla scrambled to her feet — time was up. Jims would soon be awake — his lunch had to be prepared — his little slips had to be ironed — there was a committee meeting of the Junior Reds that night — there was her new knitting bag to finish — it would be the handsomest bag in the Junior Society — handsomer even than Irene Howard's — she must get home and get to work. She was busy these days from morning till night. That little monkey of a Jims took so much time. But he was growing — he was certainly growing. And there were times when Rilla felt sure that it was not merely a pious hope but an absolute fact that he was getting

decidedly better looking. Sometimes she felt quite proud of him; and sometimes she yearned to spank him. But she never kissed him or wanted to kiss him.

“The Germans captured Lodz today,” said Miss Oliver, one December evening, when she, Mrs. Blythe, and Susan were busy sewing or knitting in the cosy livingroom. “This war is at least extending my knowledge of geography. Schoolma’am though I am, three months ago I didn’t know there was such a place in the world such as Lodz. Had I heard it mentioned I would have known nothing about it and cared as little. I know all about it now — its size, its standing, its military significance. Yesterday the news that the Germans have captured it in their second rush to Warsaw made my heart sink into my boots. I woke up in the night and worried over it. I don’t wonder babies always cry when they wake up in the night. Everything presses on my soul then and no cloud has a silver lining.”

“When I wake up in the night and cannot go to sleep again,” remarked Susan, who was knitting and reading at the same time, “I pass the moments by torturing the Kaiser to death. Last night I fried him in boiling oil and a great comfort it was to me, remembering those Belgian babies.”

“If the Kaiser were here and had a pain in his shoulder you’d be the first to run for the liniment bottle to rub him down,” laughed Miss Oliver.

“Would I?” cried outraged Susan. “Would I, Miss Oliver? I would rub him down with coal oil, Miss Oliver — and leave it to blister. That is what I would do and that you may tie to. A pain in his shoulder, indeed! He will have pains all over him before he is through with what he has started.”

“We are told to love our enemies, Susan,” said the doctor solemnly.

“Yes, our enemies, but not King George’s enemies, doctor dear,” retorted Susan crushingly. She was so well pleased with herself over this flattening out of the doctor completely that she even smiled as she polished her glasses. Susan had never given in to glasses before, but she had done so at last in order to be able to read the war news — and not a dispatch got by her. “Can you tell me, Miss Oliver, how to pronounce M-l-a-w-a and B-z-u-r-a and P-r-z-e-m-y-s-l?”

“That last is a conundrum which nobody seems to have solved yet, Susan. And I can make only a guess at the others.”

“These foreign names are far from being decent, in my opinion,” said disgusted Susan.

“I dare say the Austrians and Russians would think Saskatchewan and Musquodoboit about as bad, Susan,” said Miss Oliver. “The Serbians have done wonderfully of late. They have captured Belgrade.”

“And sent the Austrian creatures packing across the Danube with a flea in their ear,” said Susan with a relish, as she settled down to examine a map of Eastern Europe, prodding each locality with the knitting needle to brand it on her memory. “Cousin Sophia said awhile ago that Serbia was done for, but I told her there was still such a thing as an overruling Providence, doubt it who might. It says here that the slaughter was terrible. For all they were foreigners it is awful to think of so many men being killed, Mrs. Dr. dear — for they are scarce enough as it is.”

Rilla was upstairs relieving her over-charged feelings by writing in her diary.

“Things have all ‘gone catawampus,’ as Susan says, with me this week. Part of it was my own fault and part of it wasn’t, and I seem to be equally unhappy over both parts.

“I went to town the other day to buy a new winter hat. It was the first time nobody insisted on coming with me to help me select it, and I felt that mother had really given up thinking of me as a child. And I found the dearest hat — it was simply bewitching. It was a velvet hat, of the very shade of rich green that was made for me. It just goes with my hair and complexion beautifully, bringing out the red-brown shades and what Miss Oliver calls my ‘creaminess’ so well. Only once before in my life have I come across that precise shade of green. When I was twelve I had a little beaver hat of it, and all the girls in school were wild over it. Well, as soon as I saw this hat I felt that I simply must have it — and have it I did. The price was dreadful. I will not put it down here because I don’t want my

descendants to know I was guilty of paying so much for a hat, in war-time, too, when everybody is — or should be — trying to be economical.

“When I got home and tried on the hat again in my room I was assailed by qualms. Of course, it was very becoming; but somehow it seemed too elaborate and fussy for church going and our quiet little doings in the Glen — too conspicuous, in short. It hadn’t seemed so at the milliner’s but here in my little white room it did. And that dreadful price tag! And the starving Belgians! When mother saw the hat and the tag she just looked at me. Mother is some expert at looking. Father says she looked him into love with her years ago in Avonlea school and I can well believe it — though I have heard a weird tale of her banging him over the head with a slate at the very beginning of their acquaintance. Mother was a limb when she was a little girl, I understand, and even up to the time when Jem went away she was full of ginger. But let me return to my mutton — that is to say, my new green velvet hat.

“‘Do you think, Rilla,’ mother said quietly — far too quietly—’that it was right to spend so much for a hat, especially when the need of the world is so great?’

“‘I paid for it out of my own allowance, mother,’ I exclaimed.

“‘That is not the point. Your allowance is based on the principle of a reasonable amount for each thing you need. If you pay too much for one thing you must cut off somewhere else and that is not satisfactory. But if you think you did right, Rilla, I have no more to say. I leave it to your conscience.’

“‘I wish mother would not leave things to my conscience! And anyway, what was I to do? I couldn’t take that hat back — I had worn it to a concert in town — I had to keep it! I was so uncomfortable that I flew into a temper — a cold, calm, deadly temper.

“‘Mother,’ I said haughtily, ‘I am sorry you disapprove of my hat—’

“‘Not of the hat exactly,’ said mother, ‘though I consider it in doubtful taste for so young a girl — but of the price you paid for it.’

“Being interrupted didn’t improve my temper, so I went on, colder and calmer and deadlier than ever, just as if mother had not spoken.

“ — but I have to keep it now. However, I promise you that I will not get another hat for three years or for the duration of the war, if it lasts longer than that. Even you’ — oh, the sarcasm I put into the ‘you’ — ‘cannot say that what I paid was too much when spread over at least three years.’

“‘You will be very tired of that hat before three years, Rilla,’ said mother, with a provoking grin, which, being interpreted, meant that I wouldn’t stick it out.

“‘Tired or not, I will wear it that long,’ I said: and then I marched upstairs and cried to think that I had been sarcastic to mother.

“I hate that hat already. But three years or the duration of the war, I said, and three years or the duration of the war it shall be. I vowed and I shall keep my vow, cost what it will.

“That is one of the ‘catawampus’ things. The other is that I have quarrelled with Irene Howard — or she quarrelled with me — or, no, we both quarrelled.

“The Junior Red Cross met here yesterday. The hour of meeting was halfpast two but Irene came at halfpast one, because she got the chance of a drive down from the Upper Glen. Irene hasn’t been a bit nice to me since the fuss about the eats; and besides I feel sure she resents not being president. But I have been determined that things should go smoothly, so I have never taken any notice, and when she came yesterday she seemed so nice and sweet again that I hoped she had got over her huffiness and we could be the chums we used to be.

“But as soon as we sat down Irene began to rub me the wrong way. I saw her cast a look at my new knitting-bag. All the girls have always said Irene was jealous-minded and I would never believe them before. But now I feel that perhaps she is.

“The first thing she did was to pounce on Jims — Irene pretends to adore babies — pick him out of his cradle and kiss him all over his face. Now, Irene knows perfectly well that I don’t like to have Jims kissed like that. It is not hygienic. After she had worried him till he began to fuss, she looked at me and gave quite a nasty little laugh but she said, oh, so sweetly,

“‘Why, Rilla, darling, you look as if you thought I was poisoning the baby.’

“‘Oh, no, I don’t, Irene,’ I said — every bit as sweetly, ‘but you know Morgan says that the only place a baby should be kissed is on its forehead, for fear of germs, and that is my rule with Jims.’

“‘Dear me, am I so full of germs?’ said Irene plaintively. I knew she was making fun of me and I began to boil inside — but outside no sign of a simmer. I was determined I would not scrap with Irene.

“Then she began to bounce Jims. Now, Morgan says bouncing is almost the worst thing that can be done to a baby. I never allow Jims to be bounced. But Irene bounced him and that exasperating child liked it. He smiled — for the very first time. He is four months old and he has never smiled once before. Not even mother or Susan have been able to coax that thing to smile, try as they would. And here he was smiling because Irene Howard bounced him! Talk of gratitude!

“I admit that smile made a big difference in him. Two of the dearest dimples came out in his cheeks and his big brown eyes seemed full of laughter. The way Irene raved over those dimples was silly, I consider. You would have supposed she thought she had really brought them into existence. But I sewed steadily and did not enthuse, and soon Irene got tired of bouncing Jims and put him back in his cradle. He did not like that after being played with, and he began to cry and was fussy the rest of the afternoon, whereas if Irene had only left him alone he would not have been a bit of trouble.

“Irene looked at him and said, ‘Does he often cry like that?’ as if she had never heard a baby crying before.

“I explained patiently that children have to cry so many minutes per day in order to expand their lungs. Morgan says so.

“‘If Jims didn’t cry at all I’d have to make him cry for at least twenty minutes,’ I said.

“‘Oh, indeed!’ said Irene, laughing as if she didn’t believe me. ‘Morgan on the Care of Infants’ was upstairs or I would soon have convinced her. Then she said Jims didn’t have much hair — she had never seen a four months’ old baby so bald.

“Of course, I knew Jims hadn’t much hair — yet; but Irene said it in a tone that seemed to imply it was my fault that he hadn’t any hair. I said I had seen dozens of babies every bit as bald as Jims, and Irene said, Oh very well, she hadn’t meant to offend me — when I wasn’t offended.

“It went on like that the rest of the hour — Irene kept giving me little digs all the time. The girls have always said she was revengeful like that if she were peeved about anything; but I never believed it before; I used to think Irene just perfect, and it hurt me dreadfully to find she could stoop to this. But I corked up my feelings and sewed away for dear life on a Belgian child’s nightgown.

“Then Irene told me the meanest, most contemptible thing that someone had said about Walter. I won’t write it down — I can’t. Of course, she said it made her furious to hear it and all that — but there was no need for her to tell me such a thing even if she did hear it. She simply did it to hurt me.

“I just exploded. ‘How dare you come here and repeat such a thing about my brother, Irene Howard?’ I exclaimed. ‘I shall never forgive you — never. Your brother hasn’t enlisted — hasn’t any idea of enlisting.’

“‘Why Rilla, dear, I didn’t say it,’ said Irene. ‘I told you it was Mrs. George Burr. And I told her—’

“‘I don’t want to hear what you told her. Don’t you ever speak to me again, Irene Howard.’

“Oh course, I shouldn’t have said that. But it just seemed to say itself. Then the other girls all came in a bunch and I had to calm down and act the hostess’ part as well as I could. Irene paired off with Olive Kirk all the rest of the afternoon and went away without so much as a look. So I suppose she means to take me at my word and I don’t care, for I do not want to be friends with a girl who could repeat such a falsehood about Walter. But I feel unhappy over it for all that. We’ve always been such good chums and until lately Irene was lovely to me; and now another illusion has been stripped from my eyes and I feel as if there wasn’t such a thing as real true friendship in the world.

“Father got old Joe Mead to build a kennel for Dog Monday in the corner of the shipping-shed today. We thought perhaps Monday would come home when the cold weather came but he wouldn’t. No earthly influence can coax Monday away from that shed even for a few minutes. There he stays and meets every train. So we had to do something to make him comfortable. Joe built the kennel so that Monday could lie in it and still see the platform, so we hope he will occupy it.

“Monday has become quite famous. A reporter of the Enterprise came out from town and photographed him and wrote up the whole story of his faithful vigil. It was published in the Enterprise and copied all over Canada. But that doesn’t matter to poor little Monday, Jem has gone away — Monday doesn’t know where or why — but he will wait until he comes back. Somehow it comforts me: it’s foolish, I suppose, but it gives me a feeling that Jem will come back or else Monday wouldn’t keep on waiting for him.

“Jims is snoring beside me in his cradle. It is just a cold that makes him snore — not adenoids. Irene had a cold yesterday and I know she gave it to him, kissing him. He is not quite such a nuisance as he was; he has got some backbone and can sit up quite nicely, and he loves his bath now and splashes unsmilingly in the water instead of twisting and shrieking. Oh, shall I ever forget those first two months! I don’t know how I lived through them. But here I am and here is Jims and we both are going to ‘carry on.’ I tickled him a little bit tonight when I undressed him — I wouldn’t bounce him but Morgan doesn’t mention tickling — just to see if

he would smile for me as well as Irene. And he did — and out popped the dimples. What a pity his mother couldn't have seen them!

“I finished my sixth pair of socks today. With the first three I got Susan to set the heel for me. Then I thought that was a bit of shirking, so I learned to do it myself. I hate it — but I have done so many things I hate since 4th of August that one more or less doesn't matter. I just think of Jem joking about the mud on Salisbury Plain and I go at them.”

CHAPTER X I

DARK AND BRIGHT

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At Christmas the college boys and girls came home and for a little while Ingleside was gay again. But all were not there — for the first time one was missing from the circle round the Christmas table. Jem, of the steady lips and fearless eyes, was far away, and Rilla felt that the sight of his vacant chair was more than she could endure. Susan had taken a stubborn freak and insisted on setting out Jem's place for him as usual, with the twisted little napkin ring he had always had since a boy, and the odd, high Green Gables goblet that Aunt Marilla had once given him and from which he always insisted on drinking.

"That blessed boy shall have his place, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan firmly, "and do not you feel over it, for you may be sure he is here in spirit and next Christmas he will be here in the body. Wait you till the Big Push comes in the spring and the war will be over in a jiffy."

They tried to think so, but a shadow stalked in the background of their determined merrymaking. Walter, too, was quiet and dull, all through the holidays. He showed Rilla a cruel, anonymous letter he had received at Redmond — a letter far more conspicuous for malice than for patriotic indignation.

"Nevertheless, all it says is true, Rilla."

Rilla had caught it from him and thrown it into the fire.

"There isn't one word of truth in it," she declared hotly. "Walter, you've got morbid — as Miss Oliver says she gets when she broods too long over one thing."

“I can’t get away from it at Redmond, Rilla. The whole college is aflame over the war. A perfectly fit fellow, of military age, who doesn’t join up is looked upon as a shirker and treated accordingly. Dr. Milne, the English professor, who has always made a special pet of me, has two sons in khaki; and I can feel the change in his manner towards me.”

“It’s not fair — you’re not fit.”

“Physically I am. Sound as a bell. The unfitness is in the soul and it’s a taint and a disgrace. There, don’t cry, Rilla. I’m not going if that’s what you’re afraid of. The Piper’s music rings in my ears day and night — but I cannot follow.”

“You would break mother’s heart and mine if you did,” sobbed Rilla. “Oh, Walter, one is enough for any family.”

The holidays were an unhappy time for her. Still, having Nan and Di and Walter and Shirley home helped in the enduring of things. A letter and book came for her from Kenneth Ford, too; some sentences in the letter made her cheeks burn and her heart beat — until the last paragraph, which sent an icy chill over everything.

“My ankle is about as good as new. I’ll be fit to join up in a couple of months more, Rilla-my-Rilla. It will be some feeling to get into khaki all right. Little Ken will be able to look the whole world in the face then and owe not any man. It’s been rotten lately, since I’ve been able to walk without limping. People who don’t know look at me as much as to say ‘Slacker!’ Well, they won’t have the chance to look it much longer.”

“I hate this war,” said Rilla bitterly, as she gazed out into the maple grove that was a chill glory of pink and gold in the winter sunset.

“Nineteen-fourteen has gone,” said Dr. Blythe on New Year’s Day. “Its sun, which rose fairly, has set in blood. What will nineteen-fifteen bring?”

“Victory!” said Susan, for once laconic.

“Do you really believe we’ll win the war, Susan?” said Miss Oliver drearily. She had come over from Lowbridge to spend the day and see Walter and the girls before they went back to Redmond. She was in a rather blue and cynical mood and inclined to look on the dark side.

“‘Believe’ we’ll win the war!” exclaimed Susan. “No, Miss Oliver, dear, I do not believe — I know. That does not worry me. What does worry me is the trouble and expense of it all. But then you cannot make omelets without breaking eggs, so we must just trust in God and make big guns.”

“Sometimes I think the big guns are better to trust in than God,” said Miss Oliver defiantly.

“No, no, dear, you do not. The Germans had the big guns at the Marne, had they not? But Providence settled them. Do not ever forget that. Just hold on to that when you feel inclined to doubt. Clutch hold of the sides of your chair and sit tight and keep saying, ‘Big guns are good but the Almighty is better, and He is on our side, no matter what the Kaiser says about it.’ I would have gone crazy many a day lately, Miss Oliver, dear, if I had not sat tight and repeated that to myself. My cousin Sophia is, like you, somewhat inclined to despond. ‘Oh, dear me, what will we do if the Germans ever get here,’ she wailed to me yesterday. ‘Bury them,’ said I, just as offhand as that. ‘There is plenty of room for the graves.’ Cousin Sophia said that I was flippant but I was not flippant, Miss Oliver, dear, only calm and confident in the British navy and our Canadian boys. I am like old Mr. William Pollock of the Harbour Head. He is very old and has been ill for a long time, and one night last week he was so low that his daughter-in-law whispered to some one that she thought he was dead. ‘Darn it, I ain’t,’ he called right out — only, Miss Oliver, dear, he did not use so mild a word as ‘darn’ — ‘darn it, I ain’t, and I don’t mean to die until the Kaiser is well licked.’ Now, that, Miss Oliver, dear,” concluded Susan, “is the kind of spirit I admire.”

“I admire it but I can’t emulate it,” sighed Gertrude. “Before this, I have always been able to escape from the hard things of life for a little while by going into dreamland, and coming back like a giant refreshed. But I can’t escape from this.”

“Nor I,” said Mrs. Blythe. “I hate going to bed now. All my life I’ve liked going to bed, to have a gay, mad, splendid half-hour of imagining things before sleeping. Now I imagine them still. But such different things.”

“I am rather glad when the time comes to go to bed,” said Miss Oliver. “I like the darkness because I can be myself in it — I needn’t smile or talk bravely. But sometimes my imagination gets out of hand, too, and I see what you do — terrible things — terrible years to come.”

“I am very thankful that I never had any imagination to speak of,” said Susan. “I have been spared that. I see by this paper that the Crown Prince is killed again. Do you suppose there is any hope of his staying dead this time? And I also see that Woodrow Wilson is going to write another note. I wonder,” concluded Susan, with the bitter irony she had of late begun to use when referring to the poor President, “if that man’s schoolmaster is alive.”

In January Jims was five months old and Rilla celebrated the anniversary by shortening him.

“He weighs fourteen pounds,” she announced jubilantly. “Just exactly what he should weigh at five months, according to Morgan.”

There was no longer any doubt in anybody’s mind that Jims was getting positively pretty. His little cheeks were round and firm and faintly pink, his eyes were big and bright, his tiny paws had dimples at the root of every finger. He had even begun to grow hair, much to Rilla’s unspoken relief. There was a pale golden fuzz all over his head that was distinctly visible in some lights. He was a good infant, generally sleeping and digesting as Morgan decreed. Occasionally he smiled but he had never laughed, in spite of all efforts to make him. This worried Rilla also, because Morgan said that babies usually laughed aloud from the third to the fifth month. Jims was five months and had no notion of laughing. Why hadn’t he? Wasn’t he normal?

One night Rilla came home late from a recruiting meeting at the Glen where she had been giving patriotic recitations. Rilla had never been willing to recite in public before. She was afraid of her tendency to lisp,

which had a habit of reviving if she were doing anything that made her nervous. When she had first been asked to recite at the Upper Glen meeting she had refused. Then she began to worry over her refusal. Was it cowardly? What would Jem think if he knew? After two days of worry Rilla phoned to the president of the Patriotic Society that she would recite. She did, and lisped several times, and lay awake most of the night in an agony of wounded vanity. Then two nights after she recited again at Harbour Head. She had been at Lowbridge and over-harbour since then and had become resigned to an occasional lisp. Nobody except herself seemed to mind it. And she was so earnest and appealing and shining-eyed! More than one recruit joined up because Rilla's eyes seemed to look right at him when she passionately demanded how could men die better than fighting for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods, or assured her audience with thrilling intensity that one crowded hour of glorious life was worth an age without a name. Even stolid Miller Douglas was so fired one night that it took Mary Vance a good hour to talk him back to sense. Mary Vance said bitterly that if Rilla Blythe felt as bad as she had pretended to feel over Jem's going to the front she wouldn't be urging other girls' brothers and friends to go.

On this particular night Rilla was tired and cold and very thankful to creep into her warm nest and cuddle down between her blankets, though as usual with a sorrowful wonder how Jem and Jerry were faring. She was just getting warm and drowsy when Jims suddenly began to cry — and kept on crying.

Rilla curled herself up in her bed and determined she would let him cry. She had Morgan behind her for justification. Jims was warm, physically comfortable — his cry wasn't the cry of pain — and had his little tummy as full as was good for him. Under such circumstances it would be simply spoiling him to fuss over him, and she wasn't going to do it. He could cry until he got good and tired and ready to go to sleep again.

Then Rilla's imagination began to torment her. Suppose, she thought, I was a tiny, helpless creature only five months old, with my father somewhere in France and my poor little mother, who had been so worried about me, in the graveyard. Suppose I was lying in a basket in a big, black

room, without one speck of light, and nobody within miles of me, for all I could see or know. Suppose there wasn't a human being anywhere who loved me — for a father who had never seen me couldn't love me very much, especially when he had never written a word to or about me. Wouldn't I cry, too? Wouldn't I feel just so lonely and forsaken and frightened that I'd have to cry?

Rilla hopped out. She picked Jims out of his basket and took him into her own bed. His hands were cold, poor mite. But he had promptly ceased to cry. And then, as she held him close to her in the darkness, suddenly Jims laughed — a real, gurgly, chuckly, delighted, delightful laugh.

“Oh, you dear little thing!” exclaimed Rilla. “Are you so pleased at finding you're not all alone, lost in a huge, big, black room?” Then she knew she wanted to kiss him and she did. She kissed his silky, scented little head, she kissed his chubby little cheek, she kissed his little cold hands. She wanted to squeeze him — to cuddle him, just as she used to squeeze and cuddle her kittens. Something delightful and yearning and brooding seemed to have taken possession of her. She had never felt like this before.

In a few minutes Jims was sound asleep; and, as Rilla listened to his soft, regular breathing and felt the little body warm and contented against her, she realized that — at last — she loved her war-baby.

“He has got to be — such — a — darling,” she thought drowsily, as she drifted off to slumberland herself.

In February Jem and Jerry and Robert Grant were in the trenches and a little more tension and dread was added to the Ingleside life. In March “Yiprez,” as Susan called it, had come to have a bitter significance. The daily list of casualties had begun to appear in the papers and no one at Ingleside ever answered the telephone without a horrible cold shrinking — for it might be the stationmaster phoning up to say a telegram had come from overseas. No one at Ingleside ever got up in the morning without a sudden piercing wonder over what the day might bring.

“And I used to welcome the mornings so,” thought Rilla.

Yet the round of life and duty went steadily on and every week or so one of the Glen lads who had just the other day been a rollicking schoolboy went into khaki.

“It is bitter cold out tonight, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, coming in out of the clear starlit crispness of the Canadian winter twilight. “I wonder if the boys in the trenches are warm.”

“How everything comes back to this war,” cried Gertrude Oliver. “We can’t get away from it — not even when we talk of the weather. I never go out these dark cold nights myself without thinking of the men in the trenches — not only our men but everybody’s men. I would feel the same if there were nobody I knew at the front. When I snuggle down in my comfortable bed I am ashamed of being comfortable. It seems as if it were wicked of me to be so when many are not.”

“I saw Mrs. Meredith down at the store,” said Susan, “and she tells me that they are really troubled over Bruce, he takes things so much to heart. He has cried himself to sleep for a week, over the starving Belgians. ‘Oh, mother,’ he will say to her, so beseeching-like, ‘surely the babies are never hungry — oh, not the babies, mother! Just say the babies are not hungry, mother.’ And she cannot say it because it would not be true, and she is at her wits’ end. They try to keep such things from him but he finds them out and then they cannot comfort him. It breaks my heart to read about them myself, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I cannot console myself with the thought that the tales are not true. When I read a novel that makes me want to weep I just say severely to myself, ‘Now, Susan Baker, you know that is all a pack of lies.’ But we must carry on. Jack Crawford says he is going to the war because he is tired of farming. I hope he will find it a pleasant change. And Mrs. Richard Elliott over-harbour is worrying herself sick because she used to be always scolding her husband about smoking up the parlour curtains. Now that he has enlisted she wishes she had never said a word to him. You know Josiah Cooper and William Daley, Mrs. Dr. dear. They used to be fast friends but they quarrelled twenty years ago and have never spoken since. Well, the other day Josiah went to William and said right out, ‘Let us be friends. ‘Tain’t any time to be holding grudges.’ William was real glad and held out his hand, and they sat down for a good talk. And

in less than half an hour they had quarrelled again, over how the war ought to be fought, Josiah holding that the Dardanelles expedition was rank folly and William maintaining that it was the one sensible thing the Allies had done. And now they are madder at each other than ever and William says Josiah is as bad a pro-German as Whiskers-on-the-Moon. Whiskers-on-the-moon vows he is no pro-German but calls himself a pacifist, whatever that may be. It is nothing proper or Whiskers would not be it and that you may tie to. He says that the big British victory at New Chapelle cost more than it was worth and he has forbid Joe Milgrave to come near the house because Joe ran up his father's flag when the news came. Have you noticed, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the Czar has changed that Prish name to Premysl, which proves that the man had good sense, Russian though he is? Joe Vickers told me in the store that he saw a very queer looking thing in the sky tonight over Lowbridge way. Do you suppose it could have been a Zeppelin, Mrs. Dr. dear?"

"I do not think it very likely, Susan."

"Well, I would feel easier about it if Whiskers-on-the-moon were not living in the Glen. They say he was seen going through strange manoeuvres with a lantern in his back yard one night lately. Some people think he was signalling."

"To whom — or what?"

"Ah, that is the mystery, Mrs. Dr. dear. In my opinion the Government would do well to keep an eye on that man if it does not want us to be all murdered in our beds some night. Now I shall just look over the papers a minute before going to write a letter to little Jem. Two things I never did, Mrs. Dr. dear, were write letters and read politics. Yet here I am doing both regular and I find there is something in politics after all. Whatever Woodrow Wilson means I cannot fathom but I am hoping I will puzzle it out yet."

Susan, in her pursuit of Wilson and politics, presently came upon something that disturbed her and exclaimed in a tone of bitter disappointment,

“That devilish Kaiser has only a boil after all.”

“Don’t swear, Susan,” said Dr. Blythe, pulling a long face.

“‘Devilish’ is not swearing, doctor, dear. I have always understood that swearing was taking the name of the Almighty in vain?”

“Well, it isn’t — ahem — refined,” said the doctor, winking at Miss Oliver.

“No, doctor, dear, the devil and the Kaiser — if so be that they are really two different people — are not refined. And you cannot refer to them in a refined way. So I abide by what I said, although you may notice that I am careful not to use such expressions when young Rilla is about. And I maintain that the papers have no right to say that the Kaiser has pneumonia and raise people’s hopes, and then come out and say he has nothing but a boil. A boil, indeed! I wish he was covered with them.”

Susan stalked out to the kitchen and settled down to write to Jem; deeming him in need of some home comfort from certain passages in his letter that day.

“We’re in an old wine cellar tonight, dad,” he wrote, “in water to our knees. Rats everywhere — no fire — a drizzling rain coming down — rather dismal. But it might be worse. I got Susan’s box today and everything was in tip-top order and we had a feast. Jerry is up the line somewhere and he says the rations are rather worse than Aunt Martha’s ditto used to be. But here they’re not bad — only monotonous. Tell Susan I’d give a year’s pay for a good batch of her monkey-faces; but don’t let that inspire her to send any for they wouldn’t keep.

“We have been under fire since the last week in February. One boy — he was a Nova Scotian — was killed right beside me yesterday. A shell burst near us and when the mess cleared away he was lying dead — not mangled at all — he just looked a little startled. It was the first time I’d been close to anything like that and it was a nasty sensation, but one soon gets used to horrors here. We’re in an absolutely different world. The only things that

are the same are the stars — and they are never in their right places, somehow.

“Tell mother not to worry — I’m all right — fit as a fiddle — and glad I came. There’s something across from us here that has got to be wiped out of the world, that’s all — an emanation of evil that would otherwise poison life for ever. It’s got to be done, dad, however long it takes, and whatever it costs, and you tell the Glen people this for me. They don’t realize yet what it is has broken loose — I didn’t when I first joined up. I thought it was fun. Well, it isn’t! But I’m in the right place all right — make no mistake about that. When I saw what had been done here to homes and gardens and people — well, dad, I seemed to see a gang of Huns marching through Rainbow Valley and the Glen, and the garden at Ingleside. There were gardens over here — beautiful gardens with the beauty of centuries — and what are they now? Mangled, desecrated things! We are fighting to make those dear old places where we had played as children, safe for other boys and girls — fighting for the preservation and safety of all sweet, wholesome things.

“Whenever any of you go to the station be sure to give Dog Monday a double pat for me. Fancy the faithful little beggar waiting there for me like that! Honestly, dad, on some of these dark cold nights in the trenches, it heartens and braces me up no end to think that thousands of miles away at the old Glen station there is a small spotted dog sharing my vigil.

“Tell Rilla I’m glad her war-baby is turning out so well, and tell Susan that I’m fighting a good fight against both Huns and cooties.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” whispered Susan solemnly, “what are cooties?”

Mrs. Blythe whispered back and then said in reply to Susan’s horrified ejaculations, “It’s always like that in the trenches, Susan.”

Susan shook her head and went away in grim silence to re-open a parcel she had sewed up for Jem and slip in a fine tooth comb.

CHAPTER XI I

IN THE DAYS OF LANGEMARCK

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“How can spring come and be beautiful in such a horror,” wrote Rilla in her diary. “When the sun shines and the fluffy yellow catkins are coming out on the willow-trees down by the brook, and the garden is beginning to be beautiful I can’t realize that such dreadful things are happening in Flanders. But they are!

“This past week has been terrible for us all, since the news came of the fighting around Ypres and the battles of Langemarck and St. Julien. Our Canadian boys have done splendidly — General French says they ‘saved the situation,’ when the Germans had all but broken through. But I can’t feel pride or exultation or anything but a gnawing anxiety over Jem and Jerry and Mr. Grant. The casualty lists are coming out in the papers every day — oh, there are so many of them. I can’t bear to read them for fear I’d find Jem’s name — for there have been cases where people have seen their boys’ names in the casualty lists before the official telegram came. As for the telephone, for a day or two I just refused to answer it, because I thought I could not endure the horrible moment that came between saying ‘Hello’ and hearing the response. That moment seemed a hundred years long, for I was always dreading to hear ‘There is a telegram for Dr. Blythe.’ Then, when I had shirked for a while, I was ashamed of leaving it all for mother or Susan, and now I make myself go. But it never gets any easier. Gertrude teaches school and reads compositions and sets examination papers just as she always has done, but I know her thoughts are over in Flanders all the time. Her eyes haunt me.

“And Kenneth is in khaki now, too. He has got a lieutenant’s commission and expects to go overseas in midsummer, so he wrote me. There wasn’t much else in the letter — he seemed to be thinking of nothing but going overseas. I shall not see him again before he goes — perhaps I will never

see him again. Sometimes I ask myself if that evening at Four Winds was all a dream. It might as well be — it seems as if it happened in another life lived years ago — and everybody has forgotten it but me.

“Walter and Nan and Di came home last night from Redmond. When Walter stepped off the train Dog Monday rushed to meet him, frantic with joy. I suppose he thought Jem would be there, too. After the first moment, he paid no attention to Walter and his pats, but just stood there, wagging his tail nervously and looking past Walter at the other people coming out, with eyes that made me choke up, for I couldn’t help thinking that, for all we knew, Monday might never see Jem come off that train again. Then, when all the people were out, Monday looked up at Walter, gave his hand a little lick as if to say, ‘I know it isn’t your fault he didn’t come — excuse me for feeling disappointed,’ and then he trotted back to his shed, with that funny little sidelong waggle of his that always makes it seem that his hind legs are travelling directly away from the point at which his forelegs are aiming.

“We tried to coax him home with us — Di even got down and kissed him between the eyes and said, ‘Monday, old duck, won’t you come up with us just for the evening?’ And Monday said — he did!— ‘I am very sorry but I can’t. I’ve got a date to meet Jem here, you know, and there’s a train goes through at eight.’

“It’s lovely to have Walter back again though he seems quiet and sad, just as he was at Christmas. But I’m going to love him hard and cheer him up and make him laugh as he used to. It seems to me that every day of my life Walter means more to me.

“The other evening Susan happened to say that the mayflowers were out in Rainbow Valley. I chanced to be looking at mother when Susan spoke. Her face changed and she gave a queer little choked cry. Most of the time mother is so spunky and gay you would never guess what she feels inside; but now and then some little thing is too much for her and we see under the surface. ‘Mayflowers!’ she said. ‘Jem brought me mayflowers last year!’ and she got up and went out of the room. I would have rushed off to Rainbow Valley and brought her an armful of mayflowers, but I knew that wasn’t what she wanted. And after Walter got home last night he slipped

away to the valley and brought mother home all the mayflowers he could find. Nobody had said a word to him about it — he just remembered himself that Jem used to bring mother the first mayflowers and so he brought them in Jem's place. It shows how tender and thoughtful he is. And yet there are people who send him cruel letters!

“It seems strange that we can go in with ordinary life just as if nothing were happening overseas that concerned us, just as if any day might not bring us awful news. But we can and do. Susan is putting in the garden, and mother and she are housecleaning, and we Junior Reds are getting up a concert in aid of the Belgians. We have been practising for a month and having no end of trouble and bother with cranky people. Miranda Pryor promised to help with a dialogue and when she had her part all learnt her father put his foot down and refused to allow her to help at all. I am not blaming Miranda exactly, but I do think she might have a little more spunk sometimes. If she put her foot down once in a while she might bring her father to terms, for she is all the housekeeper he has and what would he do if she ‘struck’? If I were in Miranda's shoes I'd find some way of managing Whiskers-on-the-moon. I would horsewhip him, or bite him, if nothing else would serve. But Miranda is a meek and obedient daughter whose days should be long in the land.

“I couldn't get anyone else to take the part, because nobody liked it, so finally I had to take it myself. Olive Kirk is on the concert committee and goes against me in every single thing. But I got my way in asking Mrs. Channing to come out from town and sing for us, anyhow. She is a beautiful singer and will draw such a crowd that we will make more than we will have to pay her. Olive Kirk thought our local talent good enough and Minnie Clow won't sing at all now in the choruses because she would be so nervous before Mrs. Channing. And Minnie is the only good alto we have! There are times when I am so exasperated that I feel tempted to wash my hands of the whole affair; but after I dance round my room a few times in sheer rage I cool down and have another whack at it. Just at present I am racked with worry for fear the Isaac Reeses are taking whooping-cough. They have all got a dreadful cold and there are five of them who have important parts in the programme and if they go and develop whooping-cough what shall I do? Dick Reese's violin solo is to be

one of our titbits and Kit Reese is in every tableau and the three small girls have the cutest flag-drill. I've been toiling for weeks to train them in it, and now it seems likely that all my trouble will go for nothing.

"Jims cut his first tooth today. I am very glad, for he is nearly nine months old and Mary Vance has been insinuating that he is awfully backward about cutting his teeth. He has begun to creep but doesn't crawl as most babies do. He trots about on all fours and carries things in his mouth like a little dog. Nobody can say he isn't up to schedule time in the matter of creeping anyway — away ahead of it indeed, since ten months is Morgan's average for creeping. He is so cute, it will be a shame if his dad never sees him. His hair is coming on nicely too, and I am not without hope that it will be curly.

"Just for a few minutes, while I've been writing of Jims and the concert, I've forgotten Ypres and the poison gas and the casualty lists. Now it all rushes back, worse than ever. Oh, if we could just know that Jem is all right! I used to be so furious with Jem when he called me Spider. And now, if he would just come whistling through the hall and call out, 'Hello, Spider,' as he used to do, I would think it the loveliest name in the world."

Rilla put away her diary and went out to the garden. The spring evening was very lovely. The long, green, seaward-looking glen was filled with dusk, and beyond it were meadows of sunset. The harbour was radiant, purple here, azure there, opal elsewhere. The maple grove was beginning to be misty green. Rilla looked about her with wistful eyes. Who said that spring was the joy of the year? It was the heartbreak of the year. And the pale-purple mornings and the daffodil stars and the wind in the old pine were so many separate pangs of the heartbreak. Would life ever be free from dread again?

"It's good to see P.E.I. twilight once more," said Walter, joining her. "I didn't really remember that the sea was so blue and the roads so red and the wood nooks so wild and fairy haunted. Yes, the fairies still abide here. I vow I could find scores of them under the violets in Rainbow Valley."

Rilla was momentarily happy. This sounded like the Walter of yore. She hoped he was forgetting certain things that had troubled him.

“And isn’t the sky blue over Rainbow Valley?” she said, responding to his mood. “Blue — blue — you’d have to say ‘blue’ a hundred times before you could express how blue it is.”

Susan wandered by, her head tied up with a shawl, her hands full of garden implements. Doc, stealthy and wild-eyed, was shadowing her steps among the spirea bushes.

“The sky may be blue,” said Susan, “but that cat has been Hyde all day so we will likely have rain tonight and by the same token I have rheumatism in my shoulder.”

“It may rain — but don’t think rheumatism, Susan — think violets,” said Walter gaily — rather too gaily, Rilla thought.

Susan considered him unsympathetic.

“Indeed, Walter dear, I do not know what you mean by thinking violets,” she responded stiffly, “and rheumatism is not a thing to be joked about, as you may some day realize for yourself. I hope I am not of the kind that is always complaining of their aches and pains, especially now when the news is so terrible. Rheumatism is bad enough but I realize, and none better, that it is not to be compared to being gassed by the Huns.”

“Oh, my God, no!” exclaimed Walter passionately. He turned and went back to the house.

Susan shook her head. She disapproved entirely of such ejaculations. “I hope he will not let his mother hear him talking like that,” she thought as she stacked the hoes and rake away.

Rilla was standing among the budding daffodils with tear-filled eyes. Her evening was spoiled; she detested Susan, who had somehow hurt Walter; and Jem — had Jem been gassed? Had he died in torture?

“I can’t endure this suspense any longer,” said Rilla desperately.

But she endured it as the others did for another week. Then a letter came from Jem. He was all right.

“I’ve come through without a scratch, dad. Don’t know how I or any of us did it. You’ll have seen all about it in the papers — I can’t write of it. But the Huns haven’t got through — they won’t get through. Jerry was knocked stiff by a shell one time, but it was only the shock. He was all right in a few days. Grant is safe, too.”

Nan had a letter from Jerry Meredith. “I came back to consciousness at dawn,” he wrote. “Couldn’t tell what had happened to me but thought that I was done for. I was all alone and afraid — terribly afraid. Dead men were all around me, lying on the horrible grey, slimy fields. I was woefully thirsty — and I thought of David and the Bethlehem water — and of the old spring in Rainbow Valley under the maples. I seemed to see it just before me — and you standing laughing on the other side of it — and I thought it was all over with me. And I didn’t care. Honestly, I didn’t care. I just felt a dreadful childish fear of loneliness and of those dead men around me, and a sort of wonder how this could have happened to me. Then they found me and carted me off and before long I discovered that there wasn’t really anything wrong with me. I’m going back to the trenches tomorrow. Every man is needed there that can be got.”

“Laughter is gone out of the world,” said Faith Meredith, who had come over to report on her letters. “I remember telling old Mrs. Taylor long ago that the world was a world of laughter. But it isn’t so any longer.”

“It’s a shriek of anguish,” said Gertrude Oliver.

“We must keep a little laughter, girls,” said Mrs. Blythe. “A good laugh is as good as a prayer sometimes — only sometimes,” she added under her breath. She had found it very hard to laugh during the three weeks she had just lived through — she, Anne Blythe, to whom laughter had always come so easily and freshly. And what hurt most was that Rilla’s laughter had grown so rare — Rilla whom she used to think laughed overmuch. Was all the child’s girlhood to be so clouded? Yet how strong and clever and womanly she was growing! How patiently she knitted and sewed and

manipulated those uncertain Junior Reds! And how wonderful she was with Jims.

“She really could not do better for that child than if she had raised a baker’s dozen, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan had avowed solemnly. “Little did I ever expect it of her on the day she landed here with that soup tureen.”

CHAPTER XII I

A SLICE OF HUMBLE PIE

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“I am very much afraid, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, who had been on a pilgrimage to the station with some choice bones for Dog Monday, “that something terrible has happened. Whiskers-on-the-moon came off the train from Charlottetown and he was looking pleased. I do not remember that I ever saw him with a smile on in public before. Of course he may have just been getting the better of somebody in a cattle deal but I have an awful presentiment that the Huns have broken through somewhere.”

Perhaps Susan was unjust in connecting Mr. Pryor’s smile with the sinking of the Lusitania, news of which circulated an hour later when the mail was distributed. But the Glen boys turned out that night in a body and broke all his windows in a fine frenzy of indignation over the Kaiser’s doings.

“I do not say they did right and I do not say they did wrong,” said Susan, when she heard of it. “But I will say that I wouldn’t have minded throwing a few stones myself. One thing is certain — Whiskers-on-the-moon said in the post office the day the news came, in the presence of witnesses, that folks who could not stay home after they had been warned deserved no better fate. Norman Douglas is fairly foaming at the mouth over it all. ‘If the devil doesn’t get those men who sunk the Lusitania then there is no use in there being a devil,’ he was shouting in Carter’s store last night. Norman Douglas always has believed that anybody who opposed him was on the side of the devil, but a man like that is bound to be right once in a while. Bruce Meredith is worrying over the babies who were drowned. And it seems he prayed for something very special last Friday night and didn’t get it, and was feeling quite disgruntled over it. But when he heard about the Lusitania he told his mother that he understood now why God didn’t answer his prayer — He was too busy attending to the souls of all the people who went down on the Lusitania. That child’s brain is a hundred

years older than his body, Mrs. Dr. dear. As for the Lusitania, it is an awful occurrence, whatever way you look at it. But Woodrow Wilson is going to write a note about it, so why worry? A pretty president!" and Susan banged her pots about wrathfully. President Wilson was rapidly becoming anathema in Susan's kitchen.

Mary Vance dropped in one evening to tell the Ingleside folks that she had withdrawn all opposition to Miller Douglas's enlisting.

"This Lusitania business was too much for me," said Mary brusquely. "When the Kaiser takes to drowning innocent babies it's high time somebody told him where he gets off at. This thing must be fought to a finish. It's been soaking into my mind slow but I'm on now. So I up and told Miller he could go as far as I was concerned. Old Kitty Alec won't be converted though. If every ship in the world was submarined and every baby drowned, Kitty wouldn't turn a hair. But I flatter myself that it was me kept Miller back all along and not the fair Kitty. I may have deceived myself — but we shall see."

They did see. The next Sunday Miller Douglas walked into the Glen Church beside Mary Vance in khaki. And Mary was so proud of him that her white eyes fairly blazed. Joe Milgrave, back under the gallery, looked at Miller and Mary and then at Miranda Pryor, and sighed so heavily that every one within a radius of three pews heard him and knew what his trouble was. Walter Blythe did not sigh. But Rilla, scanning his face anxiously, saw a look that cut into her heart. It haunted her for the next week and made an undercurrent of soreness in her soul, which was externally being harrowed up by the near approach of the Red Cross concert and the worries connected therewith. The Reese cold had not developed into whooping-cough, so that tangle was straightened out. But other things were hanging in the balance; and on the very day before the concert came a regretful letter from Mrs. Channing saying that she could not come to sing. Her son, who was in Kingsport with his regiment, was seriously ill with pneumonia, and she must go to him at once.

The members of the concert committee looked at each other in blank dismay. What was to be done?

“This comes of depending on outside help,” said Olive Kirk, disagreeably.

“We must do something,” said Rilla, too desperate to care for Olive’s manner. “We’ve advertised the concert everywhere — and crowds are coming — there’s even a big party coming out from town — and we were short enough of music as it was. We must get some one to sing in Mrs. Channing’s place.”

“I don’t know who you can get at this late date,” said Olive. “Irene Howard could do it; but it is not likely she will after the way she was insulted by our society.”

“How did our society insult her?” asked Rilla, in what she called her ‘cold-pale tone.’ Its coldness and pallor did not daunt Olive.

“You insulted her,” she answered sharply. “Irene told me all about it — she was literally heartbroken. You told her never to speak to you again — and Irene told me she simply could not imagine what she had said or done to deserve such treatment. That was why she never came to our meetings again but joined in with the Lowbridge Red Cross. I do not blame her in the least, and I, for one, will not ask her to lower herself by helping us out of this scrape.”

“You don’t expect me to ask her?” giggled Amy MacAllister, the other member of the committee. “Irene and I haven’t spoken for a hundred years. Irene is always getting ‘insulted’ by somebody. But she is a lovely singer, I’ll admit that, and people would just as soon hear her as Mrs. Channing.”

“It wouldn’t do any good if you did ask her,” said Olive significantly. “Soon after we began planning this concert, back in April, I met Irene in town one day and asked her if she wouldn’t help us out. She said she’d love to but she really didn’t see how she could when Rilla Blythe was running the programme, after the strange way Rilla had behaved to her. So there it is and here we are, and a nice failure our concert will be.”

Rilla went home and shut herself up in her room, her soul in a turmoil. She would not humiliate herself by apologizing to Irene Howard! Irene had

been as much in the wrong as she had been; and she had told such mean, distorted versions of their quarrel everywhere, posing as a puzzled, injured martyr. Rilla could never bring herself to tell her side of it. The fact that a slur at Walter was mixed up in it tied her tongue. So most people believed that Irene had been badly used, except a few girls who had never liked her and sided with Rilla. And yet — the concert over which she had worked so hard was going to be a failure. Mrs. Channing's four solos were the feature of the whole programme.

"Miss Oliver, what do you think about it?" she asked in desperation.

"I think Irene is the one who should apologize," said Miss Oliver. "But unfortunately my opinion will not fill the blanks in your programme."

"If I went and apologized meekly to Irene she would sing, I am sure," sighed Rilla. "She really loves to sing in public. But I know she'll be nasty about it — I feel I'd rather do anything than go. I suppose I should go — if Jem and Jerry can face the Huns surely I can face Irene Howard, and swallow my pride to ask a favour of her for the good of the Belgians. Just at present I feel that I cannot do it but for all that I have a presentiment that after supper you'll see me meekly trotting through Rainbow Valley on my way to the Upper Glen Road."

Rilla's presentiment proved correct. After supper she dressed herself carefully in her blue, beaded crepe — for vanity is harder to quell than pride and Irene always saw any flaw or shortcoming in another girl's appearance. Besides, as Rilla had told her mother one day when she was nine years old, "It is easier to behave nicely when you have your good clothes on."

Rilla did her hair very becomingly and donned a long raincoat for fear of a shower. But all the while her thoughts were concerned with the coming distasteful interview, and she kept rehearsing mentally her part in it. She wished it were over — she wished she had never tried to get up a Belgian Relief concert — she wished she had not quarreled with Irene. After all, disdainful silence would have been much more effective in meeting the slur upon Walter. It was foolish and childish to fly out as she had done — well, she would be wiser in the future, but meanwhile a large and very

unpalatable slice of humble pie had to be eaten, and Rilla Blythe was no fonder of that wholesome article of diet than the rest of us.

By sunset she was at the door of the Howard house — a pretentious abode, with white scroll-work round the eaves and an eruption of bay-windows on all its sides. Mrs. Howard, a plump, voluble dame, met Rilla gushingly and left her in the parlour while she went to call Irene. Rilla threw off her raincoat and looked at herself critically in the mirror over the mantel. Hair, hat, and dress were satisfactory — nothing there for Miss Irene to make fun of. Rilla remembered how clever and amusing she used to think Irene's biting little comments about other girls. Well, it had come home to her now.

Presently, Irene skimmed down, elegantly gowned, with her pale, straw-coloured hair done in the latest and most extreme fashion, and an over-luscious atmosphere of perfume enveloping her.

"Why how do you do, Miss Blythe?" she said sweetly. "This is a very unexpected pleasure."

Rilla had risen to take Irene's chilly fingertips and now, as she sat down again, she saw something that temporarily stunned her. Irene saw it too, as she sat down, and a little amused, impertinent smile appeared on her lips and hovered there during the rest of the interview.

On one of Rilla's feet was a smart little steel-buckled shoe and a filmy blue silk stocking. The other was clad in a stout and rather shabby boot and black lisle!

Poor Rilla! She had changed, or begun to change her boots and stockings after she had put on her dress. This was the result of doing one thing with your hands and another with your brain. Oh, what a ridiculous position to be in — and before Irene Howard of all people — Irene, who was staring at Rilla's feet as if she had never seen feet before! And once she had thought Irene's manner perfection! Everything that Rilla had prepared to say vanished from her memory. Vainly trying to tuck her unlucky foot under her chair, she blurted out a blunt statement.

“I have come to ask a favour of you, Irene.”

There — lisp! Oh, she had been prepared for humiliation but not to this extent! Really, there were limits!

“Yes?” said Irene in a cool, questioning tone, lifting her shallowly-set, insolent eyes to Rilla’s crimson face for a moment and then dropping them again as if she could not tear them from their fascinated gaze at the shabby boot and the gallant shoe.

Rilla gathered herself together. She would not lisp — she would be calm and composed.

“Mrs. Channing cannot come because her son is ill in Kingsport, and I have come on behalf of the committee to ask you if you will be so kind as to sing for us in her place.” Rilla enunciated every word so precisely and carefully that she seemed to be reciting a lesson.

“It’s something of a fiddler’s invitation, isn’t it?” said Irene, with one of her disagreeable smiles.

“Olive Kirk asked you to help when we first thought of the concert and you refused,” said Rilla.

“Why, I could hardly help — then — could I?” asked Irene plaintively. “After you ordered me never to speak to you again? It would have been very awkward for us both, don’t you think?”

Now for the humble pie.

“I want to apologize to you for saying that, Irene.” said Rilla steadily. “I should not have said it and I have been very sorry ever since. Will you forgive me?”

“And sing at your concert?” said Irene sweetly and insultingly.

“If you mean,” said Rilla miserably, “that I would not be apologizing to you if it were not for the concert perhaps that is true. But it is also true that I have felt ever since it happened that I should not have said what I did and

that I have been sorry for it all winter. That is all I can say. If you feel you can't forgive me I suppose there is nothing more to be said."

"Oh, Rilla dear, don't snap me up like that," pleaded Irene. "Of course I'll forgive you — though I did feel awfully about it — how awfully I hope you'll never know. I cried for weeks over it. And I hadn't said or done a thing!"

Rilla choked back a retort. After all, there was no use in arguing with Irene, and the Belgians were starving.

"Don't you think you can help us with the concert," she forced herself to say. Oh, if only Irene would stop looking at that boot! Rilla could just hear her giving Olive Kirk an account of it.

"I don't see how I really can at the last moment like this," protested Irene. "There isn't time to learn anything new."

"Oh, you have lots of lovely songs that nobody in the Glen ever heard before," said Rilla, who knew Irene had been going to town all winter for lessons and that this was only a pretext. "They will all be new down there."

"But I have no accompanist," protested Irene.

"Una Meredith can accompany you," said Rilla.

"Oh, I couldn't ask her," sighed Irene. "We haven't spoken since last fall. She was so hateful to me the time of our Sunday-school concert that I simply had to give her up."

Dear, dear, was Irene at feud with everybody? As for Una Meredith being hateful to anybody, the idea was so farcical that Rilla had much ado to keep from laughing in Irene's very face.

"Miss Oliver is a beautiful pianist and can play any accompaniment at sight," said Rilla desperately. "She will play for you and you could run over your songs easily tomorrow evening at Ingleside before the concert."

“But I haven’t anything to wear. My new evening-dress isn’t home from Charlottetown yet, and I simply cannot wear my old one at such a big affair. It is too shabby and old-fashioned.”

“Our concert,” said Rilla slowly, “is in aid of Belgian children who are starving to death. Don’t you think you could wear a shabby dress once for their sake, Irene?”

“Oh, don’t you think those accounts we get of the conditions of the Belgians are very much exaggerated?” said Irene. “I’m sure they can’t be actually starving you know, in the twentieth century. The newspapers always colour things so highly.”

Rilla concluded that she had humiliated herself enough. There was such a thing as self-respect. No more coaxing, concert or no concert. She got up, boot and all.

“I am sorry you can’t help us, Irene, but since you cannot we must do the best we can.”

Now this did not suit Irene at all. She desired exceedingly to sing at that concert, and all her hesitations were merely by way of enhancing the boon of her final consent. Besides, she really wanted to be friends with Rilla again. Rilla’s wholehearted, ungrudging adoration had been very sweet incense to her. And Ingleside was a very charming house to visit, especially when a handsome college student like Walter was home. She stopped looking at Rilla’s feet.

“Rilla, darling, don’t be so abrupt. I really want to help you, if I can manage it. Just sit down and let’s talk it over.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t. I have to be home soon — Jims has to be settled for the night, you know.”

“Oh, yes — the baby you are bringing up by the book. It’s perfectly sweet of you to do it when you hate children so. How cross you were just because I kissed him! But we’ll forget all that and be chums again, won’t we? Now, about the concert — I dare say I can run into town on the morning train

after my dress, and out again on the afternoon one in plenty of time for the concert, if you'll ask Miss Oliver to play for me. I couldn't — she's so dreadfully haughty and supercilious that she simply paralyses poor little me."

Rilla did not waste time or breath defending Miss Oliver. She coolly thanked Irene, who had suddenly become very amiable and gushing, and got away. She was very thankful the interview was over. But she knew now that she and Irene could never be the friends they had been. Friendly, yes — but friends, no. Nor did she wish it. All winter she had felt under her other and more serious worries, a little feeling of regret for her lost chum. Now it was suddenly gone. Irene was not as Mrs. Elliott would say, of the race that knew Joseph. Rilla did not say or think that she had outgrown Irene. Had the thought occurred to her she would have considered it absurd when she was not yet seventeen and Irene was twenty. But it was the truth. Irene was just what she had been a year ago — just what she would always be. Rilla Blythe's nature in that year had changed and matured and deepened. She found herself seeing through Irene with a disconcerting clearness — discerning under all her superficial sweetness, her pettiness, her vindictiveness, her insincerity, her essential cheapness. Irene had lost for ever her faithful worshipper.

But not until Rilla had traversed the Upper Glen Road and found herself in the moon-dappled solitude of Rainbow Valley did she fully recover her composure of spirit. Then she stopped under a tall wild plum that was ghostly white and fair in its misty spring bloom and laughed.

"There is only one thing of importance just now — and that is that the Allies win the war," she said aloud. "Therefore, it follows without dispute that the fact that I went to see Irene Howard with odd shoes and stockings on is of no importance whatever. Nevertheless, I, Bertha Marilla Blythe, swear solemnly with the moon as witness" — Rilla lifted her hand dramatically to the said moon—"that I will never leave my room again without looking carefully at both my feet."

CHAPTER XI V

THE VALLEY OF DECISION

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Susan kept the flag flying at Ingleside all the next day, in honour of Italy's declaration of war.

“And not before it was time, Mrs. Dr. dear, considering the way things have begun to go on the Russian front. Say what you will, those Russians are kittle cattle, the grand duke Nicholas to the contrary notwithstanding. It is a fortunate thing for Italy that she has come in on the right side, but whether it is as fortunate for the Allies I will not predict until I know more about Italians than I do now. However, she will give that old reprobate of a Francis Joseph something to think about. A pretty Emperor indeed — with one foot in the grave and yet plotting wholesale murder” — and Susan thumped and kneaded her bread with as much vicious energy as she could have expended in punching Francis Joseph himself if he had been so unlucky as to fall into her clutches.

Walter had gone to town on the early train, and Nan offered to look after Jims for the day and so set Rilla free. Rilla was wildly busy all day, helping to decorate the Glen hall and seeing to a hundred last things. The evening was beautiful, in spite of the fact that Mr. Pryor was reported to have said that he “hoped it would rain pitch forks points down,” and to have wantonly kicked Miranda's dog as he said it. Rilla, rushing home from the hall, dressed hurriedly. Everything had gone surprisingly well at the last; Irene was even then downstairs practising her songs with Miss Oliver; Rilla was excited and happy, forgetful even of the Western front for the moment. It gave her a sense of achievement and victory to have brought her efforts of weeks to such a successful conclusion. She knew that there had not lacked people who thought and hinted that Rilla Blythe had not the tact or patience to engineer a concert programme. She had shown them! Little snatches of song bubbled up from her lips as she

dressed. She thought she was looking very well. Excitement brought a faint, becoming pink into her round creamy cheeks, quite drowning out her few freckles, and her hair gleamed with red-brown lustre. Should she wear crab-apple blossoms in it, or her little fillet of pearls? After some agonised wavering she decided on the crab-apple blossoms and tucked the white waxen cluster behind her left ear. Now for a final look at her feet. Yes, both slippers were on. She gave the sleeping Jims a kiss — what a dear little warm, rosy, satin face he had — and hurried down the hill to the hall. Already it was filling — soon it was crowded. Her concert was going to be a brilliant success.

The first three numbers were successfully over. Rilla was in the little dressing-room behind the platform, looking out on the moonlit harbour and rehearsing her own recitations. She was alone, the rest of the performers being in the larger room on the other side. Suddenly she felt two soft bare arms slipping round her waist, then Irene Howard dropped a light kiss on her cheek.

“Rilla, you sweet thing, you’re looking simply angelic tonight. You have spunk — I thought you would feel so badly over Walter’s enlisting that you’d hardly be able to bear up at all, and here you are as cool as a cucumber. I wish I had half your nerve.”

Rilla stood perfectly still. She felt no emotion whatever — she felt nothing. The world of feeling had just gone blank.

“Walter — enlisting” — she heard herself saying — then she heard Irene’s affected little laugh.

“Why, didn’t you know? I thought you did of course, or I wouldn’t have mentioned it. I am always putting my foot in it, aren’t I? Yes, that is what he went to town for to-day — he told me coming out on the train tonight, I was the first person he told. He isn’t in khaki yet — they were out of uniforms — but he will be in a day or two. I always said Walter had as much pluck as anybody. I assure you I felt proud of him, Rilla, when he told me what he’d done. Oh, there’s an end of Rick MacAllister’s reading. I must fly. I promised I’d play for the next chorus — Alice Clow has such a headache.”

She was gone — oh, thank God, she was gone! Rilla was alone again, staring out at the unchanged, dreamlike beauty of moonlit Four Winds. Feeling was coming back to her — a pang of agony so acute as to be almost physical seemed to rend her apart.

“I cannot bear it,” she said. And then came the awful thought that perhaps she could bear it and that there might be years of this hideous suffering before her.

She must get away — she must rush home — she must be alone. She could not go out there and play for drills and give readings and take part in dialogues now. It would spoil half the concert; but that did not matter — nothing mattered. Was this she, Rilla Blythe — this tortured thing, who had been quite happy a few minutes ago? Outside, a quartette was singing “We’ll never let the old flag fall” — the music seemed to be coming from some remote distance. Why couldn’t she cry, as she had cried when Jem told them he must go? If she could cry perhaps this horrible something that seemed to have seized on her very life might let go. But no tears came! Where were her scarf and coat? She must get away and hide herself like an animal hurt to the death.

Was it a coward’s part to run away like this? The question came to her suddenly as if someone else had asked it. She thought of the shambles of the Flanders front — she thought of her brother and her playmate helping to hold those fire-swept trenches. What would they think of her if she shirked her little duty here — the humble duty of carrying the programme through for her Red Cross? But she couldn’t stay — she couldn’t — yet what was it mother had said when Jem went: “When our women fail in courage shall our men be fearless still?” But this — this was unbearable.

Still, she stopped halfway to the door and went back to the window. Irene was singing now; her beautiful voice — the only real thing about her — soared clear and sweet through the building. Rilla knew that the girls’ Fairy Drill came next. Could she go out there and play for it? Her head was aching now — her throat was burning. Oh, why had Irene told her just then, when telling could do no good? Irene had been very cruel. Rilla remembered now that more than once that day she had caught her mother looking at her with an odd expression. She had been too busy to wonder

what it meant. She understood now. Mother had known why Walter went to town but wouldn't tell her until the concert was over. What spirit and endurance mother had!

"I must stay here and see things through," said Rilla, clasping her cold hands together.

The rest of the evening always seemed like a fevered dream to her. Her body was crowded by people but her soul was alone in a torture-chamber of its own. Yet she played steadily for the drills and gave her readings without faltering. She even put on a grotesque old Irish woman's costume and acted the part in the dialogue which Miranda Pryor had not taken. But she did not give her "brogue" the inimitable twist she had given it in the practices, and her readings lacked their usual fire and appeal. As she stood before the audience she saw one face only — that of the handsome, dark-haired lad sitting beside her mother — and she saw that same face in the trenches — saw it lying cold and dead under the stars — saw it pining in prison — saw the light of its eyes blotted out — saw a hundred horrible things as she stood there on the beflagged platform of the Glen hall with her own face whiter than the milky crab-blossoms in her hair. Between her numbers she walked restlessly up and down the little dressing-room. Would the concert never end!

It ended at last. Olive Kirk rushed up and told her exultantly that they had made a hundred dollars. "That's good," Rilla said mechanically. Then she was away from them all — oh, thank God, she was away from them all — Walter was waiting for her at the door. He put his arm through hers silently and they went together down the moonlit road. The frogs were singing in the marshes, the dim, ensilvered fields of home lay all around them. The spring night was lovely and appealing. Rilla felt that its beauty was an insult to her pain. She would hate moonlight for ever.

"You know?" said Walter.

"Yes. Irene told me," answered Rilla chokingly.

"We didn't want you to know till the evening was over. I knew when you came out for the drill that you had heard. Little sister, I had to do it. I

couldn't live any longer on such terms with myself as I have been since the Lusitania was sunk. When I pictured those dead women and children floating about in that pitiless, ice-cold water — well, at first I just felt a sort of nausea with life. I wanted to get out of the world where such a thing could happen — shake its accursed dust from my feet for ever. Then I knew I had to go.”

“There are — plenty — without you.”

“That isn't the point, Rilla-my-Rilla. I'm going for my own sake — to save my soul alive. It will shrink to something small and mean and lifeless if I don't go. That would be worse than blindness or mutilation or any of the things I've feared.”

“You may — be — killed,” Rilla hated herself for saying it — she knew it was a weak and cowardly thing to say — but she had rather gone to pieces after the tension of the evening.

“‘Comes he slow or comes he fast
It is but death who comes at last.’”

quoted Walter. “It's not death I fear — I told you that long ago. One can pay too high a price for mere life, little sister. There's so much hideousness in this war — I've got to go and help wipe it out of the world. I'm going to fight for the beauty of life, Rilla-my-Rilla — that is my duty. There may be a higher duty, perhaps — but that is mine. I owe life and Canada that, and I've got to pay it. Rilla, tonight for the first time since Jem left I've got back my self-respect. I could write poetry,” Walter laughed. “I've never been able to write a line since last August. Tonight I'm full of it. Little sister, be brave — you were so plucky when Jem went.”

“This — is — different,” Rilla had to stop after every word to fight down a wild outburst of sobs. “I loved — Jem — of course — but — when — he went — away — we thought — the war — would soon — be over — and you are — everything to me, Walter.”

“You must be brave to help me, Rilla-my-Rilla. I’m exalted tonight — drunk with the excitement of victory over myself — but there will be other times when it won’t be like this — I’ll need your help then.”

“When — do — you — go?” She must know the worst at once.

“Not for a week — then we go to Kingsport for training. I suppose we’ll go overseas about the middle of July — we don’t know.”

One week — only one week more with Walter! The eyes of youth did not see how she was to go on living.

When they turned in at the Ingleside gate Walter stopped in the shadows of the old pines and drew Rilla close to him.

“Rilla-my-Rilla, there were girls as sweet and pure as you in Belgium and Flanders. You — even you — know what their fate was. We must make it impossible for such things to happen again while the world lasts. You’ll help me, won’t you?”

“I’ll try, Walter,” she said. “Oh, I will try.”

As she clung to him with her face pressed against his shoulder she knew that it had to be. She accepted the fact then and there. He must go — her beautiful Walter with his beautiful soul and dreams and ideals. And she had known all along that it would come sooner or later. She had seen it coming to her — coming — coming — as one sees the shadow of a cloud drawing near over a sunny field, swiftly and inescapably. Amid all her pain she was conscious of an odd feeling of relief in some hidden part of her soul, where a little dull, unacknowledged soreness had been lurking all winter. No one — no one could ever call Walter a slacker now.

Rilla did not sleep that night. Perhaps no one at Ingleside did except Jims. The body grows slowly and steadily, but the soul grows by leaps and bounds. It may come to its full stature in an hour. From that night Rilla Blythe’s soul was the soul of a woman in its capacity for suffering, for strength, for endurance.

When the bitter dawn came she rose and went to her window. Below her was a big apple-tree, a great swelling cone of rosy blossom. Walter had planted it years ago when he was a little boy. Beyond Rainbow Valley there was a cloudy shore of morning with little ripples of sunrise breaking over it. The far, cold beauty of a lingering star shone above it. Why, in this world of springtime loveliness, must hearts break?

Rilla felt arms go about her lovingly, protectingly. It was mother — pale, large-eyed mother.

“Oh, mother, how can you bear it?” she cried wildly. “Rilla, dear, I’ve known for several days that Walter meant to go. I’ve had time to — to rebel and grow reconciled. We must give him up. There is a Call greater and more insistent than the call of our love — he has listened to it. We must not add to the bitterness of his sacrifice.”

“Our sacrifice is greater than his,” cried Rilla passionately. “Our boys give only themselves. We give them.”

Before Mrs. Blythe could reply Susan stuck her head in at the door, never troubling over such frills of etiquette as knocking. Her eyes were suspiciously red but all she said was,

“Will I bring up your breakfast, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“No, no, Susan. We will all be down presently. Do you know — that Walter has joined up.”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear. The doctor told me last night. I suppose the Almighty has His own reasons for allowing such things. We must submit and endeavour to look on the bright side. It may cure him of being a poet, at least” — Susan still persisted in thinking that poets and tramps were tarred with the same brush—”and that would be something. But thank God,” she muttered in a lower tone, “that Shirley is not old enough to go.”

“Isn’t that the same thing as thanking Him that some other woman’s son has to go in Shirley’s place?” asked the doctor, pausing on the threshold.

“No, it is not, doctor dear,” said Susan defiantly, as she picked up Jims, who was opening his big dark eyes and stretching up his dimpled paws. “Do not you put words in my mouth that I would never dream of uttering. I am a plain woman and cannot argue with you, but I do not thank God that anybody has to go. I only know that it seems they do have to go, unless we all want to be Kaiserised — for I can assure you that the Monroe doctrine, whatever it is, is nothing to tie to, with Woodrow Wilson behind it. The Huns, Dr. dear, will never be brought to book by notes. And now,” concluded Susan, tucking Jims in the crook of her gaunt arms and marching downstairs, “having cried my cry and said my say I shall take a brace, and if I cannot look pleasant I will look as pleasant as I can.”

CHAPTER X V

UNTIL THE DAY BREAK

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“The Germans have recaptured Premysl,” said Susan despairingly, looking up from her newspaper, “and now I suppose we will have to begin calling it by that uncivilised name again. Cousin Sophia was in when the mail came and when she heard the news she hove a sigh up from the depths of her stomach, Mrs. Dr. dear, and said, ‘Ah yes, and they will get Petrograd next I have no doubt.’ I said to her, ‘My knowledge of geography is not so profound as I wish it was but I have an idea that it is quite a walk from Premysl to Petrograd.’ Cousin Sophia sighed again and said, ‘The Grand Duke Nicholas is not the man I took him to be.’ ‘Do not let him know that,’ said I. ‘It might hurt his feelings and he has likely enough to worry him as it is. But you cannot cheer Cousin Sophia up, no matter how sarcastic you are, Mrs. Dr. dear. She sighed for the third time and groaned out, ‘But the Russians are retreating fast,’ and I said, ‘Well, what of it? They have plenty of room for retreating, have they not?’ But all the same, Mrs. Dr. dear, though I would never admit it to Cousin Sophia, I do not like the situation on the eastern front.”

Nobody else liked it either; but all summer the Russian retreat went on — a long-drawn-out agony.

“I wonder if I shall ever again be able to await the coming of the mail with feelings of composure — never to speak of pleasure,” said Gertrude Oliver. “The thought that haunts me night and day is — will the Germans smash Russia completely and then hurl their eastern army, flushed with victory, against the western front?”

“They will not, Miss Oliver dear,” said Susan, assuming the role of prophetess.

“In the first place, the Almighty will not allow it, in the second, Grand Duke Nicholas, though he may have been a disappointment to us in some respects, knows how to run away decently and in order, and that is a very useful knowledge when Germans are chasing you. Norman Douglas declares he is just luring them on and killing ten of them to one he loses. But I am of the opinion he cannot help himself and is just doing the best he can under the circumstances, the same as the rest of us. So do not go so far afield to borrow trouble, Miss Oliver dear, when there is plenty of it already camping on our very doorstep.”

Walter had gone to Kingsport the first of June. Nan, Di and Faith had gone also to do Red Cross work in their vacation. In mid-July Walter came home for a week's leave before going overseas. Rilla had lived through the days of his absence on the hope of that week, and now that it had come she drank every minute of it thirstily, hating even the hours she had to spend in sleep, they seemed such a waste of precious moments. In spite of its sadness, it was a beautiful week, full of poignant, unforgettable hours, when she and Walter had long walks and talks and silences together. He was all her own and she knew that he found strength and comfort in her sympathy and understanding. It was very wonderful to know she meant so much to him — the knowledge helped her through moments that would otherwise have been unendurable, and gave her power to smile — and even to laugh a little. When Walter had gone she might indulge in the comfort of tears, but not while he was here. She would not even let herself cry at night, lest her eyes should betray her to him in the morning.

On his last evening at home they went together to Rainbow Valley and sat down on the bank of the brook, under the White Lady, where the gay revels of olden days had been held in the cloudless years. Rainbow Valley was roofed over with a sunset of unusual splendour that night; a wonderful grey dusk just touched with starlight followed it; and then came moonshine, hinting, hiding, revealing, lighting up little dells and hollows here, leaving others in dark, velvet shadow.

“When I am ‘somewhere in France,’” said Walter, looking around him with eager eyes on all the beauty his soul loved, “I shall remember these still, dewy, moon-drenched places. The balsam of the fir-trees; the peace

of those white pools of moonshine; the ‘strength of the hills’ — what a beautiful old Biblical phrase that is. Rilla! Look at those old hills around us — the hills we looked up at as children, wondering what lay for us in the great world beyond them. How calm and strong they are — how patient and changeless — like the heart of a good woman. Rilla-my-Rilla, do you know what you have been to me the past year? I want to tell you before I go. I could not have lived through it if it had not been for you, little loving, believing heart.”

Rilla dared not try to speak. She slipped her hand into Walter’s and pressed it hard.

“And when I’m over there, Rilla, in that hell upon earth which men who have forgotten God have made, it will be the thought of you that will help me most. I know you’ll be as plucky and patient as you have shown yourself to be this past year — I’m not afraid for you. I know that no matter what happens, you’ll be Rilla-my-Rilla — no matter what happens.”

Rilla repressed tear and sigh, but she could not repress a little shiver, and Walter knew that he had said enough. After a moment of silence, in which each made an unworded promise to each other, he said, “Now we won’t be sober any more. We’ll look beyond the years — to the time when the war will be over and Jem and Jerry and I will come marching home and we’ll all be happy again.”

“We won’t be — happy — in the same way,” said Rilla.

“No, not in the same way. Nobody whom this war has touched will ever be happy again in quite the same way. But it will be a better happiness, I think, little sister — a happiness we’ve earned. We were very happy before the war, weren’t we? With a home like Ingleside, and a father and mother like ours we couldn’t help being happy. But that happiness was a gift from life and love; it wasn’t really ours — life could take it back at any time. It can never take away the happiness we win for ourselves in the way of duty. I’ve realised that since I went into khaki. In spite of my occasional funks, when I fall to living over things beforehand, I’ve been happy since that night in May. Rilla, be awfully good to mother while I’m away. It must be

a horrible thing to be a mother in this war — the mothers and sisters and wives and sweethearts have the hardest times. Rilla, you beautiful little thing, are you anybody's sweetheart? If you are, tell me before I go."

"No," said Rilla. Then, impelled by a wish to be absolutely frank with Walter in this talk that might be the last they would ever have, she added, blushing wildly in the moonlight, "but if — Kenneth Ford — wanted me to be—"

"I see," said Walter. "And Ken's in khaki, too. Poor little girlie, it's a bit hard for you all round. Well, I'm not leaving any girl to break her heart about me — thank God for that."

Rilla glanced up at the Manse on the hill. She could see a light in Una Meredith's window. She felt tempted to say something — then she knew she must not. It was not her secret: and, anyway, she did not know — she only suspected.

Walter looked about him lingeringly and lovingly. This spot had always been so dear to him. What fun they all had had here lang syne. Phantoms of memory seemed to pace the dappled paths and peep merrily through the swinging boughs — Jem and Jerry, bare-legged, sunburned schoolboys, fishing in the brook and frying trout over the old stone fireplace; Nan and Di and Faith, in their dimpled, fresh-eyed childish beauty; Una the sweet and shy, Carl, poring over ants and bugs, little slangy, sharp-tongued, goodhearted Mary Vance — the old Walter that had been himself lying on the grass reading poetry or wandering through palaces of fancy. They were all there around him — he could see them almost as plainly as he saw Rilla — as plainly as he had once seen the Pied Piper piping down the valley in a vanished twilight. And they said to him, those gay little ghosts of other days, "We were the children of yesterday, Walter — fight a good fight for the children of to-day and tomorrow."

"Where are you, Walter," cried Rilla, laughing a little. "Come back — come back."

Walter came back with a long breath. He stood up and looked about him at the beautiful valley of moonlight, as if to impress on his mind and heart

every charm it possessed — the great dark plumes of the firs against the silvery sky, the stately White Lady, the old magic of the dancing brook, the faithful Tree Lovers, the beckoning, tricky paths.

“I shall see it so in my dreams,” he said, as he turned away.

They went back to Ingleside. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were there, with Gertrude Oliver, who had come from Lowbridge to say goodbye. Everybody was quite cheerful and bright, but nobody said much about the war being soon over, as they had said when Jem went away. They did not talk about the war at all — and they thought of nothing else. At last they gathered around the piano and sang the grand old hymn:

“Oh God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.”

“We all come back to God in these days of soul-sifting,” said Gertrude to John Meredith. “There have been many days in the past when I didn’t believe in God — not as God — only as the impersonal Great First Cause of the scientists. I believe in Him now — I have to — there’s nothing else to fall back on but God — humbly, starkly, unconditionally.”

“‘Our help in ages past’—the same yesterday, to-day and for ever,” said the minister gently. “When we forget God — He remembers us.”

There was no crowd at the Glen Station the next morning to see Walter off. It was becoming a commonplace for a khaki clad boy to board that early morning train after his last leave. Besides his own, only the Manse folk were there, and Mary Vance. Mary had sent her Miller off the week before, with a determined grin, and now considered herself entitled to give expert opinion on how such partings should be conducted.

“The main thing is to smile and act as if nothing was happening,” she informed the Ingleside group. “The boys all hate the sob act like poison. Miller told me I wasn’t to come near the station if I couldn’t keep from bawling. So I got through with my crying beforehand, and at the last I said

to him, ‘Good luck, Miller, and if you come back you’ll find I haven’t changed any, and if you don’t come back I’ll always be proud you went, and in any case don’t fall in love with a French girl.’ Miller swore he wouldn’t, but you never can tell about those fascinating foreign hussies. Anyhow, the last sight he had of me I was smiling to my limit. Gee, all the rest of the day my face felt as if it had been starched and ironed into a smile.”

In spite of Mary’s advice and example Mrs. Blythe, who had sent Jem off with a smile, could not quite manage one for Walter. But at least no one cried. Dog Monday came out of his lair in the shipping-shed and sat down close to Walter, thumping his tail vigorously on the boards of the platform whenever Walter spoke to him, and looking up with confident eyes, as if to say, “I know you’ll find Jem and bring him back to me.”

“So long, old fellow,” said Carl Meredith cheerfully, when the goodbyes had to be said. “Tell them over there to keep their spirits up — I am coming along presently.”

“Me too,” said Shirley laconically, proffering a brown paw. Susan heard him and her face turned very grey.

Una shook hands quietly, looking at him with wistful, sorrowful, dark-blue eyes. But then Una’s eyes had always been wistful. Walter bent his handsome black head in its khaki cap and kissed her with the warm, comradely kiss of a brother. He had never kissed her before, and for a fleeting moment Una’s face betrayed her, if anyone had noticed. But nobody did; the conductor was shouting “all aboard”; everybody was trying to look very cheerful. Walter turned to Rilla; she held his hands and looked up at him. She would not see him again until the day broke and the shadows vanished — and she knew not if that daybreak would be on this side of the grave or beyond it.

“Goodbye,” she said.

On her lips it lost all the bitterness it had won through the ages of parting and bore instead all the sweetness of the old loves of all the women who had ever loved and prayed for the beloved.

“Write me often and bring Jims up faithfully, according to the gospel of Morgan,” Walter said lightly, having said all his serious things the night before in Rainbow Valley. But at the last moment he took her face between his hands and looked deep into her gallant eyes. “God bless you, Rilla-my-Rilla,” he said softly and tenderly. After all it was not a hard thing to fight for a land that bore daughters like this.

He stood on the rear platform and waved to them as the train pulled out. Rilla was standing by herself, but Una Meredith came to her and the two girls who loved him most stood together and held each other’s cold hands as the train rounded the curve of the wooded hill.

Rilla spent an hour in Rainbow Valley that morning about which she never said a word to anyone; she did not even write in her diary about it; when it was over she went home and made rompers for Jims. In the evening she went to a Junior Red Cross committee meeting and was severely businesslike.

“You would never suppose,” said Irene Howard to Olive Kirk afterwards, “that Walter had left for the front only this morning. But some people really have no depth of feeling. I often wish I could take things as lightly as Rilla Blythe.”

CHAPTER XV I

REALISM AND ROMANCE

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“Warsaw has fallen,” said Dr. Blythe with a resigned air, as he brought the mail in one warm August day.

Gertrude and Mrs. Blythe looked dismally at each other, and Rilla, who was feeding Jims a Morgonized diet from a carefully sterilized spoon, laid the said spoon down on his tray, utterly regardless of germs, and said, “Oh, dear me,” in as tragic a tone as if the news had come as a thunderbolt instead of being a foregone conclusion from the preceding week’s dispatches. They had thought they were quite resigned to Warsaw’s fall but now they knew they had, as always, hoped against hope.

“Now, let us take a brace,” said Susan. “It is not the terrible thing we have been thinking. I read a dispatch three columns long in the Montreal Herald yesterday that proved that Warsaw was not important from a military point of view at all. So let us take the military point of view, doctor dear.”

“I read that dispatch, too, and it has encouraged me immensely,” said Gertrude. “I knew then and I know now that it was a lie from beginning to end. But I am in that state of mind where even a lie is a comfort, providing it is a cheerful lie.”

“In that case, Miss Oliver dear, the German official reports ought to be all you need,” said Susan sarcastically. “I never read them now because they make me so mad I cannot put my thoughts properly on my work after a dose of them. Even this news about Warsaw has taken the edge off my afternoon’s plans. Misfortunes never come singly. I spoiled my baking of bread today — and now Warsaw has fallen — and here is little Kitchener bent on choking himself to death.”

Jims was evidently trying to swallow his spoon, germs and all. Rilla rescued him mechanically and was about to resume the operation of feeding him when a casual remark of her father's sent such a shock and thrill over her that for the second time she dropped that doomed spoon.

"Kenneth Ford is down at Martin West's over-harbour," the doctor was saying. "His regiment was on its way to the front but was held up in Kingsport for some reason, and Ken got leave of absence to come over to the Island."

"I hope he will come up to see us," exclaimed Mrs. Blythe.

"He only has a day or two off, I believe," said the doctor absently.

Nobody noticed Rilla's flushed face and trembling hands. Even the most thoughtful and watchful of parents do not see everything that goes on under their very noses. Rilla made a third attempt to give the long-suffering Jims his dinner, but all she could think of was the question — Would Ken come to see her before he went away? She had not heard from him for a long while. Had he forgotten her completely? If he did not come she would know that he had. Perhaps there was even — some other girl back there in Toronto. Of course there was. She was a little fool to be thinking about him at all. She would not think about him. If he came, well and good. It would only be courteous of him to make a farewell call at Ingleside where he had often been a guest. If he did not come — well and good, too. It did not matter very much. Nobody was going to fret. That was all settled comfortably — she was quite indifferent — but meanwhile Jims was being fed with a haste and recklessness that would have filled the soul of Morgan with horror. Jims himself didn't like it, being a methodical baby, accustomed to swallowing spoonfuls with a decent interval for breath between each. He protested, but his protests availed him nothing. Rilla, as far as the care and feeding of infants was concerned, was utterly demoralized.

Then the telephone-bell rang. There was nothing unusual about the telephone ringing. It rang on an average every ten minutes at Ingleside. But Rilla dropped Jims' spoon again — on the carpet this time — and flew

to the 'phone as if life depended on her getting there before anybody else. Jims, his patience exhausted, lifted up his voice and wept.

"Hello, is this Ingleside?"

"Yes."

"That you, Rilla?" "Yeth — yeth." Oh, why couldn't Jims stop howling for just one little minute? Why didn't somebody come in and choke him?

"Know who's speaking?"

Oh, didn't she know! Wouldn't she know that voice anywhere — at any time?

"It's Ken — isn't it?"

"Sure thing. I'm here for a look-in. Can I come up to Ingleside tonight and see you?"

"Of courthe."

Had he used "you" in the singular or plural sense? Presently she would wring Jims' neck — oh, what was Ken saying?

"See here, Rilla, can you arrange that there won't be more than a few dozen people round? Understand? I can't make my meaning clearer over this bally rural line. There are a dozen receivers down."

Did she understand! Yes, she understood.

"I'll try," she said.

"I'll be up about eight then. By-by."

Rilla hung up the 'phone and flew to Jims. But she did not wring that injured infant's neck. Instead she snatched him bodily out of his chair, crushed him against her face, kissed him rapturously on his milky mouth, and danced wildly around the room with him in her arms. After this Jims

was relieved to find that she returned to sanity, gave him the rest of his dinner properly, and tucked him away for his afternoon nap with the little lullaby he loved best of all. She sewed at Red Cross shirts for the rest of the afternoon and built a crystal castle of dreams, all a-quiver with rainbows. Ken wanted to see her — to see her alone. That could be easily managed. Shirley wouldn't bother them, father and mother were going to the Manse, Miss Oliver never played gooseberry, and Jims always slept the clock round from seven to seven. She would entertain Ken on the veranda — it would be moonlight — she would wear her white georgette dress and do her hair up — yes, she would — at least in a low knot at the nape of her neck. Mother couldn't object to that, surely. Oh, how wonderful and romantic it would be! Would Ken say anything — he must mean to say something or why should he be so particular about seeing her alone? What if it rained — Susan had been complaining about Mr. Hyde that morning! What if some officious Junior Red called to discuss Belgians and shirts? Or, worst of all, what if Fred Arnold dropped in? He did occasionally.

The evening came at last and was all that could be desired in an evening. The doctor and his wife went to the Manse, Shirley and Miss Oliver went they alone knew where, Susan went to the store for household supplies, and Jims went to Dreamland. Rilla put on her georgette gown, knotted up her hair and bound a little double string of pearls around it. Then she tucked a cluster of pale pink baby roses at her belt. Would Ken ask her for a rose for a keepsake? She knew that Jem had carried to the trenches in Flanders a faded rose that Faith Meredith had kissed and given him the night before he left.

Rilla looked very sweet when she met Ken in the mingled moonlight and vine shadows of the big veranda. The hand she gave him was cold and she was so desperately anxious not to lisp that her greeting was prim and precise. How handsome and tall Kenneth looked in his lieutenant's uniform! It made him seem older, too — so much so that Rilla felt rather foolish. Hadn't it been the height of absurdity for her to suppose that this splendid young officer had anything special to say to her, little Rilla Blythe of Glen St. Mary? Likely she hadn't understood him after all — he had only meant that he didn't want a mob of folks around making a fuss over him and trying to lionize him, as they had probably done over-

harbour. Yes, of course, that was all he meant — and she, little idiot, had gone and vainly imagined that he didn't want anybody but her. And he would think she had manoeuvred everybody away so that they could be alone together, and he would laugh to himself at her.

“This is better luck than I hoped for,” said Ken, leaning back in his chair and looking at her with very unconcealed admiration in his eloquent eyes. “I was sure someone would be hanging about and it was just you I wanted to see, Rilla-my-Rilla.”

Rilla's dream castle flashed into the landscape again. This was unmistakable enough certainly — not much doubt as to his meaning here.

“There aren't — so many of us — to poke around as there used to be,” she said softly.

“No, that's so,” said Ken gently. “Jem and Walter and the girls away — it makes a big blank, doesn't it? But—” he leaned forward until his dark curls almost brushed her hair—”doesn't Fred Arnold try to fill the blank occasionally. I've been told so.”

At this moment, before Rilla could make any reply, Jims began to cry at the top of his voice in the room whose open window was just above them — Jims, who hardly ever cried in the evening. Moreover, he was crying, as Rilla knew from experience, with a vim and energy that betokened that he had been already whimpering softly unheard for some time and was thoroughly exasperated. When Jims started in crying like that he made a thorough job of it. Rilla knew that there was no use to sit still and pretend to ignore him. He wouldn't stop; and conversation of any kind was out of the question when such shrieks and howls were floating over your head. Besides, she was afraid Kenneth would think she was utterly unfeeling if she sat still and let a baby cry like that. He was not likely acquainted with Morgan's invaluable volume.

She got up. “Jims has had a nightmare, I think. He sometimes has one and he is always badly frightened by it. Excuse me for a moment.”

Rilla flew upstairs, wishing quite frankly that soup tureens had never been invented. But when Jims, at sight of her, lifted his little arms entreatingly and swallowed several sobs, with tears rolling down his cheeks, resentment went out of her heart. After all, the poor darling was frightened. She picked him up gently and rocked him soothingly until his sobs ceased and his eyes closed. Then she essayed to lay him down in his crib. Jims opened his eyes and shrieked a protest. This performance was repeated twice. Rilla grew desperate. She couldn't leave Ken down there alone any longer — she had been away nearly half an hour already. With a resigned air she marched downstairs, carrying Jims, and sat down on the veranda. It was, no doubt, a ridiculous thing to sit and cuddle a contrary war-baby when your best young man was making his farewell call, but there was nothing else to be done.

Jims was supremely happy. He kicked his little pink-soled feet rapturously out under his white nighty and gave one of his rare laughs. He was beginning to be a very pretty baby; his golden hair curled in silken ringlets all over his little round head and his eyes were beautiful.

“He's a decorative kiddy all right, isn't he?” said Ken.

“His looks are very well,” said Rilla, bitterly, as if to imply that they were much the best of him. Jims, being an astute infant, sensed trouble in the atmosphere and realized that it was up to him to clear it away. He turned his face up to Rilla, smiled adorably and said, clearly and beguilingly, “Will — Will.”

It was the very first time he had spoken a word or tried to speak. Rilla was so delighted that she forgot her grudge against him. She forgave him with a hug and kiss. Jims, understanding that he was restored to favour, cuddled down against her just where a gleam of light from the lamp in the livingroom struck across his hair and turned it into a halo of gold against her breast.

Kenneth sat very still and silent, looking at Rilla — at the delicate, girlish silhouette of her, her long lashes, her dented lip, her adorable chin. In the dim moonlight, as she sat with her head bent a little over Jims, the lamplight glinting on her pearls until they glistened like a slender nimbus,

he thought she looked exactly like the Madonna that hung over his mother's desk at home. He carried that picture of her in his heart to the horror of the battlefields of France. He had had a strong fancy for Rilla Blythe ever since the night of the Four Winds dance; but it was when he saw her there, with little Jims in her arms, that he loved her and realized it. And all the while, poor Rilla was sitting, disappointed and humiliated, feeling that her last evening with Ken was spoiled and wondering why things always had to go so contrarily outside of books. She felt too absurd to try to talk. Evidently Ken was completely disgusted, too, since he was sitting there in such stony silence.

Hope revived momentarily when Jims went so thoroughly asleep that she thought it would be safe to lay him down on the couch in the livingroom. But when she came out again Susan was sitting on the veranda, loosening her bonnet strings with the air of one who meant to stay where she was for some time.

"Have you got your baby to sleep?" she asked kindly.

Your baby! Really, Susan might have more tact.

“Yes,” said Rilla shortly.

Susan laid her parcels on the reed table, as one determined to do her duty. She was very tired but she must help Rilla out. Here was Kenneth Ford who had come to call on the family and they were all unfortunately out, and “the poor child” had had to entertain him alone. But Susan had come to her rescue — Susan would do her part no matter how tired she was.

“Dear me, how you have grown up,” she said, looking at Ken’s six feet of khaki uniform without the least awe. Susan had grown used to khaki now, and at sixty-four even a lieutenant’s uniform is just clothes and nothing else. “It is an amazing thing how fast children do grow up. Rilla here, now, is almost fifteen.”

“I’m going on seventeen, Susan,” cried Rilla almost passionately. She was a whole month past sixteen. It was intolerable of Susan.

“It seems just the other day that you were all babies,” said Susan, ignoring Rilla’s protest. “You were really the prettiest baby I ever saw, Ken, though your mother had an awful time trying to cure you of sucking your thumb. Do you remember the day I spanked you?”

“No,” said Ken.

“Oh well, I suppose you would be too young — you were only about four and you were here with your mother and you insisted on teasing Nan until she cried. I had tried several ways of stopping you but none availed, and I saw that a spanking was the only thing that would serve. So I picked you up and laid you across my knee and lambasted you well. You howled at the top of your voice but you left Nan alone after that.”

Rilla was writhing. Hadn’t Susan any realization that she was addressing an officer of the Canadian Army? Apparently she had not. Oh, what would Ken think? “I suppose you do not remember the time your mother spanked you either,” continued Susan, who seemed to be bent on reviving tender

reminiscences that evening. "I shall never, no never, forget it. She was up here one night with you when you were about three, and you and Walter were playing out in the kitchen yard with a kitten. I had a big puncheon of rainwater by the spout which I was reserving for making soap. And you and Walter began quarrelling over the kitten. Walter was at one side of the puncheon standing on a chair, holding the kitten, and you were standing on a chair at the other side. You leaned across that puncheon and grabbed the kitten and pulled. You were always a great hand for taking what you wanted without too much ceremony. Walter held on tight and the poor kitten yelled but you dragged Walter and the kitten half over and then you both lost your balance and tumbled into that puncheon, kitten and all. If I had not been on the spot you would both have been drowned. I flew to the rescue and hauled you all three out before much harm was done, and your mother, who had seen it all from the upstairs window, came down and picked you up, dripping as you were, and gave you a beautiful spanking. Ah," said Susan with a sigh, "those were happy old days at Ingleside."

"Must have been," said Ken. His voice sounded queer and stiff. Rilla supposed he was hopelessly enraged. The truth was he dared not trust his voice lest it betray his frantic desire to laugh.

"Rilla here, now," said Susan, looking affectionately at that unhappy damsel, "never was much spanked. She was a real well-behaved child for the most part. But her father did spank her once. She got two bottles of pills out of his office and dared Alice Clow to see which of them could swallow all the pills first, and if her father had not happened in the nick of time those two children would have been corpses by night. As it was, they were both sick enough shortly after. But the doctor spanked Rilla then and there and he made such a thorough job of it that she never meddled with anything in his office afterwards. We hear a great deal nowadays of something that is called 'moral persuasion,' but in my opinion a good spanking and no nagging afterwards is a much better thing."

Rilla wondered viciously whether Susan meant to relate all the family spankings. But Susan had finished with the subject and branched off to another cheerful one.

“I remember little Tod MacAllister over-harbour killed himself that very way, eating up a whole box of fruitatives because he thought they were candy. It was a very sad affair. He was,” said Susan earnestly, “the very cutest little corpse I ever laid my eyes on. It was very careless of his mother to leave the fruitatives where he could get them, but she was well-known to be a heedless creature. One day she found a nest of five eggs as she was going across the fields to church with a brand new blue silk dress on. So she put them in the pocket of her petticoat and when she got to church she forgot all about them and sat down on them and her dress was ruined, not to speak of the petticoat. Let me see — would not Tod be some relation of yours? Your great grandmother West was a MacAllister. Her brother Amos was a MacDonaldite in religion. I am told he used to take the jerks something fearful. But you look more like your great grandfather West than the MacAllisters. He died of a paralytic stroke quite early in life.”

“Did you see anybody at the store?” asked Rilla desperately, in the faint hope of directing Susan’s conversation into more agreeable channels.

“Nobody except Mary Vance,” said Susan, “and she was stepping round as brisk as the Irishman’s flea.”

What terrible similes Susan used! Would Kenneth think she acquired them from the family!

“To hear Mary talk about Miller Douglas you would think he was the only Glen boy who had enlisted,” Susan went on. “But of course she always did brag and she has some good qualities I am willing to admit, though I did not think so that time she chased Rilla here through the village with a dried codfish till the poor child fell, heels over head, into the puddle before Carter Flagg’s store.”

Rilla went cold all over with wrath and shame. Were there any more disgraceful scenes in her past that Susan could rake up? As for Ken, he could have howled over Susan’s speeches, but he would not so insult the duenna of his lady, so he sat with a preternaturally solemn face which seemed to poor Rilla a haughty and offended one.

“I paid eleven cents for a bottle of ink tonight,” complained Susan. “Ink is twice as high as it was last year. Perhaps it is because Woodrow Wilson has been writing so many notes. It must cost him considerable. My cousin Sophia says Woodrow Wilson is not the man she expected him to be — but then no man ever was. Being an old maid, I do not know much about men and have never pretended to, but my cousin Sophia is very hard on them, although she married two of them, which you might think was a fair share. Albert Crawford’s chimney blew down in that big gale we had last week, and when Sophia heard the bricks clattering on the roof she thought it was a Zeppelin raid and went into hysterics. And Mrs. Albert Crawford says that of the two things she would have preferred the Zeppelin raid.”

Rilla sat limply in her chair like one hypnotized. She knew Susan would stop talking when she was ready to stop and that no earthly power could make her stop any sooner. As a rule, she was very fond of Susan but just now she hated her with a deadly hatred. It was ten o’clock. Ken would soon have to go — the others would soon be home — and she had not even had a chance to explain to Ken that Fred Arnold filled no blank in her life nor ever could. Her rainbow castle lay in ruins round her.

Kenneth got up at last. He realized that Susan was there to stay as long as he did, and it was a three mile walk to Martin West’s over-harbour. He wondered if Rilla had put Susan up to this, not wanting to be left alone with him, lest he say something Fred Arnold’s sweetheart did not want to hear. Rilla got up, too, and walked silently the length of the veranda with him. They stood there for a moment, Ken on the lower step. The step was half sunk into the earth and mint grew thickly about and over its edge. Often crushed by so many passing feet it gave out its essence freely, and the spicy odour hung round them like a soundless, invisible benediction. Ken looked up at Rilla, whose hair was shining in the moonlight and whose eyes were pools of allurements. All at once he felt sure there was nothing in that gossip about Fred Arnold.

“Rilla,” he said in a sudden, intense whisper, “you are the sweetest thing.”

Rilla flushed and looked at Susan. Ken looked, too, and saw that Susan’s back was turned. He put his arm about Rilla and kissed her. It was the first time Rilla had ever been kissed. She thought perhaps she ought to resent it

but she didn't. Instead, she glanced timidly into Kenneth's seeking eyes and her glance was a kiss.

"Rilla-my-Rilla," said Ken, "will you promise that you won't let anyone else kiss you until I come back?"

"Yes," said Rilla, trembling and thrilling.

Susan was turning round. Ken loosened his hold and stepped to the walk.

"Goodbye," he said casually. Rilla heard herself saying it just as casually. She stood and watched him down the walk, out of the gate, and down the road. When the fir wood hid him from her sight she suddenly said "Oh," in a choked way and ran down to the gate, sweet blossomy things catching at her skirts as she ran. Leaning over the gate she saw Kenneth walking briskly down the road, over the bars of tree shadows and moonlight, his tall, erect figure grey in the white radiance. As he reached the turn he stopped and looked back and saw her standing amid the tall white lilies by the gate. He waved his hand — she waved hers — he was gone around the turn.

Rilla stood there for a little while, gazing across the fields of mist and silver. She had heard her mother say that she loved turns in roads — they were so provocative and alluring. Rilla thought she hated them. She had seen Jem and Jerry vanish from her around a bend in the road — then Walter — and now Ken. Brothers and playmate and sweetheart — they were all gone, never, it might be, to return. Yet still the Piper piped and the dance of death went on.

When Rilla walked slowly back to the house Susan was still sitting by the veranda table and Susan was sniffing suspiciously.

"I have been thinking, Rilla dear, of the old days in the House of Dreams, when Kenneth's mother and father were courting and Jem was a little baby and you were not born or thought of. It was a very romantic affair and she and your mother were such chums. To think I should have lived to see her son going to the front. As if she had not had enough trouble in her early

life without this coming upon her! But we must take a brace and see it through.”

All Rilla’s anger against Susan had evaporated. With Ken’s kiss still burning on her lips, and the wonderful significance of the promise he had asked thrilling heart and soul, she could not be angry with anyone. She put her slim white hand into Susan’s brown, work-hardened one and gave it a squeeze. Susan was a faithful old dear and would lay down her life for any one of them.

“You are tired, Rilla dear, and had better go to bed,” Susan said, patting her hand. “I noticed you were too tired to talk tonight. I am glad I came home in time to help you out. It is very tiresome trying to entertain young men when you are not accustomed to it.”

Rilla carried Jims upstairs and went to bed, but not before she had sat for a long time at her window reconstructing her rainbow castle, with several added domes and turrets.

“I wonder,” she said to herself, “if I am, or am not, engaged to Kenneth Ford.”

CHAPTER XVI I

THE WEEKS WEAR BY

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Rilla read her first love letter in her Rainbow Valley fir-shadowed nook, and a girl's first love letter, whatever blase, older people may think of it, is an event of tremendous importance in the teens. After Kenneth's regiment had left Kingsport there came a fortnight of dully-aching anxiety and when the congregation sang in Church on Sunday evenings,

“Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea,”

Rilla's voice always failed her; for with the words came a horribly vivid mind picture of a submarined ship sinking beneath pitiless waves amid the struggles and cries of drowning men. Then word came that Kenneth's regiment had arrived safely in England; and now, at last, here was his letter. It began with something that made Rilla supremely happy for the moment and ended with a paragraph that crimsoned her cheeks with the wonder and thrill and delight of it. Between beginning and ending the letter was just such a jolly, newsy epistle as Ken might have written to anyone; but for the sake of that beginning and ending Rilla slept with the letter under her pillow for weeks, sometimes waking in the night to slip her fingers under and just touch it, and looked with secret pity on other girls whose sweethearts could never have written them anything half so wonderful and exquisite. Kenneth was not the son of a famous novelist for nothing. He “had a way” of expressing things in a few poignant, significant words that seemed to suggest far more than they uttered, and never grew stale or flat or foolish with ever so many scores of readings. Rilla went home from Rainbow Valley as if she flew rather than walked.

But such moments of uplift were rare that autumn. To be sure, there was one day in September when great news came of a big Allied victory in the

west and Susan ran out to hoist the flag — the first time she had hoisted it since the Russian line broke and the last time she was to hoist it for many dismal moons.

“Likely the Big Push has begun at last, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she exclaimed, “and we will soon see the finish of the Huns. Our boys will be home by Christmas now. Hurrah!”

Susan was ashamed of herself for hurrahing the minute she had done it, and apologized meekly for such an outburst of juvenility. “But indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, this good news has gone to my head after this awful summer of Russian slumps and Gallipoli setbacks.”

“Good news!” said Miss Oliver bitterly. “I wonder if the women whose men have been killed for it will call it good news. Just because our own men are not on that part of the front we are rejoicing as if the victory had cost no lives.”

“Now, Miss Oliver dear, do not take that view of it,” deprecated Susan. “We have not had much to rejoice over of late and yet men were being killed just the same. Do not let yourself slump like poor Cousin Sophia. She said, when the word came, ‘Ah, it is nothing but a rift in the clouds. We are up this week but we will be down the next.’ ‘Well, Sophia Crawford,’ said I, — for I will never give in to her, Mrs. Dr. dear— ‘God himself cannot make two hills without a hollow between them, as I have heard it said, but that is no reason why we should not take the good of the hills when we are on them.’ But Cousin Sophia moaned on. ‘Here is the Gallipolly expedition a failure and the Grand Duke Nicholas sent off, and everyone knows the Czar of Rooshia is a pro-German and the Allies have no ammunition and Bulgaria is going against us. And the end is not yet, for England and France must be punished for their deadly sins until they repent in sackcloth and ashes.’ ‘I think myself,’ I said, ‘that they will do their repenting in khaki and trench mud, and it seems to me that the Huns should have a few sins to repent of also.’ ‘They are instruments in the hands of the Almighty, to purge the garner,’ said Sophia. And then I got mad, Mrs. Dr. dear, and told her I did not and never would believe that the Almighty ever took such dirty instruments in hand for any purpose whatever, and that I did not consider it decent for her to be using the words

of Holy Writ as glibly as she was doing in ordinary conversation. She was not, I told her, a minister or even an elder. And for the time being I squelched her, Mrs. Dr. dear. Cousin Sophia has no spirit. She is very different from her niece, Mrs. Dean Crawford over-harbour. You know the Dean Crawfords had five boys and now the new baby is another boy. All the connection and especially Dean Crawford were much disappointed because their hearts had been set on a girl; but Mrs. Dean just laughed and said, 'Everywhere I went this summer I saw the sign "MEN WANTED" staring me in the face. Do you think I could go and have a girl under such circumstances?' There is spirit for you, Mrs. Dr. dear. But Cousin Sophia would say the child was just so much more cannon fodder."

Cousin Sophia had full range for her pessimism that gloomy autumn, and even Susan, incorrigible old optimist as she was, was hard put to it for cheer. When Bulgaria lined up with Germany Susan only remarked scornfully, "One more nation anxious for a licking," but the Greek tangle worried her beyond her powers of philosophy to endure calmly.

"Constantine of Greece has a German wife, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that fact squelches hope. To think that I should have lived to care what kind of a wife Constantine of Greece had! The miserable creature is under his wife's thumb and that is a bad place for any man to be. I am an old maid and an old maid has to be independent or she will be squashed out. But if I had been a married woman, Mrs. Dr. dear, I would have been meek and humble. It is my opinion that this Sophia of Greece is a minx."

Susan was furious when the news came that Venizelos had met with defeat. "I could spank Constantine and skin him alive afterwards, that I could," she exclaimed bitterly.

"Oh, Susan, I'm surprised at you," said the doctor, pulling a long face. "Have you no regard for the proprieties? Skin him alive by all means but omit the spanking."

"If he had been well spanked in his younger days he might have more sense now," retorted Susan. "But I suppose princes are never spanked, more is the pity. I see the Allies have sent him an ultimatum. I could tell them that it will take more than ultimatums to skin a snake like

Constantine. Perhaps the Allied blockade will hammer sense into his head; but that will take some time I am thinking, and in the meantime what is to become of poor Serbia?"

They saw what became of Serbia, and during the process Susan was hardly to be lived with. In her exasperation she abused everything and everybody except Kitchener, and she fell upon poor President Wilson tooth and claw.

"If he had done his duty and gone into the war long ago we should not have seen this mess in Serbia," she avowed.

"It would be a serious thing to plunge a great country like the United States, with its mixed population, into the war, Susan," said the doctor, who sometimes came to the defence of the President, not because he thought Wilson needed it especially, but from an unholy love of baiting Susan.

"Maybe, doctor dear — maybe! But that makes me think of the old story of the girl who told her grandmother she was going to be married. 'It is a solemn thing to be married,' said the old lady. 'Yes, but it is a solemn thing not to be,' said the girl. And I can testify to that out of my own experience, doctor dear. And I think it is a solemn thing for the Yankees that they have kept out of the war than it would have been if they had gone into it. However, though I do not know much about them, I am of the opinion that we will see them starting something yet, Woodrow Wilson or no Woodrow Wilson, when they get it into their heads that this war is not a correspondence school. They will not," said Susan, energetically waving a saucepan with one hand and a soup ladle with the other, "be too proud to fight then."

On a pale-yellow, windy evening in October Carl Meredith went away. He had enlisted on his eighteenth birthday. John Meredith saw him off with a set face. His two boys were gone — there was only little Bruce left now. He loved Bruce and Bruce's mother dearly; but Jerry and Carl were the sons of the bride of his youth and Carl was the only one of all his children who had Cecilia's very eyes. As they looked lovingly out at him above Carl's uniform the pale minister suddenly remembered the day when for the first and last time he had tried to whip Carl for his prank with the eel.

That was the first time he had realised how much Carl's eyes were like Cecilia's. Now he realised it again once more. Would he ever again see his dead wife's eyes looking at him from his son's face? What a bonny, clean, handsome lad he was! It was — hard — to see him go. John Meredith seemed to be looking at a torn plain strewn with the bodies of "able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five." Only the other day Carl had been a little scrap of a boy, hunting bugs in Rainbow Valley, taking lizards to bed with him, and scandalizing the Glen by carrying frogs to Sunday School. It seemed hardly — right — somehow that he should be an "able-bodied man" in khaki. Yet John Meredith had said no word to dissuade him when Carl had told him he must go.

Rilla felt Carl's going keenly. They had always been cronies and playmates. He was only a little older than she was and they had been children in Rainbow Valley together. She recalled all their old pranks and escapades as she walked slowly home alone. The full moon peeped through the scudding clouds with sudden floods of weird illumination, the telephone wires sang a shrill weird song in the wind, and the tall spikes of withered, grey-headed goldenrod in the fence corners swayed and beckoned wildly to her like groups of old witches weaving unholy spells. On such a night as this, long ago, Carl would come over to Ingleside and whistle her out to the gate. "Let's go on a moon-spree, Rilla," he would say, and the two of them would scamper off to Rainbow Valley. Rilla had never been afraid of his beetles and bugs, though she drew a hard and fast line at snakes. They used to talk together of almost everything and were teased about each other at school; but one evening when they were about ten years of age they had solemnly promised, by the old spring in Rainbow Valley, that they would never marry each other. Alice Clow had "crossed out" their names on her slate in school that day, and it came out that "both married." They did not like the idea at all, hence the mutual vow in Rainbow Valley. There was nothing like an ounce of prevention. Rilla laughed over the old memory — and then sighed. That very day a dispatch from some London paper had contained the cheerful announcement that "the present moment is the darkest since the war began." It was dark enough, and Rilla wished desperately that she could do something besides waiting and serving at home, as day after day the Glen boys she had known went away. If she were only a boy, speeding in khaki by Carl's side to the

Western front! She had wished that in a burst of romance when Jem had gone, without, perhaps, really meaning it. She meant it now. There were moments when waiting at home, in safety and comfort, seemed an unendurable thing.

The moon burst triumphantly through an especially dark cloud and shadow and silver chased each other in waves over the Glen. Rilla remembered one moonlit evening of childhood when she had said to her mother, “The moon just looks like a sorry, sorry face.” She thought it looked like that still — an agonised, careworn face, as though it looked down on dreadful sights. What did it see on the Western front? In broken Serbia? On shell-swept Gallipoli?

“I am tired,” Miss Oliver had said that day, in a rare outburst of impatience, “of this horrible rack of strained emotions, when every day brings a new horror or the dread of it. No, don’t look reproachfully at me, Mrs. Blythe. There’s nothing heroic about me today. I’ve slumped. I wish England had left Belgium to her fate — I wish Canada had never sent a man — I wish we’d tied our boys to our apron strings and not let one of them go. Oh — I shall be ashamed of myself in half an hour — but at this very minute I mean every word of it. Will the Allies never strike?”

“Patience is a tired mare but she jogs on,” said Susan.

“While the steeds of Armageddon thunder, trampling over our hearts,” retorted Miss Oliver. “Susan, tell me — don’t you ever — didn’t you ever — take spells of feeling that you must scream — or swear — or smash something — just because your torture reaches a point when it becomes unbearable?”

“I have never sworn or desired to swear, Miss Oliver dear, but I will admit,” said Susan, with the air of one determined to make a clean breast of it once and for all, “that I have experienced occasions when it was a relief to do considerable banging.”

“Don’t you think that is a kind of swearing, Susan? What is the difference between slamming a door viciously and saying d — —”

“Miss Oliver dear,” interrupted Susan, desperately determined to save Gertrude from herself, if human power could do it, “you are all tired out and unstrung — and no wonder, teaching those obstreperous youngsters all day and coming home to bad war news. But just you go upstairs and lie down and I will bring you up a cup of hot tea and a bite of toast and very soon you will not want to slam doors or swear.”

“Susan, you’re a good soul — a very pearl of Susans! But, Susan, it would be such a relief — to say just one soft, low, little tiny d—”

“I will bring you a hot-water bottle for the soles of your feet, also,” interposed Susan resolutely, “and it would not be any relief to say that word you are thinking of, Miss Oliver, and that you may tie to.”

“Well, I’ll try the hot-water bottle first,” said Miss Oliver, repenting herself on teasing Susan and vanishing upstairs, to Susan’s intense relief. Susan shook her head ominously as she filled the hot-water bottle. The war was certainly relaxing the standards of behaviour woefully. Here was Miss Oliver admittedly on the point of profanity.

“We must draw the blood from her brain,” said Susan, “and if this bottle is not effective I will see what can be done with a mustard plaster.”

Gertrude rallied and carried on. Lord Kitchener went to Greece, whereat Susan foretold that Constantine would soon experience a change of heart. Lloyd George began to heckle the Allies regarding equipment and guns and Susan said you would hear more of Lloyd George yet. The gallant Anzacs withdrew from Gallipoli and Susan approved the step, with reservations. The siege of Kut-El-Amara began and Susan pored over maps of Mesopotamia and abused the Turks. Henry Ford started for Europe and Susan flayed him with sarcasm. Sir John French was superseded by Sir Douglas Haig and Susan dubiously opined that it was poor policy to swap horses crossing a stream, “though, to be sure, Haig was a good name and French had a foreign sound, say what you might.” Not a move on the great chess-board of king or bishop or pawn escaped Susan, who had once read only Glen St. Mary notes. “There was a time,” she said sorrowfully, “when I did not care what happened outside of P.E. Island, and now a king cannot have a toothache in Russia or China but it

worries me. It may be broadening to the mind, as the doctor said, but it is very painful to the feelings.”

When Christmas came again Susan did not set any vacant places at the festive board. Two empty chairs were too much even for Susan who had thought in September that there would not be one.

“This is the first Christmas that Walter was not home,” Rilla wrote in her diary that night. “Jem used to be away for Christmases up in Avonlea, but Walter never was. I had letters from Ken and him today. They are still in England but expect to be in the trenches very soon. And then — but I suppose we’ll be able to endure it somehow. To me, the strangest of all the strange things since 1914 is how we have all learned to accept things we never thought we could — to go on with life as a matter of course. I know that Jem and Jerry are in the trenches — that Ken and Walter will be soon — that if one of them does not come back my heart will break — yet I go on and work and plan — yes, and even enjoy life by times. There are moments when we have real fun because, just for the moment, we don’t think about things and then — we remember — and the remembering is worse than thinking of it all the time would have been.

“Today was dark and cloudy and tonight is wild enough, as Gertrude says, to please any novelist in search of suitable matter for a murder or elopement. The raindrops streaming over the panes look like tears running down a face, and the wind is shrieking through the maple grove.

“This hasn’t been a nice Christmas Day in any way. Nan had toothache and Susan had red eyes, and assumed a weird and gruesome flippancy of manner to deceive us into thinking she hadn’t; and Jims had a bad cold all day and I’m afraid of croup. He has had croup twice since October. The first time I was nearly frightened to death, for father and mother were both away — father always is away, it seems to me, when any of this household gets sick. But Susan was cool as a fish and knew just what to do, and by morning Jims was all right. That child is a cross between a duck and an imp. He’s a year and four months old, trots about everywhere, and says quite a few words. He has the cutest little way of calling me “Willa-will.” It always brings back that dreadful, ridiculous, delightful night when Ken came to say goodbye, and I was so furious and happy. Jims is pink and

white and big-eyed and curly-haired and every now and then I discover a new dimple in him. I can never quite believe he is really the same creature as that scrawny, yellow, ugly little changeling I brought home in the soup tureen. Nobody has ever heard a word from Jim Anderson. If he never comes back I shall keep Jims always. Everybody here worships and spoils him — or would spoil him if Morgan and I didn't stand remorselessly in the way. Susan says Jims is the cleverest child she ever saw and can recognize Old Nick when he sees him — this because Jims threw poor Doc out of an upstairs window one day. Doc turned into Mr. Hyde on his way down and landed in a currant bush, spitting and swearing. I tried to console his inner cat with a saucer of milk but he would have none of it, and remained Mr. Hyde the rest of the day. Jims's latest exploit was to paint the cushion of the big armchair in the sun parlour with molasses; and before anybody found it out Mrs. Fred Clow came in on Red Cross business and sat down on it. Her new silk dress was ruined and nobody could blame her for being vexed. But she went into one of her tempers and said nasty things and gave me such slams about 'spoiling' Jims that I nearly boiled over, too. But I kept the lid on till she had waddled away and then I exploded.

"The fat, clumsy, horrid old thing,' I said — and oh, what a satisfaction it was to say it.

"She has three sons at the front,' mother said rebukingly.

"I suppose that covers all her shortcomings in manners,' I retorted. But I was ashamed — for it is true that all her boys have gone and she was very plucky and loyal about it too; and she is a perfect tower of strength in the Red Cross. It's a little hard to remember all the heroines. Just the same, it was her second new silk dress in one year and that when everybody is — or should be — trying to 'save and serve.'

"I had to bring out my green velvet hat again lately and begin wearing it. I hung on to my blue straw sailor as long as I could. How I hate the green velvet hat! It is so elaborate and conspicuous. I don't see how I could ever have liked it. But I vowed to wear it and wear it I will.

“Shirley and I went down to the station this morning to take Little Dog Monday a bang-up Christmas dinner. Dog Monday waits and watches there still, with just as much hope and confidence as ever. Sometimes he hangs around the station house and talks to people and the rest of his time he sits at his little kennel door and watches the track unwinkingly. We never try to coax him home now: we know it is of no use. When Jem comes back, Monday will come home with him; and if Jem — never comes back — Monday will wait there for him as long as his dear dog heart goes on beating.

“Fred Arnold was here last night. He was eighteen in November and is going to enlist just as soon as his mother is over an operation she has to have. He has been coming here very often lately and though I like him so much it makes me uncomfortable, because I am afraid he is thinking that perhaps I could care something for him. I can’t tell him about Ken — because, after all, what is there to tell? And yet I don’t like to behave coldly and distantly when he will be going away so soon. It is very perplexing. I remember I used to think it would be such fun to have dozens of beaux — and now I’m worried to death because two are too many.

“I am learning to cook. Susan is teaching me. I tried to learn long ago — but no, let me be honest — Susan tried to teach me, which is a very different thing. I never seemed to succeed with anything and I got discouraged. But since the boys have gone away I wanted to be able to make cake and things for them myself and so I started in again and this time I’m getting on surprisingly well. Susan says it is all in the way I hold my mouth and father says my subconscious mind is desirous of learning now, and I dare say they’re both right. Anyhow, I can make dandy shortbread and fruitcake. I got ambitious last week and attempted cream puffs, but made an awful failure of them. They came out of the oven flat as flukes. I thought maybe the cream would fill them up again and make them plump but it didn’t. I think Susan was secretly pleased. She is past mistress in the art of making cream puffs and it would break her heart if anyone else here could make them as well. I wonder if Susan tampered — but no, I won’t suspect her of such a thing.

“Miranda Pryor spent an afternoon here a few days ago, helping me cut out certain Red Cross garments known by the charming name of ‘vermin shirts.’ Susan thinks that name is not quite decent, so I suggested she call them ‘cootie sarks,’ which is old Highland Sandy’s version of it. But she shook her head and I heard her telling mother later that, in her opinion, ‘cooties’ and ‘sarks’ were not proper subjects for young girls to talk about. She was especially horrified when Jem wrote in his last letter to mother, ‘Tell Susan I had a fine cootie hunt this morning and caught fifty-three!’ Susan positively turned pea-green. ‘Mrs. Dr. dear,’ she said, ‘when I was young, if decent people were so unfortunate as to get — those insects — they kept it a secret if possible. I do not want to be narrow-minded, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I still think it is better not to mention such things.’

“Miranda grew confidential over our vermin shirts and told me all her troubles. She is desperately unhappy. She is engaged to Joe Milgrave and Joe joined up in October and has been training in Charlottetown ever since. Her father was furious when he joined and forbade Miranda ever to have any dealing or communication with him again. Poor Joe expects to go overseas any day and wants Miranda to marry him before he goes, which shows that there have been ‘communications’ in spite of Whiskers-on-the-moon. Miranda wants to marry him but cannot, and she declares it will break her heart.

“‘Why don’t you run away and marry him?’ I said. It didn’t go against my conscience in the least to give her such advice. Joe Milgrave is a splendid fellow and Mr. Pryor fairly beamed on him until the war broke out and I know Mr. Pryor would forgive Miranda very quickly, once it was over and he wanted his housekeeper back. But Miranda shook her silvery head dolefully.

“‘Joe wants me to but I can’t. Mother’s last words to me, as she lay on her dying-bed, were, “Never, never run away, Miranda,” and I promised.’

“Miranda’s mother died two years ago, and it seems, according to Miranda, that her mother and father actually ran away to be married themselves. To picture Whiskers-on-the-moon as the hero of an elopement is beyond my power. But such was the case and Mrs. Pryor at least lived to repent it. She had a hard life of it with Mr. Pryor, and she thought it was a

punishment on her for running away. So she made Miranda promise she would never, for any reason whatever, do it.

“Of course, you cannot urge a girl to break a promise made to a dying mother, so I did not see what Miranda could do unless she got Joe to come to the house when her father was away and marry her there. But Miranda said that couldn’t be managed. Her father seemed to suspect she might be up to something of the sort and he never went away for long at a time, and, of course, Joe couldn’t get leave of absence at an hour’s notice.

“‘No, I shall just have to let Joe go, and he will be killed — I know he will be killed — and my heart will break,’ said Miranda, her tears running down and copiously bedewing the vermin shirts!

“I am not writing like this for lack of any real sympathy with poor Miranda. I’ve just got into the habit of giving things a comical twist if I can, when I’m writing to Jem and Walter and Ken, to make them laugh. I really felt sorry for Miranda who is as much in love with Joe as a china-blue girl can be with anyone and who is dreadfully ashamed of her father’s pro-German sentiments. I think she understood that I did, for she said she had wanted to tell me all about her worries because I had grown so sympathetic this past year. I wonder if I have. I know I used to be a selfish, thoughtless creature — how selfish and thoughtless I am ashamed to remember now, so I can’t be quite so bad as I was.

“I wish I could help Miranda. It would be very romantic to contrive a war-wedding and I should dearly love to get the better of Whiskers-on-the-moon. But at present the oracle has not spoken.”

CHAPTER XVII I

A WAR-WEDDING

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“I can tell you this Dr. dear,” said Susan, pale with wrath, “that Germany is getting to be perfectly ridiculous.”

They were all in the big Ingleside kitchen. Susan was mixing biscuits for supper. Mrs. Blythe was making shortbread for Jem, and Rilla was compounding candy for Ken and Walter — it had once been “Walter and Ken” in her thoughts but somehow, quite unconsciously, this had changed until Ken’s name came naturally first. Cousin Sophia was also there, knitting. All the boys were going to be killed in the long run, so Cousin Sophia felt in her bones, but they might better die with warm feet than cold ones, so Cousin Sophia knitted faithfully and gloomily.

Into this peaceful scene erupted the doctor, wrathful and excited over the burning of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. And Susan became automatically quite as wrathful and excited.

“What will those Huns do next?” she demanded. “Coming over here and burning our Parliament building! Did anyone ever hear of such an outrage?”

“We don’t know that the Germans are responsible for this,” said the doctor — much as if he felt quite sure they were. “Fires do start without their agency sometimes. And Uncle Mark MacAllister’s barn was burnt last week. You can hardly accuse the Germans of that, Susan.”

“Indeed, Dr. dear, I do not know.” Susan nodded slowly and portentously. “Whiskers-on-the-moon was there that very day. The fire broke out half an hour after he was gone. So much is a fact — but I shall not accuse a Presbyterian elder of burning anybody’s barn until I have proof. However,

everybody knows, Dr. dear, that both Uncle Mark's boys have enlisted, and that Uncle Mark himself makes speeches at all the recruiting meetings. So no doubt Germany is anxious to get square with him."

"I could never speak at a recruiting meeting," said Cousin Sophia solemnly. "I could never reconcile it to my conscience to ask another woman's son to go, to murder and be murdered."

"Could you not?" said Susan. "Well, Sophia Crawford, I felt as if I could ask anyone to go when I read last night that there were no children under eight years of age left alive in Poland. Think of that, Sophia Crawford" — Susan shook a floury finger at Sophia—"not — one — child — under — eight — years — of — age!"

"I suppose the Germans has et 'em all," sighed Cousin Sophia.

"Well, no-o-o," said Susan reluctantly, as if she hated to admit that there was any crime the Huns couldn't be accused of. "The Germans have not turned cannibal yet — as far as I know. They have died of starvation and exposure, the poor little creatures. There is murdering for you, Cousin Sophia Crawford. The thought of it poisons every bite and sup I take."

"I see that Fred Carson of Lowbridge has been awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal," remarked the doctor, over his local paper.

"I heard that last week," said Susan. "He is a battalion runner and he did something extra brave and daring. His letter, telling his folks about it, came when his old Grandmother Carson was on her dying-bed. She had only a few minutes more to live and the Episcopal minister, who was there, asked her if she would not like him to pray. 'Oh yes, yes, you can pray,' she said impatient-like — she was a Dean, Dr. dear, and the Deans were always high-spirited—'you can pray, but for pity's sake pray low and don't disturb me. I want to think over this splendid news and I have not much time left to do it.' That was Almira Carson all over. Fred was the apple of her eye. She was seventy-five years of age and had not a grey hair in her head, they tell me."

“By the way, that reminds me — I found a grey hair this morning — my very first,” said Mrs. Blythe.

“I have noticed that grey hair for some time, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I did not speak of it. Thought I to myself, ‘She has enough to bear.’ But now that you have discovered it let me remind you that grey hairs are honourable.”

“I must be getting old, Gilbert.” Mrs. Blythe laughed a trifle ruefully. “People are beginning to tell me I look so young. They never tell you that when you are young. But I shall not worry over my silver thread. I never liked red hair. Gilbert, did I ever tell you of that time, years ago at Green Gables, when I dyed my hair? Nobody but Marilla and I knew about it.”

“Was that the reason you came out once with your hair shingled to the bone?”

“Yes. I bought a bottle of dye from a German Jew pedlar. I fondly expected it would turn my hair black — and it turned it green. So it had to be cut off.”

“You had a narrow escape, Mrs. Dr. dear,” exclaimed Susan. “Of course you were too young then to know what a German was. It was a special mercy of Providence that it was only green dye and not poison.”

“It seems hundreds of years since those Green Gables days,” sighed Mrs. Blythe. “They belonged to another world altogether. Life has been cut in two by the chasm of war. What is ahead I don’t know — but it can’t be a bit like the past. I wonder if those of us who have lived half our lives in the old world will ever feel wholly at home in the new.”

“Have you noticed,” asked Miss Oliver, glancing up from her book, “how everything written before the war seems so far away now, too? One feels as if one was reading something as ancient as the Iliad. This poem of Wordsworth’s — the Senior class have it in their entrance work — I’ve been glancing over it. Its classic calm and repose and the beauty of the lines seem to belong to another planet, and to have as little to do with the present world-welter as the evening star.”

“The only thing that I find much comfort in reading nowadays is the Bible,” remarked Susan, whisking her biscuits into the oven. “There are so many passages in it that seem to me exactly descriptive of the Huns. Old Highland Sandy declares that there is no doubt that the Kaiser is the Anti-Christ spoken of in Revelations, but I do not go as far as that. It would, in my humble opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear, be too great an honour for him.”

Early one morning, several days later, Miranda Pryor slipped up to Ingleside, ostensibly to get some Red Cross sewing, but in reality to talk over with sympathetic Rilla troubles that were past bearing alone. She brought her dog with her — an overfed, bandy-legged little animal very dear to her heart because Joe Milgrave had given it to her when it was a puppy. Mr. Pryor regarded all dogs with disfavour; but in those days he had looked kindly upon Joe as a suitor for Miranda’s hand and so he had allowed her to keep the puppy. Miranda was so grateful that she endeavoured to please her father by naming her dog after his political idol, the great Liberal chieftain, Sir Wilfrid Laurier — though his title was soon abbreviated to Wilfy. Sir Wilfrid grew and flourished and waxed fat; but Miranda spoiled him absurdly and nobody else liked him. Rilla especially hated him because of his detestable trick of lying flat on his back and entreating you with waving paws to tickle his sleek stomach. When she saw that Miranda’s pale eyes bore unmistakable testimony of her having cried all night, Rilla asked her to come up to her room, knowing Miranda had a tale of woe to tell, but she ordered Sir Wilfrid to remain below.

“Oh, can’t he come, too?” said Miranda wistfully. “Poor Wilfy won’t be any bother — and I wiped his paws so carefully before I brought him in. He is always so lonesome in a strange place without me — and very soon he’ll be — all — I’ll have left — to remind me — of Joe.”

Rilla yielded, and Sir Wilfrid, with his tail curled at a saucy angle over his brindled back, trotted triumphantly up the stairs before them.

“Oh, Rilla,” sobbed Miranda, when they had reached sanctuary. “I’m so unhappy. I can’t begin to tell you how unhappy I am. Truly, my heart is breaking.”

Rilla sat down on the lounge beside her. Sir Wilfrid squatted on his haunches before them, with his impertinent pink tongue stuck out, and listened. "What is the trouble, Miranda?"

"Joe is coming home tonight on his last leave. I had a letter from him on Saturday — he sends my letters in care of Bob Crawford, you know, because of father — and, oh, Rilla, he will only have four days — he has to go away Friday morning — and I may never see him again."

"Does he still want you to marry him?" asked Rilla.

"Oh, yes. He implored me in his letter to run away and be married. But I cannot do that, Rilla, not even for Joe. My only comfort is that I will be able to see him for a little while tomorrow afternoon. Father has to go to Charlottetown on business. At least we will have one good farewell talk. But oh — afterwards — why, Rilla, I know father won't even let me go to the station Friday morning to see Joe off."

"Why in the world don't you and Joe get married tomorrow afternoon at home?" demanded Rilla.

Miranda swallowed a sob in such amazement that she almost choked.

"Why — why — that is impossible, Rilla."

"Why?" briefly demanded the organizer of the Junior Red Cross and the transporter of babies in soup tureens.

"Why — why — we never thought of such a thing — Joe hasn't a license — I have no dress — I couldn't be married in black — I — I — we — you — you—" Miranda lost herself altogether and Sir Wilfrid, seeing that she was in dire distress threw back his head and emitted a melancholy yelp.

Rilla Blythe thought hard and rapidly for a few minutes. Then she said, "Miranda, if you will put yourself into my hands I'll have you married to Joe before four o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

"Oh, you couldn't."

“I can and I will. But you’ll have to do exactly as I tell you.”

“Oh — I — don’t think — oh, father will kill me—”

“Nonsense. He’ll be very angry I suppose. But are you more afraid of your father’s anger than you are of Joe’s never coming back to you?”

“No,” said Miranda, with sudden firmness, “I’m not.”

“Will you do as I tell you then?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Then get Joe on the long-distance at once and tell him to bring out a license and ring tonight.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” wailed the aghast Miranda, “it — it would be so — so indelicate.”

Rilla shut her little white teeth together with a snap. “Heaven grant me patience,” she said under her breath. “I’ll do it then,” she said aloud, “and meanwhile, you go home and make what preparations you can. When I ‘phone down to you to come up and help me sew come at once.”

As soon as Miranda, pallid, scared, but desperately resolved, had gone, Rilla flew to the telephone and put in a long-distance call for Charlottetown. She got through with such surprising quickness that she was convinced Providence approved of her undertaking, but it was a good hour before she could get in touch with Joe Milgrave at his camp. Meanwhile, she paced impatiently about, and prayed that when she did get Joe there would be no listeners on the line to carry news to Whiskers-on-the-moon.

“Is that you, Joe? Rilla Blythe is speaking — Rilla — Rilla — oh, never mind. Listen to this. Before you come home tonight get a marriage license — a marriage license — yes, a marriage license — and a wedding-ring. Did you get that? And will you do it? Very well, be sure you do it — it is your only chance.”

Flushed with triumph — for her only fear was that she might not be able to locate Joe in time — Rilla rang the Pryor ring. This time she had not such good luck for she drew Whiskers-on-the-moon.

“Is that Miranda? Oh — Mr. Pryor! Well, Mr. Pryor, will you kindly ask Miranda if she can come up this afternoon and help me with some sewing. It is very important, or I would not trouble her. Oh — thank you.”

Mr. Pryor had consented somewhat grumpily, but he had consented — he did not want to offend Dr. Blythe, and he knew that if he refused to allow Miranda to do any Red Cross work public opinion would make the Glen too hot for comfort. Rilla went out to the kitchen, shut all the doors with a mysterious expression which alarmed Susan, and then said solemnly, “Susan can you make a wedding-cake this afternoon?”

“A wedding-cake!” Susan stared. Rilla had, without any warning, brought her a war-baby once upon a time. Was she now, with equal suddenness, going to produce a husband?

“Yes, a wedding-cake — a scrumptious wedding-cake, Susan — a beautiful, plummy, eggy, citron-peely wedding-cake. And we must make other things too. I’ll help you in the morning. But I can’t help you in the afternoon for I have to make a wedding-dress and time is the essence of the contract, Susan.”

Susan felt that she was really too old to be subjected to such shocks.

“Who are you going to marry, Rilla?” she asked feebly.

“Susan, darling, I am not the happy bride. Miranda Pryor is going to marry Joe Milgrave tomorrow afternoon while her father is away in town. A war-wedding, Susan — isn’t that thrilling and romantic? I never was so excited in my life.”

The excitement soon spread over Ingleside, infecting even Mrs. Blythe and Susan.

“I’ll go to work on that cake at once,” vowed Susan, with a glance at the clock. “Mrs. Dr. dear, will you pick over the fruit and beat up the eggs? If you will I can have that cake ready for the oven by the evening. Tomorrow morning we can make salads and other things. I will work all night if necessary to get the better of Whiskers-on-the-moon.”

Miranda arrived, tearful and breathless.

“We must fix over my white dress for you to wear,” said Rilla. “It will fit you very nicely with a little alteration.”

To work went the two girls, ripping, fitting, basting, sewing for dear life. By dint of unceasing effort they got the dress done by seven o’clock and Miranda tried it on in Rilla’s room.

“It’s very pretty — but oh, if I could just have a veil,” sighed Miranda. “I’ve always dreamed of being married in a lovely white veil.”

Some good fairy evidently waits on the wishes of war-brides. The door opened and Mrs. Blythe came in, her arms full of a filmy burden.

“Miranda dear,” she said, “I want you to wear my wedding-veil tomorrow. It is twenty-four years since I was a bride at old Green Gables — the happiest bride that ever was — and the wedding-veil of a happy bride brings good luck, they say.”

“Oh, how sweet of you, Mrs. Blythe,” said Miranda, the ready tears starting to her eyes.

The veil was tried on and draped. Susan dropped in to approve but dared not linger.

“I’ve got that cake in the oven,” she said, “and I am pursuing a policy of watchful waiting. The evening news is that the Grand Duke has captured Erzerum. That is a pill for the Turks. I wish I had a chance to tell the Czar just what a mistake he made when he turned Nicholas down.”

Susan disappeared downstairs to the kitchen, whence a dreadful thud and a piercing shriek presently sounded. Everybody rushed to the kitchen — the doctor and Miss Oliver, Mrs. Blythe, Rilla, Miranda in her wedding-veil. Susan was sitting flatly in the middle of the kitchen floor with a dazed, bewildered look on her face, while Doc, evidently in his Hyde incarnation, was standing on the dresser, with his back up, his eyes blazing, and his tail the size of three tails.

“Susan, what has happened?” cried Mrs. Blythe in alarm. “Did you fall? Are you hurt?”

Susan picked herself up.

“No,” she said grimly, “I am not hurt, though I am jarred all over. Do not be alarmed. As for what has happened — I tried to kick that darned cat with both feet, that is what happened.”

Everybody shrieked with laughter. The doctor was quite helpless.

“Oh, Susan, Susan,” he gasped. “That I should live to hear you swear.”

“I am sorry,” said Susan in real distress, “that I used such an expression before two young girls. But I said that beast was darned, and darned it is. It belongs to Old Nick.”

“Do you expect it will vanish some of these days with a bang and the odour of brimstone, Susan?”

“It will go to its own place in due time and that you may tie to,” said Susan dourly, shaking out her raddled bones and going to her oven. “I suppose my plunking down like that has shaken my cake so that it will be as heavy as lead.”

But the cake was not heavy. It was all a bride’s cake should be, and Susan iced it beautifully. Next day she and Rilla worked all the forenoon, making delicacies for the wedding-feast, and as soon as Miranda phoned up that her father was safely off everything was packed in a big hamper and taken down to the Pryor house. Joe soon arrived in his uniform and a state of

violent excitement, accompanied by his best man, Sergeant Malcolm Crawford. There were quite a few guests, for all the Manse and Ingleside folk were there, and a dozen or so of Joe's relatives, including his mother, "Mrs. Dead Angus Milgrave," so called, cheerfully, to distinguish her from another lady whose Angus was living. Mrs. Dead Angus wore a rather disapproving expression, not caring overmuch for this alliance with the house of Whiskers-on-the-moon.

So Miranda Pryor was married to Private Joseph Milgrave on his last leave. It should have been a romantic wedding but it was not. There were too many factors working against romance, as even Rilla had to admit. In the first place, Miranda, in spite of her dress and veil, was such a flat-faced, commonplace, uninteresting little bride. In the second place, Joe cried bitterly all through the ceremony, and this vexed Miranda unreasonably. Long afterwards she told Rilla, "I just felt like saying to him then and there, 'If you feel so bad over having to marry me you don't have to.' But it was just because he was thinking all the time of how soon he would have to leave me."

In the third place, Jims, who was usually so well-behaved in public, took a fit of shyness and contrariness combined and began to cry at the top of his voice for "Willa." Nobody wanted to take him out, because everybody wanted to see the marriage, so Rilla who was a bridesmaid, had to take him and hold him during the ceremony.

In the fourth place, Sir Wilfrid Laurier took a fit.

Sir Wilfrid was entrenched in a corner of the room behind Miranda's piano. During his seizure he made the weirdest, most unearthly noises. He would begin with a series of choking, spasmodic sounds, continuing into a gruesome gurgle, and ending up with a strangled howl. Nobody could hear a word Mr. Meredith was saying, except now and then, when Sir Wilfrid stopped for breath. Nobody looked at the bride except Susan, who never dragged her fascinated eyes from Miranda's face — all the others were gazing at the dog. Miranda had been trembling with nervousness but as soon as Sir Wilfrid began his performance she forgot it. All that she could think of was that her dear dog was dying and she could not go to him. She never remembered a word of the ceremony.

Rilla, who in spite of Jims, had been trying her best to look rapt and romantic, as be seemed a war bridesmaid, gave up the hopeless attempt, and devoted her energies to choking down untimely merriment. She dared not look at anybody in the room, especially Mrs. Dead Angus, for fear all her suppressed mirth should suddenly explode in a most un-young-ladylike yell of laughter.

But married they were, and then they had a wedding-supper in the dining-room which was so lavish and bountiful that you would have thought it was the product of a month's labour. Everybody had brought something. Mrs. Dead Angus had brought a large apple-pie, which she placed on a chair in the dining-room and then absently sat down on it. Neither her temper nor her black silk wedding garment was improved thereby, but the pie was never missed at the gay bridal feast. Mrs. Dead Angus eventually took it home with her again. Whiskers-on-the-moon's pacifist pig should not get it, anyhow.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Joe, accompanied by the recovered Sir Wilfrid, departed for the Four Winds Lighthouse, which was kept by Joe's uncle and in which they meant to spend their brief honeymoon. Una Meredith and Rilla and Susan washed the dishes, tidied up, left a cold supper and Miranda's pitiful little note on the table for Mr. Pryor, and walked home, while the mystic veil of dreamy, haunted winter twilight wrapped itself over the Glen.

"I would really not have minded being a war-bride myself," remarked Susan sentimentally.

But Rilla felt rather flat — perhaps as a reaction to all the excitement and rush of the past thirty-six hours. She was disappointed somehow — the whole affair had been so ludicrous, and Miranda and Joe so lachrymose and commonplace.

"If Miranda hadn't given that wretched dog such an enormous dinner he wouldn't have had that fit," she said crossly. "I warned her — but she said she couldn't starve the poor dog — he would soon be all she had left, *etc.* I could have shaken her."

“The best man was more excited than Joe was,” said Susan. “He wished Miranda many happy returns of the day. She did not look very happy, but perhaps you could not expect that under the circumstances.”

“Anyhow,” thought Rilla, “I can write a perfectly killing account of it all to the boys. How Jem will howl over Sir Wilfrid’s part in it!”

But if Rilla was rather disappointed in the war wedding she found nothing lacking on Friday morning when Miranda said goodbye to her bridegroom at the Glen station. The dawn was white as a pearl, clear as a diamond. Behind the station the balsamy copse of young firs was frost-misted. The cold moon of dawn hung over the westering snow fields but the golden fleeces of sunrise shone above the maples up at Ingleside. Joe took his pale little bride in his arms and she lifted her face to his. Rilla choked suddenly. It did not matter that Miranda was insignificant and commonplace and flat-featured. It did not matter that she was the daughter of Whiskers-on-the-moon. All that mattered was that rapt, sacrificial look in her eyes — that ever-burning, sacred fire of devotion and loyalty and fine courage that she was mutely promising Joe she and thousands of other women would keep alive at home while their men held the Western front. Rilla walked away, realising that she must not spy on such a moment. She went down to the end of the platform where Sir Wilfrid and Dog Monday were sitting, looking at each other.

Sir Wilfrid remarked condescendingly: “Why do you haunt this old shed when you might lie on the hearthrug at Ingleside and live on the fat of the land? Is it a pose? Or a fixed idea?”

Whereat Dog Monday, laconically: “I have a tryst to keep.”

When the train had gone Rilla rejoined the little trembling Miranda. “Well, he’s gone,” said Miranda, “and he may never come back — but I’m his wife, and I’m going to be worthy of him. I’m going home.”

“Don’t you think you had better come with me now?” asked Rilla doubtfully. Nobody knew yet how Mr. Pryor had taken the matter.

“No. If Joe can face the Huns I guess I can face father,” said Miranda daringly. “A soldier’s wife can’t be a coward. Come on, Wilfy. I’ll go straight home and meet the worst.”

There was nothing very dreadful to face, however. Perhaps Mr. Pryor had reflected that housekeepers were hard to get and that there were many Milgrave homes open to Miranda — also, that there was such a thing as a separation allowance. At all events, though he told her grumpily that she had made a nice fool of herself, and would live to regret it, he said nothing worse, and Mrs. Joe put on her apron and went to work as usual, while Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who had a poor opinion of lighthouses for winter residences, went to sleep in his pet nook behind the woodbox, a thankful dog that he was done with war-weddings.

CHAPTER XI X

“THEY SHALL NOT PASS”

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One cold grey morning in February Gertrude Oliver wakened with a shiver, slipped into Rilla’s room, and crept in beside her.

“Rilla — I’m frightened — frightened as a baby — I’ve had another of my strange dreams. Something terrible is before us — I know.”

“What was it?” asked Rilla.

“I was standing again on the veranda steps — just as I stood in that dream on the night before the lighthouse dance, and in the sky a huge black, menacing thunder cloud rolled up from the east. I could see its shadow racing before it and when it enveloped me I shivered with icy cold. Then the storm broke — and it was a dreadful storm — blinding flash after flash and deafening peal after peal, driving torrents of rain. I turned in panic and tried to run for shelter, and as I did so a man — a soldier in the uniform of a French army officer — dashed up the steps and stood beside me on the threshold of the door. His clothes were soaked with blood from a wound in his breast, he seemed spent and exhausted; but his white face was set and his eyes blazed in his hollow face. ‘They shall not pass,’ he said, in low, passionate tones which I heard distinctly amid all the turmoil of the storm. Then I awakened. Rilla, I’m frightened — the spring will not bring the Big Push we’ve all been hoping for — instead it is going to bring some dreadful blow to France. I am sure of it. The Germans will try to smash through somewhere.”

“But he told you that they would not pass,” said Rilla, seriously. She never laughed at Gertrude’s dreams as the doctor did.

“I do not know if that was prophecy or desperation, Rilla, the horror of that dream holds me yet in an icy grip. We shall need all our courage before long.”

Dr. Blythe did laugh at the breakfast table — but he never laughed at Miss Oliver’s dreams again; for that day brought news of the opening of the Verdun offensive, and thereafter through all the beautiful weeks of spring the Ingleside family, one and all, lived in a trance of dread. There were days when they waited in despair for the end as foot by foot the Germans crept nearer and nearer to the grim barrier of desperate France.

Susan’s deeds were in her spotless kitchen at Ingleside, but her thoughts were on the hills around Verdun. “Mrs. Dr. dear,” she would stick her head in at Mrs. Blythe’s door the last thing at night to remark, “I do hope the French have hung onto the Crow’s Wood today,” and she woke at dawn to wonder if Dead Man’s Hill — surely named by some prophet — was still held by the “poyloos.” Susan could have drawn a map of the country around Verdun that would have satisfied a chief of staff.

“If the Germans capture Verdun the spirit of France will be broken,” Miss Oliver said bitterly.

“But they will not capture it,” staunchly said Susan, who could not eat her dinner that day for fear lest they do that very thing. “In the first place, you dreamed they would not — you dreamed the very thing the French are saying before they ever said it—’they shall not pass.’ I declare to you, Miss Oliver, dear, when I read that in the paper, and remembered your dream, I went cold all over with awe. It seemed to me like Biblical times when people dreamed things like that quite frequently.

“I know — I know,” said Gertrude, walking restlessly about. “I cling to a persistent faith in my dream, too — but every time bad news comes it fails me. Then I tell myself ‘mere coincidence’—’subconscious memory’ and so forth.”

“I do not see how any memory could remember a thing before it was ever said at all,” persisted Susan, “though of course I am not educated like you and the doctor. I would rather not be, if it makes anything as simple as that

so hard to believe. But in any case we need not worry over Verdun, even if the Huns get it. Joffre says it has no military significance.”

“That old sop of comfort has been served up too often already when reverses came,” retorted Gertrude. “It has lost its power to charm.”

“Was there ever a battle like this in the world before?” said Mr. Meredith, one evening in mid-April.

“It’s such a titanic thing we can’t grasp it,” said the doctor. “What were the scraps of a few Homeric handfuls compared to this? The whole Trojan war might be fought around a Verdun fort and a newspaper correspondent would give it no more than a sentence. I am not in the confidence of the occult powers” — the doctor threw Gertrude a twinkle—”but I have a hunch that the fate of the whole war hangs on the issue of Verdun. As Susan and Joffre say, it has no real military significance; but it has the tremendous significance of an Idea. If Germany wins there she will win the war. If she loses, the tide will set against her.”

“Lose she will,” said Mr. Meredith: emphatically. “The Idea cannot be conquered. France is certainly very wonderful. It seems to me that in her I see the white form of civilization making a determined stand against the black powers of barbarism. I think our whole world realizes this and that is why we all await the issue so breathlessly. It isn’t merely the question of a few forts changing hands or a few miles of blood-soaked ground lost and won.”

“I wonder,” said Gertrude dreamily, “if some great blessing, great enough for the price, will be the meed of all our pain? Is the agony in which the world is shuddering the birth-pang of some wondrous new era? Or is it merely a futile

struggle of ants

In the gleam of a million million of suns?

We think very lightly, Mr. Meredith, of a calamity which destroys an ant-hill and half its inhabitants. Does the Power that runs the universe think us of more importance than we think ants?”

“You forget,” said Mr. Meredith, with a flash of his dark eyes, “that an infinite Power must be infinitely little as well as infinitely great. We are neither, therefore there are things too little as well as too great for us to apprehend. To the infinitely little an ant is of as much importance as a mastodon. We are witnessing the birth-pangs of a new era — but it will be born a feeble, wailing life like everything else. I am not one of those who expect a new heaven and a new earth as the immediate result of this war. That is not the way God works. But work He does, Miss Oliver, and in the end His purpose will be fulfilled.”

“Sound and orthodox — sound and orthodox,” muttered Susan approvingly in the kitchen. Susan liked to see Miss Oliver sat upon by the minister now and then. Susan was very fond of her but she thought Miss Oliver liked saying heretical things to ministers far too well, and deserved an occasional reminder that these matters were quite beyond her province.

In May Walter wrote home that he had been awarded a D.C. Medal. He did not say what for, but the other boys took care that the Glen should know the brave thing Walter had done. “In any war but this,” wrote Jerry Meredith, “it would have meant a V.C. But they can’t make V.C.’s as common as the brave things done every day here.”

“He should have had the V.C.,” said Susan, and was very indignant over it. She was not quite sure who was to blame for his not getting it, but if it were General Haig she began for the first time to entertain serious doubts as to his fitness for being Commander-in-Chief.

Rilla was beside herself with delight. It was her dear Walter who had done this thing — Walter, to whom someone had sent a white feather at Redmond — it was Walter who had dashed back from the safety of the trench to drag in a wounded comrade who had fallen on No-man’s-land. Oh, she could see his white beautiful face and wonderful eyes as he did it! What a thing to be the sister of such a hero! And he hadn’t thought it worth while writing about. His letter was full of other things — little intimate things that they two had known and loved together in the dear old cloudless days of a century ago.

“I’ve been thinking of the daffodils in the garden at Ingleside,” he wrote. “By the time you get this they will be out, blowing there under that lovely rosy sky. Are they really as bright and golden as ever, Rilla? It seems to me that they must be dyed red with blood — like our poppies here. And every whisper of spring will be falling as a violet in Rainbow Valley.

“There is a young moon tonight — a slender, silver, lovely thing hanging over these pits of torment. Will you see it tonight over the maple grove?

“I’m enclosing a little scrap of verse, Rilla. I wrote it one evening in my trench dug-out by the light of a bit of candle — or rather it came to me there — I didn’t feel as if I were writing it — something seemed to use me as an instrument. I’ve had that feeling once or twice before, but very rarely and never so strongly as this time. That was why I sent it over to the London Spectator. It printed it and the copy came today. I hope you’ll like it. It’s the only poem I’ve written since I came overseas.”

The poem was a short, poignant little thing. In a month it had carried Walter’s name to every corner of the globe. Everywhere it was copied — in metropolitan dailies and little village weeklies — in profound reviews and “agony columns,” in Red Cross appeals and Government recruiting propaganda. Mothers and sisters wept over it, young lads thrilled to it, the whole great heart of humanity caught it up as an epitome of all the pain and hope and pity and purpose of the mighty conflict, crystallized in three brief immortal verses. A Canadian lad in the Flanders trenches had written the one great poem of the war. “The Piper,” by Pte. Walter Blythe, was a classic from its first printing.

Rilla copied it in her diary at the beginning of an entry in which she poured out the story of the hard week that had just passed.

“It has been such a dreadful week,” she wrote, “and even though it is over and we know that it was all a mistake that does not seem to do away with the bruises left by it. And yet it has in some ways been a very wonderful week and I have had some glimpses of things I never realized before — of how fine and brave people can be even in the midst of horrible suffering. I am sure I could never be as splendid as Miss Oliver was.

“Just a week ago today she had a letter from Mr. Grant’s mother in Charlottetown. And it told her that a cable had just come saying that Major Robert Grant had been killed in action a few days before.

“Oh, poor Gertrude! At first she was crushed. Then after just a day she pulled herself together and went back to her school. She did not cry — I never saw her shed a tear — but oh, her face and her eyes!

“‘I must go on with my work,’ she said. ‘That is my duty just now.’

“I could never have risen to such a height.

“She never spoke bitterly except once, when Susan said something about spring being here at last, and Gertrude said,

“‘Can the spring really come this year?’

“Then she laughed — such a dreadful little laugh, just as one might laugh in the face of death, I think, and said,

“‘Observe my egotism. Because I, Gertrude Oliver, have lost a friend, it is incredible that the spring can come as usual. The spring does not fail because of the million agonies of others — but for mine — oh, can the universe go on?’

“‘Don’t feel bitter with yourself, dear,’ mother said gently. ‘It is a very natural thing to feel as if things couldn’t go on just the same when some great blow has changed the world for us. We all feel like that.’

“Then that horrid old Cousin Sophia of Susan’s piped up. She was sitting there, knitting and croaking like an old ‘raven of bode and woe’ as Walter used to call her.

“‘You ain’t as bad off as some, Miss Oliver,’ she said, ‘and you shouldn’t take it so hard. There’s some as has lost their husbands; that’s a hard blow; and there’s some as has lost their sons. You haven’t lost either husband or son.’

“‘No,’ said Gertrude, more bitterly still. ‘It’s true I haven’t lost a husband — I have only lost the man who would have been my husband. I have lost no son — only the sons and daughters who might have been born to me — who will never be born to me now.’

“‘It isn’t ladylike to talk like that,’ said Cousin Sophia in a shocked tone; and then Gertrude laughed right out, so wildly that Cousin Sophia was really frightened. And when poor tortured Gertrude, unable to endure it any longer, hurried out of the room, Cousin Sophia asked mother if the blow hadn’t affected Miss Oliver’s mind.

“‘I suffered the loss of two good kind partners,’ she said, ‘but it did not affect me like that.’

“I should think it wouldn’t! Those poor men must have been thankful to die.

“I heard Gertrude walking up and down her room most of the night. She walked like that every night. But never so long as that night. And once I heard her give a dreadful sudden little cry as if she had been stabbed. I couldn’t sleep for suffering with her; and I couldn’t help her. I thought the night would never end. But it did; and then ‘joy came in the morning’ as the Bible says. Only it didn’t come exactly in the morning but well along in the afternoon. The telephone rang and I answered it. It was old Mrs. Grant speaking from Charlottetown, and her news was that it was all a mistake — Robert wasn’t killed at all; he had only been slightly wounded in the arm and was safe in the hospital out of harm’s way for a time anyhow. They hadn’t learned yet how the mistake had happened but supposed there must have been another Robert Grant.

“I hung up the telephone and flew to Rainbow Valley. I’m sure I did fly — I can’t remember my feet ever touching the ground. I met Gertrude on her way home from school in the glade of spruces where we used to play, and I just gasped out the news to her. I ought to have had more sense, of course. But I was so crazy with joy and excitement that I never stopped to think. Gertrude just dropped there among the golden young ferns as if she had been shot. The fright it gave me ought to make me sensible — in this respect at least — for the rest of my life. I thought I had killed her — I

remembered that her mother had died very suddenly from heart failure when quite a young woman. It seemed years to me before I discovered that her heart was still beating. A pretty time I had! I never saw anybody faint before, and I knew there was nobody up at the house to help, because everybody else had gone to the station to meet Di and Nan coming home from Redmond. But I knew — theoretically — how people in a faint should be treated, and now I know it practically. Luckily the brook was handy, and after I had worked frantically over her for a while Gertrude came back to life. She never said one word about my news and I didn't dare to refer to it again. I helped her walk up through the maple grove and up to her room, and then she said, 'Rob — is — living,' as if the words were torn out of her, and flung herself on her bed and cried and cried and cried. I never saw anyone cry so before. All the tears that she hadn't shed all that week came then. She cried most of last night, I think, but her face this morning looked as if she had seen a vision of some kind, and we were all so happy that we were almost afraid.

"Di and Nan are home for a couple of weeks. Then they go back to Red Cross work in the training camp at Kingsport. I envy them. Father says I'm doing just as good work here, with Jims and my Junior Reds. But it lacks the romance theirs must have.

"Kut has fallen. It was almost a relief when it did fall, we had been dreading it so long. It crushed us flat for a day and then we picked up and put it behind us. Cousin Sophia was as gloomy as usual and came over and groaned that the British were losing everywhere.

"‘They're good losers,’ said Susan grimly. ‘When they lose a thing they keep on looking till they find it again! Anyhow, my king and country need me now to cut potato sets for the back garden, so get you a knife and help me, Sophia Crawford. It will divert your thoughts and keep you from worrying over a campaign that you are not called upon to run.’

"Susan is an old brick, and the way she flattens out poor Cousin Sophia is beautiful to behold.

"As for Verdun, the battle goes on and on, and we see-saw between hope and fear. But I know that strange dream of Miss Oliver's foretold the

victory of France. ‘They shall not pass.’”

CHAPTER X X

NORMAN DOUGLAS SPEAKS OUT IN MEETING

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“Where are you wandering, Anne o’ mine?” asked the doctor, who even yet, after twenty-four years of marriage, occasionally addressed his wife thus when nobody was about. Anne was sitting on the veranda steps, gazing absently over the wonderful bridal world of spring blossom, Beyond the white orchard was a copse of dark young firs and creamy wild cherries, where the robins were whistling madly; for it was evening and the fire of early stars was burning over the maple grove.

Anne came back with a little sigh.

“I was just taking relief from intolerable realities in a dream, Gilbert — a dream that all our children were home again — and all small again — playing in Rainbow Valley. It is always so silent now — but I was imagining I heard clear voices and gay, childish sounds coming up as I used to. I could hear Jem’s whistle and Walter’s yodel, and the twins’ laughter, and for just a few blessed minutes I forgot about the guns on the Western front, and had a little false, sweet happiness.”

The doctor did not answer. Sometimes his work tricked him into forgetting for a few moments the Western front, but not often. There was a good deal of grey now in his still thick curls that had not been there two years ago. Yet he smiled down into the starry eyes he loved — the eyes that had once been so full of laughter, and now seemed always full of unshed tears.

Susan wandered by with a hoe in her hand and her second best bonnet on her head.

“I have just finished reading a piece in the Enterprise which told of a couple being married in an aeroplane. Do you think it would be legal,

doctor dear?" she inquired anxiously.

"I think so," said the doctor gravely.

"Well," said Susan dubiously, "it seems to me that a wedding is too solemn for anything so giddy as an aeroplane. But nothing is the same as it used to be. Well, it is half an hour yet before prayer-meeting time, so I am going around to the kitchen garden to have a little evening hate with the weeds. But all the time I am strafing them I will be thinking about this new worry in the Trentino. I do not like this Austrian caper, Mrs. Dr. dear."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Blythe ruefully. "All the forenoon I preserved rhubarb with my hands and waited for the war news with my soul. When it came I shrivelled. Well, I suppose I must go and get ready for the prayer-meeting, too."

Every village has its own little unwritten history, handed down from lip to lip through the generations, of tragic, comic, and dramatic events. They are told at weddings and festivals, and rehearsed around winter firesides. And in these oral annals of Glen St. Mary the tale of the union prayer-meeting held that night in the Methodist Church was destined to fill an imperishable place.

The union prayer-meeting was Mr. Arnold's idea. The county battalion, which had been training all winter in Charlottetown, was to leave shortly for overseas. The Four Winds Harbour boys belonging to it from the Glen and over-harbour and Harbour Head and Upper Glen were all home on their last leave, and Mr. Arnold thought, properly enough, that it would be a fitting thing to hold a union prayer-meeting for them before they went away. Mr. Meredith having agreed, the meeting was announced to be held in the Methodist Church. Glen prayer-meetings were not apt to be too well attended, but on this particular evening the Methodist Church was crowded. Everybody who could go was there. Even Miss Cornelia came — and it was the first time in her life that Miss Cornelia had ever set foot inside a Methodist Church. It took no less than a world conflict to bring that about.

“I used to hate Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia calmly, when her husband expressed surprise over her going, “but I don’t hate them now. There is no sense in hating Methodists when there is a Kaiser or a Hindenburg in the world.”

So Miss Cornelia went. Norman Douglas and his wife went too. And Whiskers-on-the-moon strutted up the aisle to a front pew, as if he fully realized what a distinction he conferred upon the building. People were somewhat surprised that he should be there, since he usually avoided all assemblages connected in any way with the war. But Mr. Meredith had said that he hoped his session would be well represented, and Mr. Pryor had evidently taken the request to heart. He wore his best black suit and white tie, his thick, tight, iron-grey curls were neatly arranged, and his broad, red round face looked, as Susan most uncharitably thought, more “sanctimonious” than ever.

“The minute I saw that man coming into the Church, looking like that, I felt that mischief was brewing, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said afterwards. “What form it would take I could not tell, but I knew from face of him that he had come there for no good.”

The prayer-meeting opened conventionally and continued quietly. Mr. Meredith spoke first with his usual eloquence and feeling. Mr. Arnold followed with an address which even Miss Cornelia had to confess was irreproachable in taste and subject-matter.

And then Mr. Arnold asked Mr. Pryor to lead in prayer.

Miss Cornelia had always averred that Mr. Arnold had no gumption. Miss Cornelia was not apt to err on the side of charity in her judgment of Methodist ministers, but in this case she did not greatly overshoot the mark. The Rev. Mr. Arnold certainly did not have much of that desirable, indefinable quality known as gumption, or he would never have asked Whiskers-on-the-moon to lead in prayer at a khaki prayer-meeting. He thought he was returning the compliment to Mr. Meredith, who, at the conclusion of his address, had asked a Methodist deacon to lead.

Some people expected Mr. Pryor to refuse grumpily — and that would have made enough scandal. But Mr. Pryor bounded briskly to his feet, unctuously said, “Let us pray,” and forthwith prayed. In a sonorous voice which penetrated to every corner of the crowded building Mr. Pryor poured forth a flood of fluent words, and was well on in his prayer before his dazed and horrified audience awakened to the fact that they were listening to a pacifist appeal of the rankest sort. Mr. Pryor had at least the courage of his convictions; or perhaps, as people afterwards said, he thought he was safe in a church and that it was an excellent chance to air certain opinions he dared not voice elsewhere, for fear of being mobbed. He prayed that the unholy war might cease — that the deluded armies being driven to slaughter on the Western front might have their eyes opened to their iniquity and repent while yet there was time — that the poor young men present in khaki, who had been hounded into a path of murder and militarism, should yet be rescued —

Mr. Pryor had got this far without let or hindrance; and so paralysed were his hearers, and so deeply imbued with their born-and-bred conviction that no disturbance must ever be made in a church, no matter what the provocation, that it seemed likely that he would continue unchecked to the end. But one man at least in that audience was not hampered by inherited or acquired reverence for the sacred edifice. Norman Douglas was, as Susan had often vowed crisply, nothing more or less than a “pagan.” But he was a rampantly patriotic pagan, and when the significance of what Mr. Pryor was saying fully dawned on him, Norman Douglas suddenly went berserk. With a positive roar he bounded to his feet in his side pew, facing the audience, and shouted in tones of thunder:

“Stop — stop — STOP that abominable prayer! What an abominable prayer!”

Every head in the church flew up. A boy in khaki at the back gave a faint cheer. Mr. Meredith raised a deprecating hand, but Norman was past caring for anything like that. Eluding his wife’s restraining grasp, he gave one mad spring over the front of the pew and caught the unfortunate Whiskers-on-the-moon by his coat collar. Mr. Pryor had not “stopped” when so bidden, but he stopped now, perforce, for Norman, his long red

beard literally bristling with fury, was shaking him until his bones fairly rattled, and punctuating his shakes with a lurid assortment of abusive epithets.

“You blatant beast!” — shake—“You malignant carrion” — shake—“You pig-headed varmint!” — shake—“you putrid pup” — shake—“you pestilential parasite” — shake—“you — Hunnish scum” — shake—“you indecent reptile — you — you—” Norman choked for a moment.

Everybody believed that the next thing he would say, church or no church, would be something that would have to be spelt with asterisks; but at that moment Norman encountered his wife’s eye and he fell back with a thud on Holy Writ. “You whited sepulchre!” he bellowed, with a final shake, and cast Whiskers-on-the-moon from him with a vigour which impelled that unhappy pacifist to the very verge of the choir entrance door. Mr. Pryor’s once ruddy face was ashen. But he turned at bay. “I’ll have the law on you for this,” he gasped.

“Do — do,” roared Norman, making another rush. But Mr. Pryor was gone. He had no desire to fall a second time into the hands of an avenging militarist. Norman turned to the platform for one graceless, triumphant moment.

“Don’t look so flabbergasted, parsons,” he boomed. “You couldn’t do it — nobody would expect it of the cloth — but somebody had to do it. You know you’re glad I threw him out — he couldn’t be let go on yammering and yodelling and yawping sedition and treason. Sedition and treason — somebody had to deal with it. I was born for this hour — I’ve had my innings in church at last. I can sit quiet for another sixty years now! Go ahead with your meeting, parsons. I reckon you won’t be troubled with any more pacifist prayers.”

But the spirit of devotion and reverence had fled. Both ministers realized it and realized that the only thing to do was to close the meeting quietly and let the excited people go. Mr. Meredith addressed a few earnest words to the boys in khaki — which probably saved Mr. Pryor’s windows from a second onslaught — and Mr. Arnold pronounced an incongruous benediction, at least he felt it was incongruous, for he could not at once banish from his memory the sight of gigantic Norman Douglas shaking the

fat, pompous little Whiskers-on-the-moon as a huge mastiff might shake an overgrown puppy. And he knew that the same picture was in everybody's mind. Altogether the union prayer-meeting could hardly be called an unqualified success. But it was remembered in Glen St. Mary when scores of orthodox and undisturbed assemblies were totally forgotten.

"You will never, no, never, Mrs. Dr. dear, hear me call Norman Douglas a pagan again," said Susan when she reached home. "If Ellen Douglas is not a proud woman this night she should be."

"Norman Douglas did a wholly indefensible thing," said the doctor. "Pryor should have been let severely alone until the meeting was over. Then later on, his own minister and session should deal with him. That would have been the proper procedure. Norman's performance was utterly improper and scandalous and outrageous; but, by George," — the doctor threw back his head and chuckled, "by George, Anne-girl, it was satisfying."

CHAPTER XX I

“LOVE AFFAIRS ARE HORRIBLE”

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Ingleside

20th June 1916

“We have been so busy, and day after day has brought such exciting news, good and bad, that I haven’t had time and composure to write in my diary for weeks. I like to keep it up regularly, for father says a diary of the years of the war should be a very interesting thing to hand down to one’s children. The trouble is, I like to write a few personal things in this blessed old book that might not be exactly what I’d want my children to read. I feel that I shall be a far greater stickler for propriety in regard to them than I am for myself!

“The first week in June was another dreadful one. The Austrians seemed just on the point of overrunning Italy: and then came the first awful news of the Battle of Jutland, which the Germans claimed as a great victory. Susan was the only one who carried on. ‘You need never tell me that the Kaiser has defeated the British Navy,’ she said, with a contemptuous sniff. ‘It is all a German lie and that you may tie to.’ And when a couple of days later we found out that she was right and that it had been a British victory instead of a British defeat, we had to put up with a great many ‘I told you so’s,’ but we endured them very comfortably.

“It took Kitchener’s death to finish Susan. For the first time I saw her down and out. We all felt the shock of it but Susan plumbed the depths of despair. The news came at night by ‘phone but Susan wouldn’t believe it until she saw the Enterprise headline the next day. She did not cry or faint or go into hysterics; but she forgot to put salt in the soup, and that is something Susan never did in my recollection. Mother and Miss Oliver and I cried but Susan looked at us in stony sarcasm and said, ‘The Kaiser

and his six sons are all alive and thriving. So the world is not left wholly desolate. Why cry, Mrs. Dr. dear?’ Susan continued in this stony, hopeless condition for twenty-four hours, and then Cousin Sophia appeared and began to condole with her.

“‘This is terrible news, ain’t it, Susan? We might as well prepare for the worst for it is bound to come. You said once — and well do I remember the words, Susan Baker — that you had complete confidence in God and Kitchener. Ah well, Susan Baker, there is only God left now.’

“Whereat Cousin Sophia put her handkerchief to her eyes pathetically as if the world were indeed in terrible straits. As for Susan, Cousin Sophia was the salvation of her. She came to life with a jerk.

“‘Sophia Crawford, hold your peace!’ she said sternly. ‘You may be an idiot but you need not be an irreverent idiot. It is no more than decent to be weeping and wailing because the Almighty is the sole stay of the Allies now. As for Kitchener, his death is a great loss and I do not dispute it. But the outcome of this war does not depend on one man’s life and now that the Russians are coming on again you will soon see a change for the better.’

“Susan said this so energetically that she convinced herself and cheered up immediately. But Cousin Sophia shook her head.

“‘Albert’s wife wants to call the baby after Brusiloff,’ she said, ‘but I told her to wait and see what becomes of him first. Them Russians has such a habit of petering out.’

“The Russians are doing splendidly, however, and they have saved Italy. But even when the daily news of their sweeping advance comes we don’t feel like running up the flag as we used to do. As Gertrude says, Verdun has slain all exultation. We would all feel more like rejoicing if the victories were on the western front. ‘When will the British strike?’ Gertrude sighed this morning. ‘We have waited so long — so long.’

“Our greatest local event in recent weeks was the route march the county battalion made through the county before it left for overseas. They

marched from Charlottetown to Lowbridge, then round the Harbour Head and through the Upper Glen and so down to the St. Mary station.

Everybody turned out to see them, except old Aunt Fannie Clow, who is bedridden and Mr. Pryor, who hadn't been seen out even in church since the night of the Union Prayer Meeting the previous week.

"It was wonderful and heartbreaking to see that battalion marching past. There were young men and middle-aged men in it. There was Laurie McAllister from over-harbour who is only sixteen but swore he was eighteen, so that he could enlist; and there was Angus Mackenzie, from the Upper Glen who is fifty-five if he is a day and swore he was forty-four. There were two South African veterans from Lowbridge, and the three eighteen-year-old Baxter triplets from Harbour Head. Everybody cheered as they went by, and they cheered Foster Booth, who is forty, walking side by side with his son Charley who is twenty. Charley's mother died when he was born, and when Charley enlisted Foster said he'd never yet let Charley go anywhere he daren't go himself, and he didn't mean to begin with the Flanders trenches. At the station Dog Monday nearly went out of his head. He tore about and sent messages to Jem by them all. Mr. Meredith read an address and Reta Crawford recited 'The Piper.' The soldiers cheered her like mad and cried 'We'll follow — we'll follow — we won't break faith,' and I felt so proud to think that it was my dear brother who had written such a wonderful, heart-stirring thing. And then I looked at the khaki ranks and wondered if those tall fellows in uniform could be the boys I've laughed with and played with and danced with and teased all my life. Something seems to have touched them and set them apart. They have heard the Piper's call.

"Fred Arnold was in the battalion and I felt dreadfully about him, for I realized that it was because of me that he was going away with such a sorrowful expression. I couldn't help it but I felt as badly as if I could.

"The last evening of his leave Fred came up to Ingleside and told me he loved me and asked me if I would promise to marry him some day, if he ever came back. He was desperately in earnest and I felt more wretched than I ever did in my life. I couldn't promise him that — why, even if there was no question of Ken, I don't care for Fred that way and never

could — but it seemed so cruel and heartless to send him away to the front without any hope of comfort. I cried like a baby; and yet — oh, I am afraid that there must be something incurably frivolous about me, because, right in the middle of it all, with me crying and Fred looking so wild and tragic, the thought popped into my head that it would be an unendurable thing to see that nose across from me at the breakfast table every morning of my life. There, that is one of the entries I wouldn't want my descendants to read in this journal. But it is the humiliating truth; and perhaps it's just as well that thought did come or I might have been tricked by pity and remorse into giving him some rash assurance. If Fred's nose were as handsome as his eyes and mouth some such thing might have happened. And then what an unthinkable predicament I should have been in!

“When poor Fred became convinced that I couldn't promise him, he behaved beautifully — though that rather made things worse. If he had been nasty about it I wouldn't have felt so heartbroken and remorseful — though why I should feel remorseful I don't know, for I never encouraged Fred to think I cared a bit about him. Yet feel remorseful I did — and do. If Fred Arnold never comes back from overseas, this will haunt me all my life.

“Then Fred said if he couldn't take my love with him to the trenches at least he wanted to feel that he had my friendship, and would I kiss him just once in goodbye before he went — perhaps for ever?

“I don't know how I could ever had imagined that love affairs were delightful, interesting things. They are horrible. I couldn't even give poor heartbroken Fred one little kiss, because of my promise to Ken. It seemed so brutal. I had to tell Fred that of course he would have my friendship, but that I couldn't kiss him because I had promised somebody else I wouldn't.

“He said, ‘It is — is it — Ken Ford?’

“I nodded. It seemed dreadful to have to tell it — it was such a sacred little secret just between me and Ken.

“When Fred went away I came up here to my room and cried so long and so bitterly that mother came up and insisted on knowing what was the

matter. I told her. She listened to my tale with an expression that clearly said, ‘Can it be possible that anyone has been wanting to marry this baby?’ But she was so nice and understanding and sympathetic, oh, just so race-of-Josephy — that I felt indescribably comforted. Mothers are the dearest things.

“‘But oh, mother,’ I sobbed, ‘he wanted me to kiss him goodbye — and I couldn’t — and that hurt me worse than all the rest.’

“‘Well, why didn’t you kiss him?’ asked mother coolly. ‘Considering the circumstances, I think you might have.’

“‘But I couldn’t, mother — I promised Ken when he went away that I wouldn’t kiss anybody else until he came back.’

“This was another high explosive for poor mother. She exclaimed, with the queerest little catch in her voice, ‘Rilla, are you engaged to Kenneth Ford?’

“‘I — don’t — know,’ I sobbed.

“‘You — don’t — know?’ repeated mother.

“Then I had to tell her the whole story, too; and every time I tell it it seems sillier and sillier to imagine that Ken meant anything serious. I felt idiotic and ashamed by the time I got through.

“Mother sat a little while in silence. Then she came over, sat down beside me, and took me in her arms.

“‘Don’t cry, dear little Rilla-my-Rilla. You have nothing to reproach yourself with in regard to Fred; and if Leslie West’s son asked you to keep your lips for him, I think you may consider yourself engaged to him. But — oh, my baby — my last little baby — I have lost you — the war has made a woman of you too soon.’

“I shall never be too much of a woman to find comfort in mother’s hugs. Nevertheless, when I saw Fred marching by two days later in the parade,

my heart ached unbearably.

“But I’m glad mother thinks I’m really engaged to Ken!”

CHAPTER XXI I

LITTLE DOG MONDAY KNOWS

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“It is two years tonight since the dance at the light, when Jack Elliott brought us news of the war. Do you remember, Miss Oliver?”

Cousin Sophia answered for Miss Oliver. “Oh, indeed, Rilla, I remember that evening only too well, and you a-prancing down here to show off your party clothes. Didn’t I warn you that we could not tell what was before us? Little did you think that night what was before you.”

“Little did any of us think that,” said Susan sharply, “not being gifted with the power of prophecy. It does not require any great foresight, Sophia Crawford, to tell a body that she will have some trouble before her life is over. I could do as much myself.”

“We all thought the war would be over in a few months then,” said Rilla wistfully. “When I look back it seems so ridiculous that we ever could have supposed it.”

“And now, two years later, it is no nearer the end than it was then,” said Miss Oliver gloomily.

Susan clicked her knitting-needles briskly.

“Now, Miss Oliver, dear, you know that is not a reasonable remark. You know we are just two years nearer the end, whenever the end is appointed to be.”

“Albert read in a Montreal paper today that a war expert gives it as his opinion that it will last five years more,” was Cousin Sophia’s cheerful contribution.

“It can’t,” cried Rilla; then she added with a sigh, “Two years ago we would have said ‘It can’t last two years.’ But five more years of this!”

“If Rumania comes in, as I have strong hopes now of her doing, you will see the end in five months instead of five years,” said Susan.

“I’ve no faith in furriners,” sighed Cousin Sophia.

“The French are foreigners,” retorted Susan, “and look at Verdun. And think of all the Somme victories this blessed summer. The Big Push is on and the Russians are still going well. Why, General Haig says that the German officers he has captured admit that they have lost the war.”

“You can’t believe a word the Germans say,” protested Cousin Sophia. “There is no sense in believing a thing just because you’d like to believe it, Susan Baker. The British have lost millions of men at the Somme and how far have they got? Look facts in the face, Susan Baker, look facts in the face.”

“They are wearing the Germans out and so long as that happens it does not matter whether it is done a few miles east or a few miles west. I am not,” admitted Susan in tremendous humility, “I am not a military expert, Sophia Crawford, but even I can see that, and so could you if you were not determined to take a gloomy view of everything. The Huns have not got all the cleverness in the world. Have you not heard the story of Alistair MacCallum’s son Roderick, from the Upper Glen? He is a prisoner in Germany and his mother got a letter from him last week. He wrote that he was being very kindly treated and that all the prisoners had plenty of food and so on, till you would have supposed everything was lovely. But when he signed his name, right in between Roderick and MacCallum, he wrote two Gaelic words that meant ‘all lies’ and the German censor did not understand Gaelic and thought it was all part of Roddy’s name. So he let it pass, never dreaming how he was diddled. Well, I am going to leave the war to Haig for the rest of the day and make a frosting for my chocolate cake. And when it is made I shall put it on the top shelf. The last one I made I left it on the lower shelf and little Kitchener sneaked in and clawed all the icing off and ate it. We had company for tea that night and when I went to get my cake what a sight did I behold!”

“Has that pore orphan’s father never been heerd from yet?” asked Cousin Sophia.

“Yes, I had a letter from him in July,” said Rilla. “He said that when he got word of his wife’s death and of my taking the baby — Mr. Meredith wrote him, you know — he wrote right away, but as he never got any answer he had begun to think his letter must have been lost.”

“It took him two years to begin to think it,” said Susan scornfully. “Some people think very slow. Jim Anderson has not got a scratch, for all he has been two years in the trenches. A fool for luck, as the old proverb says.”

“He wrote very nicely about Jims and said he’d like to see him,” said Rilla. “So I wrote and told him all about the wee man, and sent him snapshots. Jims will be two years old next week and he is a perfect duck.”

“You didn’t used to be very fond of babies,” said Cousin Sophia.

“I’m not a bit fonder of babies in the abstract than ever I was,” said Rilla, frankly. “But I do love Jims, and I’m afraid I wasn’t really half as glad as I should have been when Jim Anderson’s letter proved that he was safe and sound.”

“You wasn’t hoping the man would be killed!” cried Cousin Sophia in horrified accents.

“No — no — no! I just hoped he would go on forgetting about Jims, Mrs. Crawford.”

“And then your pa would have the expense of raising him,” said Cousin Sophia reprovingly. “You young creeturs are terrible thoughtless.”

Jims himself ran in at this juncture, so rosy and curly and kissable, that he extorted a qualified compliment even from Cousin Sophia.

“He’s a reel healthy-looking child now, though mebbe his colour is a mite too high — sorter consumptive looking, as you might say. I never thought you’d raise him when I saw him the day after you brung him home. I reely

did not think it was in you and I told Albert's wife so when I got home. Albert's wife says, says she, 'There's more in Rilla Blythe than you'd think for, Aunt Sophia.' Them was her very words. 'More in Rilla Blythe than you'd think for.' Albert's wife always had a good opinion of you."

Cousin Sophia sighed, as if to imply that Albert's wife stood alone in this against the world. But Cousin Sophia really did not mean that. She was quite fond of Rilla in her own melancholy way; but young creeturs had to be kept down. If they were not kept down society would be demoralized.

"Do you remember your walk home from the light two years ago tonight?" whispered Gertrude Oliver to Rilla, teasingly.

"I should think I do," smiled Rilla; and then her smile grew dreamy and absent; she was remembering something else — that hour with Kenneth on the sandshore. Where would Ken be tonight? And Jem and Jerry and Walter and all the other boys who had danced and moonlighted on the old Four Winds Point that evening of mirth and laughter — their last joyous unclouded evening. In the filthy trenches of the Somme front, with the roar of the guns and the groans of stricken men for the music of Ned Burr's violin, and the flash of star shells for the silver sparkles on the old blue gulf. Two of them were sleeping under the Flanders poppies — Alec Burr from the Upper Glen, and Clark Manley of Lowbridge. Others were wounded in the hospitals. But so far nothing had touched the manse and the Ingleside boys. They seemed to bear charmed lives. Yet the suspense never grew any easier to bear as the weeks and months of war went by.

"It isn't as if it were some sort of fever to which you might conclude they were immune when they hadn't taken it for two years," sighed Rilla. "The danger is just as great and just as real as it was the first day they went into the trenches. I know this, and it tortures me every day. And yet I can't help hoping that since they've come this far unhurt they'll come through. Oh, Miss Oliver, what would it be like not to wake up in the morning feeling afraid of the news the day would bring? I can't picture such a state of things somehow. And two years ago this morning I woke wondering what delightful gift the new day would give me. These are the two years I thought would be filled with fun."

“Would you exchange them — now — for two years filled with fun?”

“No,” said Rilla slowly. “I wouldn’t. It’s strange — isn’t it? — They have been two terrible years — and yet I have a queer feeling of thankfulness for them — as if they had brought me something very precious, with all their pain. I wouldn’t want to go back and be the girl I was two years ago, not even if I could. Not that I think I’ve made any wonderful progress — but I’m not quite the selfish, frivolous little doll I was then. I suppose I had a soul then, Miss Oliver — but I didn’t know it. I know it now — and that is worth a great deal — worth all the suffering of the past two years. And still” — Rilla gave a little apologetic laugh, “I don’t want to suffer any more — not even for the sake of more soul growth. At the end of two more years I might look back and be thankful for the development they had brought me, too; but I don’t want it now.”

“We never do,” said Miss Oliver. “That is why we are not left to choose our own means and measure of development, I suppose. No matter how much we value what our lessons have brought us we don’t want to go on with the bitter schooling. Well, let us hope for the best, as Susan says; things are really going well now and if Rumania lines up, the end may come with a suddenness that will surprise us all.”

Rumania did come in — and Susan remarked approvingly that its king and queen were the finest looking royal couple she had seen pictures of. So the summer passed away. Early in September word came that the Canadians had been shifted to the Somme front and anxiety grew tenser and deeper. For the first time Mrs. Blythe’s spirit failed her a little, and as the days of suspense wore on the doctor began to look gravely at her, and veto this or that special effort in Red Cross work.

“Oh, let me work — let me work, Gilbert,” she entreated feverishly. “While I’m working I don’t think so much. If I’m idle I imagine everything — rest is only torture for me. My two boys are on the frightful Somme front — and Shirley pores day and night over aviation literature and says nothing. But I see the purpose growing in his eyes. No, I cannot rest — don’t ask it of me, Gilbert.”

But the doctor was inexorable.

“I can’t let you kill yourself, Anne-girl,” he said. “When the boys come back I want a mother here to welcome them. Why, you’re getting transparent. It won’t do — ask Susan there if it will do.”

“Oh, if Susan and you are both banded together against me!” said Anne helplessly.

One day the glorious news came that the Canadians had taken Courcellette and Martenpuich, with many prisoners and guns. Susan ran up the flag and said it was plain to be seen that Haig knew what soldiers to pick for a hard job. The others dared not feel exultant. Who knew what price had been paid?

Rilla woke that morning when the dawn was beginning to break and went to her window to look out, her thick creamy eyelids heavy with sleep. Just at dawn the world looks as it never looks at any other time. The air was cold with dew and the orchard and grove and Rainbow Valley were full of mystery and wonder. Over the eastern hill were golden deeps and silvery-pink shallows. There was no wind, and Rilla heard distinctly a dog howling in a melancholy way down in the direction of the station. Was it Dog Monday? And if it were, why was he howling like that? Rilla shivered; the sound had something boding and grievous in it. She remembered that Miss Oliver said once, when they were coming home in the darkness and heard a dog howl, “When a dog cries like that the Angel of Death is passing.” Rilla listened with a curdling fear at her heart. It was Dog Monday — she felt sure of it. Whose dirge was he howling — to whose spirit was he sending that anguished greeting and farewell?

Rilla went back to bed but she could not sleep. All day she watched and waited in a dread of which she did not speak to anyone. She went down to see Dog Monday and the stationmaster said, “That dog of yours howled from midnight to sunrise something weird. I dunno what got into him. I got up once and went out and hollered at him but he paid no ‘tention to me. He was sitting all alone in the moonlight out there at the end of the platform, and every few minutes the poor lonely little beggar’d lift his nose and howl as if his heart was breaking. He never did it afore — always slept in his kennel real quiet and canny from train to train. But he sure had something on his mind last night.”

Dog Monday was lying in his kennel. He wagged his tail and licked Rilla's hand. But he would not touch the food she brought for him.

"I'm afraid he's sick," she said anxiously. She hated to go away and leave him. But no bad news came that day — nor the next — nor the next. Rilla's fear lifted. Dog Monday howled no more and resumed his routine of train meeting and watching. When five days had passed the Ingleside people began to feel that they might be cheerful again. Rilla dashed about the kitchen helping Susan with the breakfast and singing so sweetly and clearly that Cousin Sophia across the road heard her and croaked out to Mrs. Albert,

"‘Sing before eating, cry before sleeping,’ I've always heard."

But Rilla Blythe shed no tears before the nightfall. When her father, his face grey and drawn and old, came to her that afternoon and told her that Walter had been killed in action at Courcelette she crumpled up in a pitiful little heap of merciful unconsciousness in his arms. Nor did she waken to her pain for many hours.

CHAPTER XXII I

“AND SO, GOODNIGHT”

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The fierce flame of agony had burned itself out and the grey dust of its ashes was over all the world. Rilla's younger life recovered physically sooner than her mother. For weeks Mrs. Blythe lay ill from grief and shock. Rilla found it was possible to go on with existence, since existence had still to be reckoned with. There was work to be done, for Susan could not do all. For her mother's sake she had to put on calmness and endurance as a garment in the day; but night after night she lay in her bed, weeping the bitter rebellious tears of youth until at last tears were all wept out and the little patient ache that was to be in her heart until she died took their place.

She clung to Miss Oliver, who knew what to say and what not to say. So few people did. Kind, wellmeaning callers and comforters gave Rilla some terrible moments.

“You'll get over it in time,” Mrs. William Reese said, cheerfully. Mrs. Reese had three stalwart sons, not one of whom had gone to the front.

“It's such a blessing it was Walter who was taken and not Jem,” said Miss Sarah Clow. “Walter was a member of the church, and Jem wasn't. I've told Mr. Meredith many a time that he should have spoken seriously to Jem about it before he went away.”

“Pore, pore Walter,” sighed Mrs. Reese.

“Do not you come here calling him poor Walter,” said Susan indignantly, appearing in the kitchen door, much to the relief of Rilla, who felt that she could endure no more just then. “He was not poor. He was richer than any of you. It is you who stay at home and will not let your sons go who are

poor — poor and naked and mean and small — pisen poor, and so are your sons, with all their prosperous farms and fat cattle and their souls no bigger than a flea's — if as big."

"I came here to comfort the afflicted and not to be insulted," said Mrs. Reese, taking her departure, unregretted by anyone. Then the fire went out of Susan and she retreated to her kitchen, laid her faithful old head on the table and wept bitterly for a time. Then she went to work and ironed Jims's little rompers. Rilla scolded her gently for it when she herself came in to do it.

"I am not going to have you kill yourself working for any war-baby," Susan said obstinately.

"Oh, I wish I could just keep on working all the time, Susan," cried poor Rilla. "And I wish I didn't have to go to sleep. It is hideous to go to sleep and forget it for a little while, and wake up and have it all rush over me anew the next morning. Do people ever get used to things like this, Susan? And oh, Susan, I can't get away from what Mrs. Reese said. Did Walter suffer much — he was always so sensitive to pain. Oh, Susan, if I knew that he didn't I think I could gather up a little courage and strength."

This merciful knowledge was given to Rilla. A letter came from Walter's commanding officer, telling them that he had been killed instantly by a bullet during a charge at Courcelette. The same day there was a letter for Rilla from Walter himself.

Rilla carried it unopened to Rainbow Valley and read it there, in the spot where she had had her last talk with him. It is a strange thing to read a letter after the writer is dead — a bitter-sweet thing, in which pain and comfort are strangely mingled. For the first time since the blow had fallen Rilla felt — a different thing from tremulous hope and faith — that Walter, of the glorious gift and the splendid ideals, still lived, with just the same gift and just the same ideals. That could not be destroyed — these could suffer no eclipse. The personality that had expressed itself in that last letter, written on the eve of Courcelette, could not be snuffed out by a German bullet. It must carry on, though the earthly link with things of earth were broken.

“We’re going over the top tomorrow, Rilla-my-Rilla,” wrote Walter. “I wrote mother and Di yesterday, but somehow I feel as if I must write you tonight. I hadn’t intended to do any writing tonight — but I’ve got to. Do you remember old Mrs. Tom Crawford over-harbour, who was always saying that it was ‘laid on her’ to do such and such a thing? Well, that is just how I feel. It’s ‘laid on me’ to write you tonight — you, sister and chum of mine. There are some things I want to say before — well, before tomorrow.

“You and Ingleside seem strangely near me tonight. It’s the first time I’ve felt this since I came. Always home has seemed so far away — so hopelessly far away from this hideous welter of filth and blood. But tonight it is quite close to me — it seems to me I can almost see you — hear you speak. And I can see the moonlight shining white and still on the old hills of home. It has seemed to me ever since I came here that it was impossible that there could be calm gentle nights and unshattered moonlight anywhere in the world. But tonight somehow, all the beautiful things I have always loved seem to have become possible again — and this is good, and makes me feel a deep, certain, exquisite happiness. It must be autumn at home now — the harbour is a-dream and the old Glen hills blue with haze, and Rainbow Valley a haunt of delight with wild asters blowing all over it — our old “farewell-summers.” I always liked that name better than ‘aster’ — it was a poem in itself.

“Rilla, you know I’ve always had premonitions. You remember the Pied Piper — but no, of course you wouldn’t — you were too young. One evening long ago when Nan and Di and Jem and the Merediths and I were together in Rainbow Valley I had a queer vision or presentiment — whatever you like to call it. Rilla, I saw the Piper coming down the Valley with a shadowy host behind him. The others thought I was only pretending — but I saw him for just one moment. And Rilla, last night I saw him again. I was doing sentry-go and I saw him marching across No-man’s-land from our trenches to the German trenches — the same tall shadowy form, piping weirdly — and behind him followed boys in khaki. Rilla, I tell you I saw him — it was no fancy — no illusion. I heard his music, and then — he was gone. But I had seen him — and I knew what it meant — I knew that I was among those who followed him.

“Rilla, the Piper will pipe me ‘west’ tomorrow. I feel sure of this. And Rilla, I’m not afraid. When you hear the news, remember that. I’ve won my own freedom here — freedom from all fear. I shall never be afraid of anything again — not of death — nor of life, if after all, I am to go on living. And life, I think, would be the harder of the two to face — for it could never be beautiful for me again. There would always be such horrible things to remember — things that would make life ugly and painful always for me. I could never forget them. But whether it’s life or death, I’m not afraid, Rilla-my-Rilla, and I am not sorry that I came. I’m satisfied. I’ll never write the poems I once dreamed of writing — but I’ve helped to make Canada safe for the poets of the future — for the workers of the future — ay, and the dreamers, too — for if no man dreams, there will be nothing for the workers to fulfil — the future, not of Canada only but of the world — when the ‘red rain’ of Langemarck and Verdun shall have brought forth a golden harvest — not in a year or two, as some foolishly think, but a generation later, when the seed sown now shall have had time to germinate and grow. Yes, I’m glad I came, Rilla. It isn’t only the fate of the little sea-born island I love that is in the balance — nor of Canada nor of England. It’s the fate of mankind. That is what we’re fighting for. And we shall win — never for a moment doubt that, Rilla. For it isn’t only the living who are fighting — the dead are fighting too. Such an army cannot be defeated.

“Is there laughter in your face yet, Rilla? I hope so. The world will need laughter and courage more than ever in the years that will come next. I don’t want to preach — this isn’t any time for it. But I just want to say something that may help you over the worst when you hear that I’ve gone ‘west.’ I’ve a premonition about you, Rilla, as well as about myself. I think Ken will go back to you — and that there are long years of happiness for you by-and-by. And you will tell your children of the Idea we fought and died for — teach them it must be lived for as well as died for, else the price paid for it will have been given for nought. This will be part of your work, Rilla. And if you — all you girls back in the homeland — do it, then we who don’t come back will know that you have not ‘broken faith’ with us.

“I meant to write to Una tonight, too, but I won’t have time now. Read this letter to her and tell her it’s really meant for you both — you two dear, fine loyal girls. Tomorrow, when we go over the top — I’ll think of you both — of your laughter, Rilla-my-Rilla, and the steadfastness in Una’s blue eyes — somehow I see those eyes very plainly tonight, too. Yes, you’ll both keep faith — I’m sure of that — you and Una. And so — goodnight. We go over the top at dawn.”

Rilla read her letter over many times. There was a new light on her pale young face when she finally stood up, amid the asters Walter had loved, with the sunshine of autumn around her. For the moment at least, she was lifted above pain and loneliness.

“I will keep faith, Walter,” she said steadily. “I will work — and teach — and learn — and laugh, yes, I will even laugh — through all my years, because of you and because of what you gave when you followed the call.”

Rilla meant to keep Walter’s letter as a sacred treasure. But, seeing the look on Una Meredith’s face when Una had read it and held it back to her, she thought of something. Could she do it? Oh, no, she could not give up Walter’s letter — his last letter. Surely it was not selfishness to keep it. A copy would be such a soulless thing. But Una — Una had so little — and her eyes were the eyes of a woman stricken to the heart, who yet must not cry out or ask for sympathy.

“Una, would you like to have this letter — to keep?” she asked slowly.

“Yes — if you can give it to me,” Una said dully.

“Then — you may have it,” said Rilla hurriedly.

“Thank you,” said Una. It was all she said, but there was something in her voice which repaid Rilla for her bit of sacrifice.

Una took the letter and when Rilla had gone she pressed it against her lonely lips. Una knew that love would never come into her life now — it was buried for ever under the bloodstained soil “Somewhere in France.” No one but herself — and perhaps Rilla — knew it — would ever know it.

She had no right in the eyes of her world to grieve. She must hide and bear her long pain as best she could — alone. But she, too, would keep faith.

CHAPTER XXI V

MARY IS JUST IN TIME

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The autumn of 1916 was a bitter season for Ingleside. Mrs. Blythe's return to health was slow, and sorrow and loneliness were in all hearts. Every one tried to hide it from the others and "carry on" cheerfully. Rilla laughed a good deal. Nobody at Ingleside was deceived by her laughter; it came from her lips only, never from her heart. But outsiders said some people got over trouble very easily, and Irene Howard remarked that she was surprised to find how shallow Rilla Blythe really was. "Why, after all her pose of being so devoted to Walter, she doesn't seem to mind his death at all. Nobody has ever seen her shed a tear or heard her mention his name. She has evidently quite forgotten him. Poor fellow — you'd really think his family would feel it more. I spoke of him to Rilla at the last Junior Red meeting — of how fine and brave and splendid he was — and I said life could never be just the same to me again, now that Walter had gone — we were such friends, you know — why I was the very first person he told about having enlisted — and Rilla answered, as coolly and indifferently as if she were speaking of an entire stranger, 'He was just one of many fine and splendid boys who have given everything for their country.' Well, I wish I could take things as calmly — but I'm not made like that. I'm so sensitive — things hurt me terribly — I really never get over them. I asked Rilla right out why she didn't put on mourning for Walter. She said her mother didn't wish it. But every one is talking about it."

"Rilla doesn't wear colours — nothing but white," protested Betty Mead.

"White becomes her better than anything else," said Irene significantly.

"And we all know black doesn't suit her complexion at all. But of course I'm not saying that is the reason she doesn't wear it. Only, it's funny. If my brother had died I'd have gone into deep mourning. I wouldn't have had the heart for anything else. I confess I'm disappointed in Rilla Blythe."

“I am not, then,” cried Betty Meade, loyally, “I think Rilla is just a wonderful girl. A few years ago I admit I did think she was rather too vain and gigglesome; but now she is nothing of the sort. I don’t think there is a girl in the Glen who is so unselfish and plucky as Rilla, or who has done her bit as thoroughly and patiently. Our Junior Red Cross would have gone on the rocks a dozen times if it hadn’t been for her tact and perseverance and enthusiasm — you know that perfectly well, Irene.”

“Why, I am not running Rilla down,” said Irene, opening her eyes widely. “It was only her lack of feeling I was criticizing. I suppose she can’t help it. Of course, she’s a born manager — everyone knows that. She’s very fond of managing, too — and people like that are very necessary I admit. So don’t look at me as if I’d said something perfectly dreadful, Betty, please. I’m quite willing to agree that Rilla Blythe is the embodiment of all the virtues, if that will please you. And no doubt it is a virtue to be quite unmoved by things that would crush most people.”

Some of Irene’s remarks were reported to Rilla; but they did not hurt her as they would once have done. They didn’t matter, that was all. Life was too big to leave room for pettiness. She had a pact to keep and a work to do; and through the long hard days and weeks of that disastrous autumn she was faithful to her task. The war news was consistently bad, for Germany marched from victory to victory over poor Rumania. “Foreigners — foreigners,” Susan muttered dubiously. “Russians or Rumanians or whatever they may be, they are foreigners and you cannot tie to them. But after Verdun I shall not give up hope. And can you tell me, Mrs. Dr. dear, if the Dobruja is a river or a mountain range, or a condition of the atmosphere?”

The Presidential election in the United States came off in November, and Susan was red-hot over that — and quite apologetic for her excitement.

“I never thought I would live to see the day when I would be interested in a Yankee election, Mrs. Dr. dear. It only goes to show we can never know what we will come to in this world, and therefore we should not be proud.”

Susan stayed up late on the evening of the eleventh, ostensibly to finish a pair of socks. But she ‘phoned down to Carter Flagg’s store at intervals,

and when the first report came through that Hughes had been elected she stalked solemnly upstairs to Mrs. Blythe's room and announced it in a thrilling whisper from the foot of the bed.

"I thought if you were not asleep you would be interested in knowing it. I believe it is for the best. Perhaps he will just fall to writing notes, too, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I hope for better things. I never was very partial to whiskers, but one cannot have everything."

When news came in the morning that after all Wilson was reelected, Susan tacked to catch another breeze of optimism.

"Well, better a fool you know than a fool you do not know, as the old proverb has it," she remarked cheerfully. "Not that I hold Woodrow to be a fool by any means, though by times you would not think he has the sense he was born with. But he is a good letter writer at least, and we do not know if the Hughes man is even that. All things being considered I commend the Yankees. They have shown good sense and I do not mind admitting it. Cousin Sophia wanted them to elect Roosevelt, and is much disgruntled because they would not give him a chance. I had a hankering for him myself, but we must believe that Providence overrules these matters and be satisfied — though what the Almighty means in this affair of Rumania I cannot fathom — saying it with all reverence."

Susan fathomed it — or thought she did — when the Asquith ministry went down and Lloyd George became Premier.

"Mrs. Dr. dear, Lloyd George is at the helm at last. I have been praying for this for many a day. Now we shall soon see a blessed change. It took the Rumanian disaster to bring it about, no less, and that is the meaning of it, though I could not see it before. There will be no more shillyshallying. I consider that the war is as good as won, and that I shall tie to, whether Bucharest falls or not."

Bucharest did fall — and Germany proposed peace negotiations. Whereat Susan scornfully turned a deaf ear and absolutely refused to listen to such proposals. When President Wilson sent his famous December peace note Susan waxed violently sarcastic.

“Woodrow Wilson is going to make peace, I understand. First Henry Ford had a try at it and now comes Wilson. But peace is not made with ink, Woodrow, and that you may tie to,” said Susan, apostrophizing the unlucky President out of the kitchen window nearest the United States. “Lloyd George’s speech will tell the Kaiser what is what, and you may keep your peace screeds at home and save postage.”

“What a pity President Wilson can’t hear you, Susan,” said Rilla slyly.

“Indeed, Rilla dear, it is a pity that he has no one near him to give him good advice, as it is clear he has not, in all those Democrats and Republicans,” retorted Susan. “I do not know the difference between them, for the politics of the Yankees is a puzzle I cannot solve, study it as I may. But as far as seeing through a grindstone goes, I am afraid—” Susan shook her head dubiously, “that they are all tarred with the same brush.”

“I am thankful Christmas is over,” Rilla wrote in her diary during the last week of a stormy December. “We had dreaded it so — the first Christmas since Courcelette. But we had all the Merediths down for dinner and nobody tried to be gay or cheerful. We were all just quiet and friendly, and that helped. Then, too, I was so thankful that Jims had got better — so thankful that I almost felt glad — almost but not quite. I wonder if I shall ever feel really glad over anything again. It seems as if gladness were killed in me — shot down by the same bullet that pierced Walter’s heart. Perhaps some day a new kind of gladness will be born in my soul — but the old kind will never live again.

“Winter set in awfully early this year. Ten days before Christmas we had a big snowstorm — at least we thought it big at the time. As it happened, it was only a prelude to the real performance. It was fine the next day, and Ingleside and Rainbow Valley were wonderful, with the trees all covered with snow, and big drifts everywhere, carved into the most fantastic shapes by the chisel of the northeast wind. Father and mother went up to Avonlea. Father thought the change would do mother good, and they wanted to see poor Aunt Diana, whose son Jock had been seriously wounded a short time before. They left Susan and me to keep house, and father expected to be back the next day. But he never got back for a week. That night it began to storm again, and it stormed unbrokenly for four days. It was the worst and

longest storm that Prince Edward Island has known for years. Everything was disorganized — the roads were completely choked up, the trains blockaded, and the telephone wires put entirely out of commission.

“And then Jims took ill.

“He had a little cold when father and mother went away, and he kept getting worse for a couple of days, but it didn’t occur to me that there was danger of anything serious. I never even took his temperature, and I can’t forgive myself, because it was sheer carelessness. The truth is I had slumped just then. Mother was away, so I let myself go. All at once I was tired of keeping up and pretending to be brave and cheerful, and I just gave up for a few days and spent most of the time lying on my face on my bed, crying. I neglected Jims — that is the hateful truth — I was cowardly and false to what I promised Walter — and if Jims had died I could never have forgiven myself.

“Then, the third night after father and mother went away, Jims suddenly got worse — oh, so much worse — all at once. Susan and I were all alone. Gertrude had been at Lowbridge when the storm began and had never got back. At first we were not much alarmed. Jims has had several bouts of croup and Susan and Morgan and I have always brought him through without much trouble. But it wasn’t very long before we were dreadfully alarmed.

“‘I never saw croup like this before,’ said Susan.

“As for me, I knew, when it was too late, what kind of croup it was. I knew it was not the ordinary croup—‘false croup’ as doctors call it — but the ‘true croup’ — and I knew that it was a deadly and dangerous thing. And father was away and there was no doctor nearer than Lowbridge — and we could not ‘phone and neither horse nor man could get through the drifts that night.

“Gallant little Jims put up a good fight for his life, — Susan and I tried every remedy we could think of or find in father’s books, but he continued to grow worse. It was heartrending to see and hear him. He gasped so horribly for breath — the poor little soul — and his face turned a dreadful

bluish colour and had such an agonized expression, and he kept struggling with his little hands, as if he were appealing to us to help him somehow. I found myself thinking that the boys who had been gassed at the front must have looked like that, and the thought haunted me amid all my dread and misery over Jims. And all the time the fatal membrane in his wee throat grew and thickened and he couldn't get it up.

“Oh, I was just wild! I never realized how dear Jims was to me until that moment. And I felt so utterly helpless.”

“And then Susan gave up. ‘We cannot save him! Oh, if your father was here — look at him, the poor little fellow! I know not what to do.’

“I looked at Jims and I thought he was dying. Susan was holding him up in his crib to give him a better chance for breath, but it didn't seem as if he could breathe at all. My little war-baby, with his dear ways and sweet roguish face, was choking to death before my very eyes, and I couldn't help him. I threw down the hot poultice I had ready in despair. Of what use was it? Jims was dying, and it was my fault — I hadn't been careful enough!

“Just then — at eleven o'clock at night — the door bell rang. Such a ring — it pealed all over the house above the roar of the storm. Susan couldn't go — she dared not lay Jims down — so I rushed downstairs. In the hall I paused just a minute — I was suddenly overcome by an absurd dread. I thought of a weird story Gertrude had told me once. An aunt of hers was alone in a house one night with her sick husband. She heard a knock at the door. And when she went and opened it there was nothing there — nothing that could be seen, at least. But when she opened the door a deadly cold wind blew in and seemed to sweep past her right up the stairs, although it was a calm, warm summer night outside. Immediately she heard a cry. She ran upstairs — and her husband was dead. And she always believed, so Gertrude said, that when she opened that door she let Death in.

“It was so ridiculous of me to feel so frightened. But I was distracted and worn out, and I simply felt for a moment that I dared not open the door — that death was waiting outside. Then I remembered that I had no time to waste — must not be so foolish — I sprang forward and opened the door.

“Certainly a cold wind did blow in and filled the hall with a whirl of snow. But there on the threshold stood a form of flesh and blood — Mary Vance, coated from head to foot with snow — and she brought Life, not Death, with her, though I didn’t know that then. I just stared at her.

“‘I haven’t been turned out,’ grinned Mary, as she stepped in and shut the door. ‘I came up to Carter Flagg’s two days ago and I’ve been stormed-stayed there ever since. But old Abbie Flagg got on my nerves at last, and tonight I just made up my mind to come up here. I thought I could wade this far, but I can tell you it was as much as a bargain. Once I thought I was stuck for keeps. Ain’t it an awful night?’

“I came to myself and knew I must hurry upstairs. I explained as quickly as I could to Mary, and left her trying to brush the snow off. Upstairs I found that Jims was over that paroxysm, but almost as soon as I got back to the room he was in the grip of another. I couldn’t do anything but moan and cry — oh, how ashamed I am when I think of it; and yet what could I do — we had tried everything we knew — and then all at once I heard Mary Vance saying loudly behind me, ‘Why, that child is dying!’

“I whirled around. Didn’t I know he was dying — my little Jims! I could have thrown Mary Vance out of the door or the window — anywhere — at that moment. There she stood, cool and composed, looking down at my baby, with those, weird white eyes of hers, as she might look at a choking kitten. I had always disliked Mary Vance — and just then I hated her.

“‘We have tried everything,’ said poor Susan dully. ‘It is not ordinary croup.’

“‘No, it’s the diphthery croup,’ said Mary briskly, snatching up an apron. ‘And there’s mighty little time to lose — but I know what to do. When I lived over-harbour with Mrs. Wiley, years ago, Will Crawford’s kid died of diphthery croup, in spite of two doctors. And when old Aunt Christina MacAllister heard of it — she was the one brought me round when I nearly died of pneumonia you know — she was a wonder — no doctor was a patch on her — they don’t hatch her breed of cats nowadays, let me tell you — she said she could have saved him with her grandmother’s remedy if she’d been there. She told Mrs. Wiley what it was and I’ve never forgot

it. I've the greatest memory ever — a thing just lies in the back of my head till the time comes to use it. Got any sulphur in the house, Susan?'

"Yes, we had sulphur. Susan went down with Mary to get it, and I held Jims. I hadn't any hope — not the least. Mary Vance might brag as she liked — she was always bragging — but I didn't believe any grandmother's remedy could save Jims now. Presently Mary came back. She had tied a piece of thick flannel over her mouth and nose, and she carried Susan's old tin chip pan, half full of burning coals.

"'You watch me,' she said boastfully. 'I've never done this, but it's kill or cure that child is dying anyway.'

"She sprinkled a spoonful of sulphur over the coals; and then she picked up Jims, turned him over, and held him face downward, right over those choking, blinding fumes. I don't know why I didn't spring forward and snatch him away. Susan says it was because it was foreordained that I shouldn't, and I think she is right, because it did really seem that I was powerless to move. Susan herself seemed transfixed, watching Mary from the doorway. Jims writhed in those big, firm, capable hands of Mary — oh yes, she is capable all right — and choked and wheezed — and choked and wheezed — and I felt that he was being tortured to death — and then all at once, after what seemed to me an hour, though it really wasn't long, he coughed up the membrane that was killing him. Mary turned him over and laid him back on his bed. He was white as marble and the tears were pouring out of his brown eyes — but that awful livid look was gone from his face and he could breathe quite easily.

"'Wasn't that some trick?' said Mary gaily. 'I hadn't any idea how it would work, but I just took a chance. I'll smoke his throat out again once or twice before morning, just to kill all the germs, but you'll see he'll be all right now.'

"Jims went right to sleep — real sleep, not coma, as I feared at first. Mary 'smoked him,' as she called it, twice through the night, and at daylight his throat was perfectly clear and his temperature was almost normal. When I made sure of that I turned and looked at Mary Vance. She was sitting on the lounge laying down the law to Susan on some subject about which

Susan must have known forty times as much as she did. But I didn't mind how much law she laid down or how much she bragged. She had a right to brag — she had dared to do what I would never have dared, and had saved Jims from a horrible death. It didn't matter any more that she had once chased me through the Glen with a codfish; it didn't matter that she had smeared goose-grease all over my dream of romance the night of the lighthouse dance; it didn't matter that she thought she knew more than anybody else and always rubbed it in — I would never dislike Mary Vance again. I went over to her and kissed her.

“‘What's up now?’ she said.

“‘Nothing — only I'm so grateful to you, Mary.’

“‘Well, I think you ought to be, that's a fact. You two would have let that baby die on your hands if I hadn't happened along,’ said Mary, just beaming with complacency. She got Susan and me a tip-top breakfast and made us eat it, and ‘bossed the life out of us,’ as Susan says, for two days, until the roads were opened so that she could get home. Jims was almost well by that time, and father turned up. He heard our tale without saying much. Father is rather scornful generally about what he calls ‘old wives’ remedies.’ He laughed a little and said, ‘After this, Mary Vance will expect me to call her in for consultation in all my serious cases.’

“So Christmas was not so hard as I expected it to be; and now the New Year is coming — and we are still hoping for the ‘Big Push’ that will end the war — and Little Dog Monday is getting stiff and rheumatic from his cold vigils, but still he ‘carries on,’ and Shirley continues to read the exploits of the aces. Oh, nineteen-seventeen, what will you bring?”

CHAPTER XX V

SHIRLEY GOES

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“No, Woodrow, there will be no peace without victory,” said Susan, sticking her knitting needle viciously through President Wilson’s name in the newspaper column. “We Canadians mean to have peace and victory, too. You, if it pleases you, Woodrow, can have the peace without the victory” — and Susan stalked off to bed with the comfortable consciousness of having got the better of the argument with the President. But a few days later she rushed to Mrs. Blythe in red-hot excitement.

“Mrs. Dr. dear, what do you think? A ‘phone message has just come through from Charlottetown that Woodrow Wilson has sent that German ambassador man to the right about at last. They tell me that means war. So I begin to think that Woodrow’s heart is in the right place after all, wherever his head may be, and I am going to commandeer a little sugar and celebrate the occasion with some fudge, despite the howls of the Food Board. I thought that submarine business would bring things to a crisis. I told Cousin Sophia so when she said it was the beginning of the end for the Allies.”

“Don’t let the doctor hear of the fudge, Susan,” said Anne, with a smile. “You know he has laid down very strict rules for us along the lines of economy the government has asked for.”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, and a man should be master in his own household, and his women folk should bow to his decrees. I flatter myself that I am becoming quite efficient in economizing” — Susan had taken to using certain German terms with killing effect—“but one can exercise a little gumption on the quiet now and then. Shirley was wishing for some of my fudge the other day — the Susan brand, as he called it — and I said ‘The first victory there is to celebrate I shall make you some.’ I consider this

news quite equal to a victory, and what the doctor does not know will never grieve him. I take the whole responsibility, Mrs. Dr. dear, so do not you vex your conscience."

Susan spoiled Shirley shamelessly that winter. He came home from Queen's every weekend, and Susan had all his favourite dishes for him, in so far as she could evade or wheedle the doctor, and waited on him hand and foot. Though she talked war constantly to everyone else she never mentioned it to him or before him, but she watched him like a cat watching a mouse; and when the German retreat from the Bapaume salient began and continued, Susan's exultation was linked up with something deeper than anything she expressed. Surely the end was in sight — would come now before — anyone else — could go.

"Things are coming our way at last. We have got the Germans on the run," she boasted. "The United States has declared war at last, as I always believed they would, in spite of Woodrow's gift for letter writing, and you will see they will go into it with a vim since I understand that is their habit, when they do start. And we have got the Germans on the run, too."

"The States mean well," moaned Cousin Sophia, "but all the vim in the world cannot put them on the fighting line this spring, and the Allies will be finished before that. The Germans are just luring them on. That man Simonds says their retreat has put the Allies in a hole."

"That man Simonds has said more than he will ever live to make good," retorted Susan. "I do not worry myself about his opinion as long as Lloyd George is Premier of England. He will not be bamboozled and that you may tie to. Things look good to me. The U. S. is in the war, and we have got Kut and Bagdad back — and I would not be surprised to see the Allies in Berlin by June — and the Russians, too, since they have got rid of the Czar. That, in my opinion was a good piece of work."

"Time will show if it is," said Cousin Sophia, who would have been very indignant if anyone had told her that she would rather see Susan put to shame as a seer, than a successful overthrow of tyranny, or even the march of the Allies down Unter den Linden. But then the woes of the Russian

people were quite unknown to Cousin Sophia, while this aggravating, optimistic Susan was an ever-present thorn in her side.

Just at that moment Shirley was sitting on the edge of the table in the livingroom, swinging his legs — a brown, ruddy, wholesome lad, from top to toe, every inch of him — and saying coolly, “Mother and dad, I was eighteen last Monday. Don’t you think it’s about time I joined up?”

The pale mother looked at him.

“Two of my sons have gone and one will never return. Must I give you too, Shirley?”

The age-old cry—”Joseph is not and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away.” How the mothers of the Great War echoed the old Patriarch’s moan of so many centuries ago!

“You wouldn’t have me a slacker, mother? I can get into the flying-corps. What say, dad?”

The doctor’s hands were not quite steady as he folded up the powders he was concocting for Abbie Flagg’s rheumatism. He had known this moment was coming, yet he was not altogether prepared for it. He answered slowly, “I won’t try to hold you back from what you believe to be your duty. But you must not go unless your mother says you may.”

Shirley said nothing more. He was not a lad of many words. Anne did not say anything more just then, either. She was thinking of little Joyce’s grave in the old burying-ground over-harbour — little Joyce who would have been a woman now, had she lived — of the white cross in France and the splendid grey eyes of the little boy who had been taught his first lessons of duty and loyalty at her knee — of Jem in the terrible trenches — of Nan and Di and Rilla, waiting — waiting — waiting, while the golden years of youth passed by — and she wondered if she could bear any more. She thought not; surely she had given enough.

Yet that night she told Shirley that he might go.

They did not tell Susan right away. She did not know it until, a few days later, Shirley presented himself in her kitchen in his aviation uniform. Susan didn't make half the fuss she had made when Jem and Walter had gone. She said stonily, "So they're going to take you, too."

"Take me? No. I'm going, Susan — got to."

Susan sat down by the table, folded her knotted old hands, that had grown warped and twisted working for the Ingleside children to still their shaking, and said:

"Yes, you must go. I did not see once why such things must be, but I can see now."

"You're a brick, Susan," said Shirley. He was relieved that she took it so coolly — he had been a little afraid, with a boy's horror of "a scene." He went out whistling gaily; but half an hour later, when pale Anne Blythe came in, Susan was still sitting there.

"Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan, making an admission she would once have died rather than make, "I feel very old. Jem and Walter were yours but Shirley is mine. And I cannot bear to think of him flying — his machine crashing down — the life crushed out of his body — the dear little body I nursed and cuddled when he was a wee baby."

"Susan — don't," cried Anne.

"Oh, Mrs. Dr. dear, I beg your pardon. I ought not to have said anything like that out loud. I sometimes forget that I resolved to be a heroine. This — this has shaken me a little. But I will not forget myself again. Only if things do not go as smoothly in the kitchen for a few days I hope you will make due allowance for me. At least," said poor Susan, forcing a grim smile in a desperate effort to recover lost standing, "at least flying is a clean job. He will not get so dirty and messed up as he would in the trenches, and that is well, for he has always been a tidy child."

So Shirley went — not radiantly, as to a high adventure, like Jem, not in a white flame of sacrifice, like Walter, but in a cool, businesslike mood, as

of one doing something, rather dirty and disagreeable, that had just got to be done. He kissed Susan for the first time since he was five years old, and said, "Goodbye, Susan — mother Susan."

"My little brown boy — my little brown boy," said Susan. "I wonder," she thought bitterly, as she looked at the doctor's sorrowful face, "if you remember how you spanked him once when he was a baby. I am thankful I have nothing like that on my conscience now."

The doctor did not remember the old discipline. But before he put on his hat to go out on his round of calls he stood for a moment in the great silent livingroom that had once been full of children's laughter.

"Our last son — our last son," he said aloud. "A good, sturdy, sensible lad, too. Always reminded me of my father. I suppose I ought to be proud that he wanted to go — I was proud when Jem went — even when Walter went — but 'our house is left us desolate.'"

"I have been thinking, doctor," old Sandy of the Upper Glen said to him that afternoon, "that your house will be seeming very big the day."

Highland Sandy's quaint phrase struck the doctor as perfectly expressive. Ingleside did seem very big and empty that night. Yet Shirley had been away all winter except for weekends, and had always been a quiet fellow even when home. Was it because he had been the only one left that his going seemed to leave such a huge blank — that every room seemed vacant and deserted — that the very trees on the lawn seemed to be trying to comfort each other with caresses of freshly-budding boughs for the loss of the last of the little lads who had romped under them in childhood?

Susan worked very hard all day and late into the night. When she had wound the kitchen clock and put Dr. Jekyll out, none too gently, she stood for a little while on the doorstep, looking down the Glen, which lay tranced in faint, silvery light from a sinking young moon. But Susan did not see the familiar hills and harbour. She was looking at the aviation camp in Kingsport where Shirley was that night.

“He called me ‘Mother Susan,’” she was thinking. “Well, all our men folk have gone now — Jem and Walter and Shirley and Jerry and Carl. And none of them had to be driven to it. So we have a right to be proud. But pride—” Susan sighed bitterly—”pride is cold company and that there is no gainsaying.”

The moon sank lower into a black cloud in the west, the Glen went out in an eclipse of sudden shadow — and thousands of miles away the Canadian boys in khaki — the living and the dead — were in possession of Vimy Ridge.

Vimy Ridge is a name written in crimson and gold on the Canadian annals of the Great War. “The British couldn’t take it and the French couldn’t take it,” said a German prisoner to his captors, “but you Canadians are such fools that you don’t know when a place can’t be taken!”

So the “fools” took it — and paid the price.

Jerry Meredith was seriously wounded at Vimy Ridge — shot in the back, the telegram said.

“Poor Nan,” said Mrs. Blythe, when the news came. She thought of her own happy girlhood at old Green Gables. There had been no tragedy like this in it. How the girls of to-day had to suffer! When Nan came home from Redmond two weeks later her face showed what those weeks had meant to her. John Meredith, too, seemed to have grown old suddenly in them. Faith did not come home; she was on her way across the Atlantic as a V.A.D. Di had tried to wring from her father consent to her going also, but had been told that for her mother’s sake it could not be given. So Di, after a flying visit home, went back to her Red Cross work in Kingsport.

The mayflowers bloomed in the secret nooks of Rainbow Valley. Rilla was watching for them. Jem had once taken his mother the earliest mayflowers; Walter brought them to her when Jem was gone; last spring Shirley had sought them out for her; now, Rilla thought she must take the boys’ place in this. But before she had discovered any, Bruce Meredith came to Ingleside one twilight with his hands full of delicate pink sprays. He stalked up the steps of the veranda and laid them on Mrs. Blythe’s lap.

“Because Shirley isn’t here to bring them,” he said in his funny, shy, blunt way.

“And you thought of this, you darling,” said Anne, her lips quivering, as she looked at the stocky, black-browed little chap, standing before her, with his hands thrust into his pockets.

“I wrote Jem to-day and told him not to worry ‘bout you not getting your mayflowers,” said Bruce seriously, “‘cause I’d see to that. And I told him I would be ten pretty soon now, so it won’t be very long before I’ll be eighteen, and then I’ll go to help him fight, and maybe let him come home for a rest while I took his place. I wrote Jerry, too. Jerry’s getting better, you know.”

“Is he? Have you had any good news about him?”

“Yes. Mother had a letter to-day, and it said he was out of danger.”

“Oh, thank God,” murmured Mrs. Blythe, in a half-whisper.

Bruce looked at her curiously.

“That is what father said when mother told him. But when I said it the other day when I found out Mr. Mead’s dog hadn’t hurt my kitten — I thought he had shaken it to death, you know — father looked awful solemn and said I must never say that again about a kitten. But I couldn’t understand why, Mrs. Blythe. I felt awful thankful, and it must have been God that saved Stripey, because that Mead dog had ‘normous jaws, and oh, how it shook poor Stripey. And so why couldn’t I thank Him? ‘Course,” added Bruce reminiscently, “maybe I said it too loud—’cause I was awful glad and excited when I found Stripey was all right. I ‘most shouted it, Mrs. Blythe. Maybe if I’d said it sort of whispery like you and father it would have been all right. Do you know, Mrs. Blythe” — Bruce dropped to a “whispery” tone, edging a little nearer to Anne—”what I would like to do to the Kaiser if I could?”

“What would you like to do, laddie?”

“Norman Reese said in school to-day that he would like to tie the Kaiser to a tree and set cross dogs to worrying him,” said Bruce gravely. “And Emily Flagg said she would like to put him in a cage and poke sharp things into him. And they all said things like that. But Mrs. Blythe” — Bruce took a little square paw out of his pocket and put it earnestly on Anne’s knee—”I would like to turn the Kaiser into a good man — a very good

man — all at once if I could. That is what I would do. Don't you think, Mrs. Blythe, that would be the very worstest punishment of all?"

"Bless the child," said Susan, "how do you make out that would be any kind of a punishment for that wicked fiend?"

"Don't you see," said Bruce, looking levelly at Susan, out of his blackly blue eyes, "if he was turned into a good man he would understand how dreadful the things he has done are, and he would feel so terrible about it that he would be more unhappy and miserable than he could ever be in any other way. He would feel just awful — and he would go on feeling like that forever. Yes" — Bruce clenched his hands and nodded his head emphatically, "yes, I would make the Kaiser a good man — that is what I would do — it would serve him 'zackly right."

CHAPTER XXV I

SUSAN HAS A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

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An aeroplane was flying over Glen St. Mary, like a great bird poised against the western sky — a sky so clear and of such a pale, silvery yellow, that it gave an impression of a vast, wind-freshened space of freedom. The little group on the Ingleside lawn looked up at it with fascinated eyes, although it was by no means an unusual thing to see an occasional hovering plane that summer. Susan was always intensely excited. Who knew but that it might be Shirley away up there in the clouds, flying over to the Island from Kingsport? But Shirley had gone overseas now, so Susan was not so keenly interested in this particular aeroplane and its pilot. Nevertheless, she looked at it with awe.

“I wonder, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said solemnly, “what the old folks down there in the graveyard would think if they could rise out of their graves for one moment and behold that sight. I am sure my father would disapprove of it, for he was a man who did not believe in new-fangled ideas of any sort. He always cut his grain with a reaping hook to the day of his death. A mower he would not have. What was good enough for his father was good enough for him, he used to say. I hope it is not unfilial to say that I think he was wrong in that point of view, but I am not sure I go so far as to approve of aeroplanes, though they may be a military necessity. If the Almighty had meant us to fly he would have provided us with wings. Since He did not it is plain He meant us to stick to the solid earth. At any rate, you will never see me, Mrs. Dr. dear, cavorting through the sky in an aeroplane.”

“But you won’t refuse to cavort a bit in father’s new automobile when it comes, will you, Susan?” teased Rilla.

“I do not expect to trust my old bones in automobiles, either,” retorted Susan. “But I do not look upon them as some narrow-minded people do. Whiskers-on-the-moon says the Government should be turned out of office for permitting them to run on the Island at all. He foams at the mouth, they tell me, when he sees one. The other day he saw one coming along that narrow side-road by his wheatfield, and Whiskers bounded over the fence and stood right in the middle of the road, with his pitchfork. The man in the machine was an agent of some kind, and Whiskers hates agents as much as he hates automobiles. He made the car come to a halt, because there was not room to pass him on either side, and the agent could not actually run over him. Then he raised his pitchfork and shouted, ‘Get out of this with your devil-machine or I will run this pitchfork clean through you.’ And Mrs. Dr. dear, if you will believe me, that poor agent had to back his car clean out to the Lowbridge road, nearly a mile, Whiskers following him every step, shaking his pitchfork and bellowing insults. Now, Mrs. Dr. dear, I call such conduct unreasonable; but all the same,” added Susan, with a sigh, “what with aeroplanes and automobiles and all the rest of it, this Island is not what it used to be.”

The aeroplane soared and dipped and circled, and soared again, until it became a mere speck far over the sunset hills.

“‘With the majesty of pinion Which the Theban eagles bear Sailing with supreme dominion Through the azure fields of air.’”

quoted Anne Blythe dreamily.

“I wonder,” said Miss Oliver, “if humanity will be any happier because of aeroplanes. It seems to me that the sum of human happiness remains much the same from age to age, no matter how it may vary in distribution, and that all the ‘many inventions’ neither lessen nor increase it.”

“After all, the ‘kingdom of heaven is within you,’” said Mr. Meredith, gazing after the vanishing speck which symbolized man’s latest victory in a world-old struggle. “It does not depend on material achievements and triumphs.”

“Nevertheless, an aeroplane is a fascinating thing,” said the doctor. “It has always been one of humanity’s favourite dreams — the dream of flying. Dream after dream comes true — or rather is made true by persevering effort. I should like to have a flight in an aeroplane myself.”

“Shirley wrote me that he was dreadfully disappointed in his first flight,” said Rilla. “He had expected to experience the sensation of soaring up from the earth like a bird — and instead he just had the feeling that he wasn’t moving at all, but that the earth was dropping away under him. And the first time he went up alone he suddenly felt terribly homesick. He had never felt like that before; but all at once, he said, he felt as if he were adrift in space — and he had a wild desire to get back home to the old planet and the companionship of fellow creatures. He soon got over that feeling, but he says his first flight alone was a nightmare to him because of that dreadful sensation of ghastly loneliness.”

The aeroplane disappeared. The doctor threw back his head with a sigh.

“When I have watched one of those bird-men out of sight I come back to earth with an odd feeling of being merely a crawling insect. Anne,” he said, turning to his wife, “do you remember the first time I took you for a buggy ride in Avonlea — that night we went to the Carmody concert, the first fall you taught in Avonlea? I had out little black mare with the white star on her forehead, and a shining brand-new buggy — and I was the proudest fellow in the world, barring none. I suppose our grandson will be taking his sweetheart out quite casually for an evening ‘fly’ in his aeroplane.”

“An aeroplane won’t be as nice as little Silverspot was,” said Anne. “A machine is simply a machine — but Silverspot, why she was a personality, Gilbert. A drive behind her had something in it that not even a flight among sunset clouds could have. No, I don’t envy my grandson’s sweetheart, after all. Mr. Meredith is right. ‘The kingdom of Heaven’ — and of love — and of happiness — doesn’t depend on externals.”

“Besides,” said the doctor gravely, “our said grandson will have to give most of his attention to the aeroplane — he won’t be able to let the reins lie on its back while he gazes into his lady’s eyes. And I have an awful

suspicion that you can't run an aeroplane with one arm. No" — the doctor shook his head—"I believe I'd still prefer Silverspot after all."

The Russian line broke again that summer and Susan said bitterly that she had expected it ever since Kerensky had gone and got married.

"Far be it from me to decry the holy state of matrimony, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I felt that when a man was running a revolution he had his hands full and should have postponed marriage until a more fitting season. The Russians are done for this time and there would be no sense in shutting our eyes to the fact. But have you seen Woodrow Wilson's reply to the Pope's peace proposals? It is magnificent. I really could not have expressed the rights of the matter better myself. I feel that I can forgive Wilson everything for it. He knows the meaning of words and that you may tie to. Speaking of meanings, have you heard the latest story about Whiskers-on-the-moon, Mrs. Dr. dear? It seems he was over at the Lowbridge Road school the other day and took a notion to examine the fourth class in spelling. They have the summer term there yet, you know, with the spring and fall vacations, being rather backward people on that road. My niece, Ella Baker, goes to that school and she it was who told me the story. The teacher was not feeling well, having a dreadful headache, and she went out to get a little fresh air while Mr. Pryor was examining the class. The children got along all right with the spelling but when Whiskers began to question them about the meanings of the words they were all at sea, because they had not learned them. Ella and the other big scholars felt terrible over it. They love their teacher so, and it seems Mr. Pryor's brother, Abel Pryor, who is trustee of that school, is against her and has been trying to turn the other trustees over to his way of thinking. And Ella and the rest were afraid that if the fourth class couldn't tell Whiskers the meanings of the words he would think the teacher was no good and tell Abel so, and Abel would have a fine handle. But little Sandy Logan saved the situation. He is a Home boy, but he is as smart as a steel trap, and he sized up Whiskers-on-the-moon right off. 'What does "anatomy" mean?' Whiskers demanded. 'A pain in your stomach,' Sandy replied, quick as a flash and never batting an eyelid. Whiskers-on-the-moon is a very ignorant man, Mrs. Dr. dear; he didn't know the meaning of the words himself, and he said 'Very good — very good.' The class caught right on

— at least three or four of the brighter ones did — and they kept up the fun. Jean Blane said that ‘acoustic’ meant ‘a religious squabble,’ and Muriel Baker said that an ‘agnostic’ was ‘a man who had indigestion,’ and Jim Carter said that ‘acerbity’ meant that ‘you ate nothing but vegetable food,’ and so on all down the list. Whiskers swallowed it all, and kept saying ‘Very good — very good’ until Ella thought that die she would trying to keep a straight face. When the teacher came in, Whiskers complimented her on the splendid understanding the children had of their lesson and said he meant to tell the trustees what a jewel they had. It was ‘very unusual,’ he said, to find a fourth class who could answer up so prompt when it came to explaining what words meant. He went off beaming. But Ella told me this as a great secret, Mrs. Dr. dear, and we must keep it as such, for the sake of the Lowbridge Road teacher. It would likely be the ruin of her chances of keeping the school if Whiskers should ever find out how he had been bamboozled.”

Mary Vance came up to Ingleside that same afternoon to tell them that Miller Douglas, who had been wounded when the Canadians took Hill 70, had had to have his leg amputated. The Ingleside folk sympathized with Mary, whose zeal and patriotism had taken some time to kindle but now burned with a glow as steady and bright as any one’s.

“Some folks have been twitting me about having a husband with only one leg. But,” said Mary, rising to a lofty height, “I would rather Miller with only one leg than any other man in the world with a dozen — unless,” she added as an afterthought, “unless it was Lloyd George. Well, I must be going. I thought you’d be interested in hearing about Miller so I ran up from the store, but I must hustle home for I promised Luke MacAllister I’d help him build his grain stack this evening. It’s up to us girls to see that the harvest is got in, since the boys are so scarce. I’ve got overalls and I can tell you they’re real becoming. Mrs. Alec Douglas says they’re indecent and shouldn’t be allowed, and even Mrs. Elliott kinder looks askance at them. But bless you, the world moves, and anyhow there’s no fun for me like shocking Kitty Alec.”

“By the way, father,” said Rilla, “I’m going to take Jack Flagg’s place in his father’s store for a month. I promised him today that I would, if you

didn't object. Then he can help the farmers get the harvest in. I don't think I'd be much use in a harvest myself — though lots of the girls are — but I can set Jack free while I do his work. Jims isn't much bother in the daytime now, and I'll always be home at night."

"Do you think you'll like weighing out sugar and beans, and trafficking in butter and eggs?" said the doctor, twinkling.

"Probably not. That isn't the question. It's just one way of doing my bit." So Rilla went behind Mr. Flagg's counter for a month; and Susan went into Albert Crawford's oatfields.

"I am as good as any of them yet," she said proudly. "Not a man of them can beat me when it comes to building a stack. When I offered to help Albert looked doubtful. 'I am afraid the work will be too hard for you,' he said. 'Try me for a day and see,' said I. 'I will do my darnedest.'"

None of the Ingleside folks spoke for just a moment. Their silence meant that they thought Susan's pluck in "working out" quite wonderful. But Susan mistook their meaning and her sunburned face grew red.

"This habit of swearing seems to be growing on me, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said apologetically. "To think that I should be acquiring it at my age! It is such a dreadful example to the young girls. I am of the opinion it comes of reading the newspapers so much. They are so full of profanity and they do not spell it with stars either, as used to be done in my young days. This war is demoralizing everybody."

Susan, standing on a load of grain, her grey hair whipping in the breeze and her skirt kilted up to her knees for safety and convenience — no overalls for Susan, if you please — neither a beautiful nor a romantic figure; but the spirit that animated her gaunt arms was the selfsame one that captured Vimy Ridge and held the German legions back from Verdun.

It is not the least likely, however, that this consideration was the one which appealed most strongly to Mr. Pryor when he drove past one afternoon and saw Susan pitching sheaves gamely.

“Smart woman that,” he reflected. “Worth two of many a younger one yet. I might do worse — I might do worse. If Milgrave comes home alive I’ll lose Miranda and hired housekeepers cost more than a wife and are liable to leave a man in the lurch any time. I’ll think it over.”

A week later Mrs. Blythe, coming up from the village late in the afternoon, paused at the gate of Ingleside in an amazement which temporarily bereft her of the power of motion. An extraordinary sight met her eyes. Round the end of the kitchen burst Mr. Pryor, running as stout, pompous Mr. Pryor had not run in years, with terror imprinted on every lineament — a terror quite justifiable, for behind him, like an avenging fate, came Susan, with a huge, smoking iron pot grasped in her hands, and an expression in her eye that boded ill to the object of her indignation, if she should overtake him. Pursuer and pursued tore across the lawn. Mr. Pryor reached the gate a few feet ahead of Susan, wrenched it open, and fled down the road, without a glance at the transfixed lady of Ingleside.

“Susan,” gasped Anne.

Susan halted in her mad career, set down her pot, and shook her fist after Mr. Pryor, who had not ceased to run, evidently believing that Susan was still full cry after him.

“Susan, what does this mean?” demanded Anne, a little severely.

“You may well ask that, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan replied wrathfully. “I have not been so upset in years. That — that — that pacifist has actually had the audacity to come up here and, in my own kitchen, to ask me to marry him. HIM!”

Anne choked back a laugh.

“But — Susan! Couldn’t you have found a — well, a less spectacular method of refusing him? Think what a gossip this would have made if anyone had been going past and had seen such a performance.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, you are quite right. I did not think of it because I was quite past thinking rationally. I was just clean mad. Come in the house

and I will tell you all about it.”

Susan picked up her pot and marched into the kitchen, still trembling with wrathful excitement. She set her pot on the stove with a vicious thud. “Wait a moment until I open all the windows to air this kitchen well, Mrs. Dr. dear. There, that is better. And I must wash my hands, too, because I shook hands with Whiskers-on-the-moon when he came in — not that I wanted to, but when he stuck out his fat, oily hand I did not know just what else to do at the moment. I had just finished my afternoon cleaning and thanks be, everything was shining and spotless; and thought I ‘now that dye is boiling and I will get my rug rags and have them nicely out of the way before supper.’

“Just then a shadow fell over the floor and looking up I saw Whiskers-on-the-moon, standing in the doorway, dressed up and looking as if he had just been starched and ironed. I shook hands with him, as aforesaid, Mrs. Dr. dear, and told him you and the doctor were both away. But he said,

“I have come to see you, Miss Baker.’

“I asked him to sit down, for the sake of my own manners, and then I stood there right in the middle of the floor and gazed at him as contemptuously as I could. In spite of his brazen assurance this seemed to rattle him a little; but he began trying to look sentimental at me out of his little piggy eyes, and all at once an awful suspicion flashed into my mind. Something told me, Mrs. Dr. dear, that I was about to receive my first proposal. I have always thought that I would like to have just one offer of marriage to reject, so that I might be able to look other women in the face, but you will not hear me bragging of this. I consider it an insult and if I could have thought of any way of preventing it I would. But just then, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will see I was at a disadvantage, being taken so completely by surprise. Some men, I am told, consider a little preliminary courting the proper thing before a proposal, if only to give fair warning of their intentions; but Whiskers-on-the-moon probably thought it was any port in a storm for me and that I would jump at him. Well, he is undeceived — yes, he is undeceived, Mrs. Dr. dear. I wonder if he has stopped running yet.”

“I understand that you don’t feel flattered, Susan. But couldn’t you have refused him a little more delicately than by chasing him off the premises in such a fashion?”

“Well, maybe I might have, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I intended to, but one remark he made aggravated me beyond my powers of endurance. If it had not been for that I would not have chased him with my dye-pot. I will tell you the whole interview. Whiskers sat down, as I have said, and right beside him on another chair Doc was lying. The animal was pretending to be asleep but I knew very well he was not, for he has been Hyde all day and Hyde never sleeps. By the way, Mrs. Dr. dear, have you noticed that that cat is far oftener Hyde than Jekyll now? The more victories Germany wins the Hyder he becomes. I leave you to draw your own conclusions from that. I suppose Whiskers thought he might curry favour with me by praising the creature, little dreaming what my real sentiments towards it were, so he stuck out his pudgy hand and stroked Mr. Hyde’s back. ‘What a nice cat,’ he said. The nice cat flew at him and bit him. Then it gave a fearful yowl, and bounded out of the door. Whiskers looked after it quite amazed. ‘That is a queer kind of a varmint,’ he said. I agreed with him on that point, but I was not going to let him see it. Besides, what business had he to call our cat a varmint? ‘It may be a varmint or it may not,’ I said, ‘but it knows the difference between a Canadian and a Hun.’ You would have thought, would you not, Mrs. Dr. dear, that a hint like that would have been enough for him! But it went no deeper than his skin. I saw him settling back quite comfortable, as if for a good talk, and thought I, ‘If there is anything coming it may as well come soon and be done with, for with all these rags to dye before supper I have no time to waste in flirting,’ so I spoke right out. ‘If you have anything particular to discuss with me, Mr. Pryor, I would feel obliged if you would mention it without loss of time, because I am very busy this afternoon.’ He fairly beamed at me out of that circle of red whisker, and said, ‘You are a businesslike woman and I agree with you. There is no use in wasting time beating around the bush. I came up here today to ask you to marry me.’ So there it was, Mrs. Dr. dear. I had a proposal at last, after waiting sixty-four years for one.

“I just glared at that presumptuous creature and I said, ‘I would not marry you if you were the last man on earth, Josiah Pryor. So there you have my

answer and you can take it away forthwith.' You never saw a man so taken aback as he was, Mrs. Dr. dear. He was so flabbergasted that he just blurted out the truth. 'Why, I thought you'd be only too glad to get a chance to be married,' he said. That was when I lost my head, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think I had a good excuse, when a Hun and a pacifist made such an insulting remark to me? 'Go,' I thundered, and I just caught up that iron pot. I could see that he thought I had suddenly gone insane, and I suppose he considered an iron pot full of boiling dye was a dangerous weapon in the hands of a lunatic. At any rate he went, and stood not upon the order of his going, as you saw for yourself. And I do not think we will see him back here proposing to us again in a hurry. No, I think he has learned that there is at least one single woman in Glen St. Mary who has no hankering to become Mrs. Whiskers-on-the-moon."

CHAPTER XXVI I

WAITING

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Ingleside,
1st November 1917

“It is November — and the Glen is all grey and brown, except where the Lombardy poplars stand up here and there like great golden torches in the sombre landscape, although every other tree has shed its leaves. It has been very hard to keep our courage alight of late. The Caporetto disaster is a dreadful thing and not even Susan can extract much consolation out of the present state of affairs. The rest of us don’t try. Gertrude keeps saying desperately, ‘They must not get Venice — they must not get Venice,’ as if by saying it often enough she can prevent them. But what is to prevent them from getting Venice I cannot see. Yet, as Susan fails not to point out, there was seemingly nothing to prevent them from getting to Paris in 1914, yet they did not get it, and she affirms they shall not get Venice either. Oh, how I hope and pray they will not — Venice the beautiful Queen of the Adriatic. Although I’ve never seen it I feel about it just as Byron did — I’ve always loved it — it has always been to me ‘a fairy city of the heart.’ Perhaps I caught my love of it from Walter, who worshipped it. It was always one of his dreams to see Venice. I remember we planned once — down in Rainbow Valley one evening just before the war broke out — that some time we would go together to see it and float in a gondola through its moonlit streets.

“Every fall since the war began there has been some terrible blow to our troops — Antwerp in 1914, Serbia in 1915; last fall, Rumania, and now Italy, the worst of all. I think I would give up in despair if it were not for what Walter said in his dear last letter — that ‘the dead as well as the living were fighting on our side and such an army cannot be defeated.’ No

it cannot. We will win in the end. I will not doubt it for one moment. To let myself doubt would be to 'break faith.'

"We have all been campaigning furiously of late for the new Victory Loan. We Junior Reds canvassed diligently and landed several tough old customers who had at first flatly refused to invest. I — even I — tackled Whiskers-on-the-moon. I expected a bad time and a refusal. But to my amazement he was quite agreeable and promised on the spot to take a thousand dollar bond. He may be a pacifist, but he knows a good investment when it is handed out to him. Five and a half per cent is five and a half per cent, even when a militaristic government pays it.

"Father, to tease Susan, says it was her speech at the Victory Loan Campaign meeting that converted Mr. Pryor. I don't think that at all likely, since Mr. Pryor has been publicly very bitter against Susan ever since her quite unmistakable rejection of his lover-like advances. But Susan did make a speech — and the best one made at the meeting, too. It was the first time she ever did such a thing and she vows it will be the last. Everybody in the Glen was at the meeting, and quite a number of speeches were made, but somehow things were a little flat and no especial enthusiasm could be worked up. Susan was quite dismayed at the lack of zeal, because she had been burningly anxious that the Island should go over the top in regard to its quota. She kept whispering viciously to Gertrude and me that there was 'no ginger' in the speeches; and when nobody went forward to subscribe to the loan at the close Susan 'lost her head.' At least, that is how she describes it herself. She bounded to her feet, her face grim and set under her bonnet — Susan is the only woman in Glen St. Mary who still wears a bonnet — and said sarcastically and loudly, 'No doubt it is much cheaper to talk patriotism than it is to pay for it. And we are asking charity, of course — we are asking you to lend us your money for nothing! No doubt the Kaiser will feel quite downcast when he hears of this meeting!'"

"Susan has an unshaken belief that the Kaiser's spies — presumably represented by Mr. Pryor — promptly inform him of every happening in our Glen.

“Norman Douglas shouted out ‘Hear! Hear!’ and some boy at the back said, ‘What about Lloyd George?’ in a tone Susan didn’t like. Lloyd George is her pet hero, now that Kitchener is gone.

“‘I stand behind Lloyd George every time,’ retorted Susan.

“‘I suppose that will hearten him up greatly,’ said Warren Mead, with one of his disagreeable ‘hawhaws.’

“Warren’s remark was spark to powder. Susan just ‘sailed in’ as she puts it, and ‘said her say.’ She said it remarkably well, too. There was no lack of ‘ginger’ in her speech, anyhow. When Susan is warmed up she has no mean powers of oratory, and the way she trimmed those men down was funny and wonderful and effective all at once. She said it was the likes of her, millions of her, that did stand behind Lloyd George, and did hearten him up. That was the keynote of her speech. Dear old Susan! She is a perfect dynamo of patriotism and loyalty and contempt for slackers of all kinds, and when she let it loose on that audience in her one grand outburst she electrified it. Susan always vows she is no suffragette, but she gave womanhood its due that night, and she literally made those men cringe. When she finished with them they were ready to eat out of her hand. She wound up by ordering them — yes, ordering them — to march up to the platform forthwith and subscribe for Victory Bonds. And after wild applause most of them did it, even Warren Mead. When the total amount subscribed came out in the Charlottetown dailies the next day we found that the Glen led every district on the Island — and certainly Susan has the credit for it. She, herself, after she came home that night was quite ashamed and evidently feared that she had been guilty of unbecoming conduct: she confessed to mother that she had been ‘rather unladylike.’

“We were all — except Susan — out for a trial ride in father’s new automobile tonight. A very good one we had, too, though we did get ingloriously ditched at the end, owing to a certain grim old dame — to wit, Miss Elizabeth Carr of the Upper Glen — who wouldn’t rein her horse out to let us pass, honk as we might. Father was quite furious; but in my heart I believe I sympathized with Miss Elizabeth. If I had been a spinster lady, driving along behind my own old nag, in maiden meditation fancy free, I wouldn’t have lifted a rein when an obstreperous car hooted blatantly

behind me. I should just have sat up as dourly as she did and said ‘Take the ditch if you are determined to pass.’

“We did take the ditch — and got up to our axles in sand — and sat foolishly there while Miss Elizabeth clucked up her horse and rattled victoriously away.

“Jem will have a laugh when I write him this. He knows Miss Elizabeth of old.

“But — will — Venice — be — saved?”

19th November 1917

“It is not saved yet — it is still in great danger. But the Italians are making a stand at last on the Piave line. To be sure military critics say they cannot possibly hold it and must retreat to the Adige. But Susan and Gertrude and I say they must hold it, because Venice must be saved, so what are the military critics to do?

“Oh, if I could only believe that they can hold it!

“Our Canadian troops have won another great victory — they have stormed the Passchendaele Ridge and held it in the face of all counter attacks. None of our boys were in the battle — but oh, the casualty list of other people’s boys! Joe Milgrave was in it but came through safe. Miranda had some bad days until she got word from him. But it is wonderful how Miranda has bloomed out since her marriage. She isn’t the same girl at all. Even her eyes seem to have darkened and deepened — though I suppose that is just because they glow with the greater intensity that has come to her. She makes her father stand round in a perfectly amazing fashion; she runs up the flag whenever a yard of trench on the western front is taken; and she comes up regularly to our Junior Red Cross; and she does — yes, she does — put on funny little ‘married woman’ airs that are quite killing. But she is the only war-bride in the Glen and surely nobody need grudge her the satisfaction she gets out of it.

“The Russian news is bad, too — Kerensky’s government has fallen and Lenin is dictator of Russia. Somehow, it is very hard to keep up courage in the dull hopelessness of these grey autumn days of suspense and boding news. But we are beginning to ‘get in a low,’ as old Highland Sandy says, over the approaching election. Conscription is the real issue at stake and it will be the most exciting election we ever had. All the women ‘who have got de age’ — to quote Jo Poirier, and who have husbands, sons, and brothers at the front, can vote. Oh, if I were only twenty-one! Gertrude and Susan are both furious because they can’t vote.

“‘It is not fair,’ Gertrude says passionately. ‘There is Agnes Carr who can vote because her husband went. She did everything she could to prevent him from going, and now she is going to vote against the Union Government. Yet I have no vote, because my man at the front is only my sweetheart and not my husband!’”

“As for Susan, when she reflects that she cannot vote, while a rank old pacifist like Mr. Pryor can — and will — her comments are sulphurous.

“I really feel sorry for the Elliotts and Crawfords and MacAllisters over-harbour. They have always lined up in clearly divided camps of Liberal and Conservative, and now they are torn from their moorings — I know I’m mixing my metaphors dreadfully — and set hopelessly adrift. It will kill some of those old Grits to vote for Sir Robert Borden’s side — and yet they have to because they believe the time has come when we must have conscription. And some poor Conservatives who are against conscription must vote for Laurier, who always has been anathema to them. Some of them are taking it terribly hard. Others seem to be in much the same attitude as Mrs. Marshall Elliott has come to be regarding Church Union.

“She was up here last night. She doesn’t come as often as she used to. She is growing too old to walk this far — dear old ‘Miss Cornelia.’ I hate to think of her growing old — we have always loved her so and she has always been so good to us Ingleside young fry.

“She used to be so bitterly opposed to Church Union. But last night, when father told her it was practically decided, she said in a resigned tone, ‘Well, in a world where everything is being rent and torn what matters one

more rending and tearing? Anyhow, compared with Germans even Methodists seem attractive to me.'

"Our Junior R.C. goes on quite smoothly, in spite of the fact that Irene has come back to it — having fallen out with the Lowbridge society, I understand. She gave me a sweet little jab last meeting — about knowing me across the square in Charlottetown 'by my green velvet hat.' Everybody knows me by that detestable and detested hat. This will be my fourth season for it. Even mother wanted me to get a new one this fall; but I said, 'No.' As long as the war lasts so long do I wear that velvet hat in winter."

23rd November 1917

"The Piave line still holds — and General Byng has won a splendid victory at Cambrai. I did run up the flag for that — but Susan only said 'I shall set a kettle of water on the kitchen range tonight. I notice little Kitchener always has an attack of croup after any British victory. I do hope he has no pro-German blood in his veins. Nobody knows much about his father's people.'

"Jims has had a few attacks of croup this fall — just the ordinary croup — not that terrible thing he had last year. But whatever blood runs in his little veins it is good, healthy blood. He is rosy and plump and curly and cute; and he says such funny things and asks such comical questions. He likes very much to sit in a special chair in the kitchen; but that is Susan's favourite chair, too, and when she wants it, out Jims must go. The last time she put him out of it he turned around and asked solemnly, 'When you are dead, Susan, can I sit in that chair?' Susan thought it quite dreadful, and I think that was when she began to feel anxiety about his possible ancestry. The other night I took Jims with me for a walk down to the store. It was the first time he had ever been out so late at night, and when he saw the stars he exclaimed, 'Oh, Willa, see the big moon and all the little moons!' And last Wednesday morning, when he woke up, my little alarm clock had stopped because I had forgotten to wind it up. Jims bounded out of his crib and ran across to me, his face quite aghast above his little blue flannel pyjamas. 'The clock is dead,' he gasped, 'oh Willa, the clock is dead.'

“One night he was quite angry with both Susan and me because we would not give him something he wanted very much. When he said his prayers he plumped down wrathfully, and when he came to the petition ‘Make me a good boy’ he tacked on emphatically, ‘and please make Willa and Susan good, ‘cause they’re not.’

“I don’t go about quoting Jims’s speeches to all I meet. That always bores me when other people do it! I just enshrine them in this old hotch-potch of a journal!

“This very evening as I put Jims to bed he looked up and asked me gravely, ‘Why can’t yesterday come back, Willa?’

“Oh, why can’t it, Jims? That beautiful ‘yesterday’ of dreams and laughter — when our boys were home — when Walter and I read and rambled and watched new moons and sunsets together in Rainbow Valley. If it could just come back! But yesterdays never come back, little Jims — and the todays are dark with clouds — and we dare not think about the tomorrows.”

11th December 1917

“Wonderful news came today. The British troops captured Jerusalem yesterday. We ran up the flag and some of Gertrude’s old sparkle came back to her for a moment.

“‘After all,’ she said, ‘it is worth while to live in the days which see the object of the Crusades attained. The ghosts of all the Crusaders must have crowded the walls of Jerusalem last night, with Coeur-de-lion at their head.’

“Susan had cause for satisfaction also.

“‘I am so thankful I can pronounce Jerusalem and Hebron,’ she said. ‘They give me a real comfortable feeling after Przemysl and Brest-Litovsk! Well, we have got the Turks on the run, at least, and Venice is safe and Lord Lansdowne is not to be taken seriously; and I see no reason why we should be downhearted.’

“Jerusalem! The ‘meteor flag of England!’ floats over you — the Crescent is gone. How Walter would have thrilled over that!”

18th December 1917

“Yesterday the election came off. In the evening mother and Susan and Gertrude and I forgathered in the livingroom and waited in breathless suspense, father having gone down to the village. We had no way of hearing the news, for Carter Flagg’s store is not on our line, and when we tried to get it Central always answered that the line ‘was busy’ — as no doubt it was, for everybody for miles around was trying to get Carter’s store for the same reason we were.

“About ten o’clock Gertrude went to the ‘phone and happened to catch someone from over-harbour talking to Carter Flagg. Gertrude shamelessly listened in and got for her comforting what eavesdroppers are proverbially supposed to get — to wit, unpleasant hearing; the Union Government had ‘done nothing’ in the West.

“We looked at each other in dismay. If the Government had failed to carry the West, it was defeated.

“‘Canada is disgraced in the eyes of the world,’ said Gertrude bitterly.

“‘If everybody was like the Mark Crawfords over-harbour this would not have happened,’ groaned Susan. ‘Yhey locked their Uncle up in the barn this morning and would not let him out until he promised to vote Union. That is what I call effective argument, Mrs. Dr. dear.’

“Gertrude and I couldn’t rest after all that. We walked the floor until our legs gave out and we had to sit down perforce. Mother knitted away as steadily as clockwork and pretended to be calm and serene — pretended so well that we were all deceived and envious until the next day, when I caught her ravelling out four inches of her sock. She had knit that far past where the heel should have begun!

“It was twelve before father came home. He stood in the doorway and looked at us and we looked at him. We did not dare ask him what the news

was. Then he said that it was Laurier who had ‘done nothing’ in the West, and that the Union Government was in with a big majority. Gertrude clapped her hands. I wanted to laugh and cry, mother’s eyes flashed with their old-time starriness and Susan emitted a queer sound between a gasp and a whoop.

“This will not comfort the Kaiser much,’ she said.

“Then we went to bed, but were too excited to sleep. Really, as Susan said solemnly this morning, ‘Mrs. Dr. dear, I think politics are too strenuous for women.’”

31st December 1917

“Our fourth War Christmas is over. We are trying to gather up some courage wherewith to face another year of it. Germany has, for the most part, been victorious all summer. And now they say she has all her troops from the Russian front ready for a ‘big push’ in the spring. Sometimes it seems to me that we just cannot live through the winter waiting for that.

“I had a great batch of letters from overseas this week. Shirley is at the front now, too, and writes about it all as coolly and matter-of-factly as he used to write of football at Queen’s. Carl wrote that it had been raining for weeks and that nights in the trenches always made him think of the night of long ago when he did penance in the graveyard for running away from Henry Warren’s ghost. Carl’s letters are always full of jokes and bits of fun. They had a great rat-hunt the night before he wrote — spearing rats with their bayonets — and he got the best bag and won the prize. He has a tame rat that knows him and sleeps in his pocket at night. Rats don’t worry Carl as they do some people — he was always chummy with all little beasts. He says he is making a study of the habits of the trench rat and means to write a treatise on it some day that will make him famous.

“Ken wrote a short letter. His letters are all rather short now — and he doesn’t often slip in those dear little sudden sentences I love so much. Sometimes I think he has forgotten all about the night he was here to say goodbye — and then there will be just a line or a word that makes me think he remembers and always will remember. For instance to-day’s letter

hadn't a thing in it that mightn't have been written to any girl, except that he signed himself 'Your Kenneth,' instead of 'Yours, Kenneth,' as he usually does. Now, did he leave that 's' off intentionally or was it only carelessness? I shall lie awake half the night wondering. He is a captain now. I am glad and proud — and yet Captain Ford sounds so horribly far away and high up. Ken and Captain Ford seem like two different persons. I may be practically engaged to Ken — mother's opinion on that point is my stay and bulwark — but I can't be to Captain Ford!

“And Jem is a lieutenant now — won his promotion on the field. He sent me a snapshot, taken in his new uniform. He looked thin and old — old — my boy-brother Jem. I can't forget mother's face when I showed it to her. 'That — my little Jem — the baby of the old House of Dreams?' was all she said.

“There was a letter from Faith, too. She is doing V.A.D. work in England and writes hopefully and brightly. I think she is almost happy — she saw Jem on his last leave and she is so near him she could go to him, if he were wounded. That means so much to her. Oh, if I were only with her! But my work is here at home. I know Walter wouldn't have wanted me to leave mother and in everything I try to 'keep faith' with him, even to the little details of daily life. Walter died for Canada — I must live for her. That is what he asked me to do.”

28th January 1918

“‘I shall anchor my storm-tossed soul to the British fleet and make a batch of bran biscuits,’ said Susan today to Cousin Sophia, who had come in with some weird tale of a new and all-conquering submarine, just launched by Germany. But Susan is a somewhat disgruntled woman at present, owing to the regulations regarding cookery. Her loyalty to the Union Government is being sorely tried. It surmounted the first strain gallantly. When the order about flour came Susan said, quite cheerfully, ‘I am an old dog to be learning new tricks, but I shall learn to make war bread if it will help defeat the Huns.’

“But the later suggestions went against Susan's grain. Had it not been for father's decree I think she would have snapped her fingers at Sir Robert

Borden.

“‘Talk about trying to make bricks without straw, Mrs. Dr. dear! How am I to make a cake without butter or sugar? It cannot be done — not cake that is cake. Of course one can make a slab, Mrs. Dr. dear. And we cannot even camooflash it with a little icing! To think that I should have lived to see the day when a government at Ottawa should step into my kitchen and put me on rations!’

“Susan would give the last drop of her blood for her ‘king and country,’ but to surrender her beloved recipes is a very different and much more serious matter.

“I had letters from Nan and Di too — or rather notes. They are too busy to write letters, for exams are looming up. They will graduate in Arts this spring. I am evidently to be the dunce of the family. But somehow I never had any hankering for a college course, and even now it doesn’t appeal to me. I’m afraid I’m rather devoid of ambition. There is only one thing I really want to be — and I don’t know if I’ll be it or not. If not — I don’t want to be anything. But I shan’t write it down. It is all right to think it; but, as Cousin Sophia would say, it might be brazen to write it down.

“I will write it down. I won’t be cowed by the conventions and Cousin Sophia! I want to be Kenneth Ford’s wife! There now!

“I’ve just looked in the glass, and I hadn’t the sign of a blush on my face. I suppose I’m not a properly constructed damsel at all.

“I was down to see little Dog Monday today. He has grown quite stiff and rheumatic but there he sat, waiting for the train. He thumped his tail and looked pleadingly into my eyes. ‘When will Jem come?’ he seemed to say. Oh, Dog Monday, there is no answer to that question; and there is, as yet, no answer to the other which we are all constantly asking ‘What will happen when Germany strikes again on the western front — her one great, last blow for victory!’”

1st March 1918

“‘What will spring bring?’ Gertrude said today. ‘I dread it as I never dreaded spring before. Do you suppose there will ever again come a time when life will be free from fear? For almost four years we have lain down with fear and risen up with it. It has been the unbidden guest at every meal, the unwelcome companion at every gathering.’

“‘Hindenburg says he will be in Paris on 1st April,’ sighed Cousin Sophia.

“‘Hindenburg!’ There is no power in pen and ink to express the contempt which Susan infused into that name. ‘Has he forgotten what day the first of April is?’

“‘Hindenburg has kept his word hitherto,’ said Gertrude, as gloomily as Cousin Sophia herself could have said it.

“‘Yes, fighting against the Russians and Rumanians,’ retorted Susan. ‘Wait you till he comes up against the British and French, not to speak of the Yankees, who are getting there as fast as they can and will no doubt give a good account of themselves.’

“‘You said just the same thing before Mons, Susan,’ I reminded her.

“‘Hindenburg says he will spend a million lives to break the Allied front,’ said Gertrude. ‘At such a price he must purchase some successes and how can we live through them, even if he is baffled in the end. These past two months when we have been crouching and waiting for the blow to fall have seemed as long as all the preceding months of the war put together. I work all day feverishly and waken at three o’clock at night to wonder if the iron legions have struck at last. It is then I see Hindenburg in Paris and Germany triumphant. I never see her so at any other time than that accursed hour.’

“Susan looked dubious over Gertrude’s adjective, but evidently concluded that the ‘a’ saved the situation.

“‘I wish it were possible to take some magic draught and go to sleep for the next three months — and then waken to find Armageddon over,’ said mother, almost impatiently.

“It is not often that mother slumps into a wish like that — or at least the verbal expression of it. Mother has changed a great deal since that terrible day in September when we knew that Walter would not come back; but she has always been brave and patient. Now it seemed as if even she had reached the limit of her endurance.

“Susan went over to mother and touched her shoulder.

“‘Do not you be frightened or downhearted, Mrs. Dr. dear,’ she said gently. ‘I felt somewhat that way myself last night, and I rose from my bed and lighted my lamp and opened my Bible; and what do you think was the first verse my eyes lighted upon? It was ‘And they shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord of Hosts, to deliver thee.’ I am not gifted in the way of dreaming, as Miss Oliver is, but I knew then and there, Mrs. Dr. dear, that it was a manifest leading, and that Hindenburg will never see Paris. So I read no further but went back to my bed and I did not waken at three o’clock or at any other hour before morning.’

“I say that verse Susan read over and over again to myself. The Lord of Hosts is with us — and the spirits of all just men made perfect — and even the legions and guns that Germany is massing on the western front must break against such a barrier. This is in certain uplifted moments; but when other moments come I feel, like Gertrude, that I cannot endure any longer this awful and ominous hush before the coming storm.”

23rd March 1918

“Armageddon has begun!—’the last great fight of all!’ Is it, I wonder? Yesterday I went down to the post office for the mail. It was a dull, bitter day. The snow was gone but the grey, lifeless ground was frozen hard and a biting wind was blowing. The whole Glen landscape was ugly and hopeless.

“Then I got the paper with its big black headlines. Germany struck on the twenty-first. She makes big claims of guns and prisoners taken. General Haig reports that ‘severe fighting continues.’ I don’t like the sound of that last expression.

“We all find we cannot do any work that requires concentration of thought. So we all knit furiously, because we can do that mechanically. At least the dreadful waiting is over — the horrible wondering where and when the blow will fall. It has fallen — but they shall not prevail against us!

“Oh, what is happening on the western front tonight as I write this, sitting here in my room with my journal before me? Jims is asleep in his crib and the wind is wailing around the window; over my desk hangs Walter’s picture, looking at me with his beautiful deep eyes; the Mona Lisa he gave me the last Christmas he was home hangs on one side of it, and on the other a framed copy of “The Piper.” It seems to me that I can hear Walter’s voice repeating it — that little poem into which he put his soul, and which will therefore live for ever, carrying Walter’s name on through the future of our land. Everything about me is calm and peaceful and ‘homey.’ Walter seems very near me — if I could just sweep aside the thin wavering little veil that hangs between, I could see him — just as he saw the Pied Piper the night before Courcelette.

“Over there in France tonight — does the line hold?”

CHAPTER XXVII I

BLACK SUNDAY

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In March of the year of grace 1918 there was one week into which must have crowded more of searing human agony than any seven days had ever held before in the history of the world. And in that week there was one day when all humanity seemed nailed to the cross; on that day the whole planet must have been aggroan with universal convulsion; everywhere the hearts of men were failing them for fear.

It dawned calmly and coldly and greyly at Ingleside. Mrs. Blythe and Rilla and Miss Oliver made ready for church in a suspense tempered by hope and confidence. The doctor was away, having been summoned during the wee sma's to the Marwood household in Upper Glen, where a little war-bride was fighting gallantly on her own battleground to give life, not death, to the world. Susan announced that she meant to stay home that morning — a rare decision for Susan.

“But I would rather not go to church this morning, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she explained. “If Whiskers-on-the-moon were there and I saw him looking holy and pleased, as he always looks when he thinks the Huns are winning, I fear I would lose my patience and my sense of decorum and hurl a Bible or hymnbook at him, thereby disgracing myself and the sacred edifice. No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I shall stay home from church till the tide turns and pray hard here.”

“I think I might as well stay home, too, for all the good church will do me today,” Miss Oliver said to Rilla, as they walked down the hard-frozen red road to the church. “I can think of nothing but the question, ‘Does the line still hold?’”

“Next Sunday will be Easter,” said Rilla. “Will it herald death or life to our cause?”

Mr. Meredith preached that morning from the text, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved,” and hope and confidence rang through his inspiring sentences. Rilla, looking up at the memorial tablet on the wall above their pew, “sacred to the memory of Walter Cuthbert Blythe,” felt herself lifted out of her dread and filled anew with courage. Walter could not have laid down his life for naught. His had been the gift of prophetic vision and he had foreseen victory. She would cling to that belief — the line would hold.

In this renewed mood she walked home from church almost gaily. The others, too, were hopeful, and all went smiling into Ingleside. There was no one in the livingroom, save Jims, who had fallen asleep on the sofa, and Doc, who sat “hushed in grim repose” on the hearthrug, looking very Hydeish indeed. No one was in the dining-room either — and, stranger still, no dinner was on the table, which was not even set. Where was Susan?

“Can she have taken ill?” exclaimed Mrs. Blythe anxiously. “I thought it strange that she did not want to go to church this morning.”

The kitchen door opened and Susan appeared on the threshold with such a ghastly face that Mrs. Blythe cried out in sudden panic.

“Susan, what is it?”

“The British line is broken and the German shells are falling on Paris,” said Susan dully.

The three women stared at each other, stricken.

“It’s not true — it’s not,” gasped Rilla.

“The thing would be — ridiculous,” said Gertrude Oliver — and then she laughed horribly.

“Susan, who told you this — when did the news come?” asked Mrs. Blythe.

“I got it over the long-distance phone from Charlottetown half an hour ago,” said Susan. “The news came to town late last night. It was Dr. Holland phoned it out and he said it was only too true. Since then I have done nothing, Mrs. Dr. dear. I am very sorry dinner is not ready. It is the first time I have been so remiss. If you will be patient I will soon have something for you to eat. But I am afraid I let the potatoes burn.”

“Dinner! Nobody wants any dinner, Susan,” said Mrs. Blythe wildly. “Oh, this thing is unbelievable — it must be a nightmare.”

“Paris is lost — France is lost — the war is lost,” gasped Rilla, amid the utter ruins of hope and confidence and belief.

“Oh God — Oh God,” moaned Gertrude Oliver, walking about the room and wringing her hands, “Oh — God!”

Nothing else — no other words — nothing but that age old plea — the old, old cry of supreme agony and appeal, from the human heart whose every human staff has failed it.

“Is God dead?” asked a startled little voice from the doorway of the livingroom. Jims stood there, flushed from sleep, his big brown eyes filled with dread, “Oh Willa — oh, Willa, is God dead?”

Miss Oliver stopped walking and exclaiming, and stared at Jims, in whose eyes tears of fright were beginning to gather. Rilla ran to his comforting, while Susan bounded up from the chair upon which she had dropped.

“No,” she said briskly, with a sudden return of her real self. “No, God isn’t dead — nor Lloyd George either. We were forgetting that, Mrs. Dr. dear. Don’t cry, little Kitchener. Bad as things are, they might be worse. The British line may be broken but the British navy is not. Let us tie to that. I will take a brace and get up a bite to eat, for strength we must have.”

They made a pretence of eating Susan's "bite," but it was only a pretence. Nobody at Ingleside ever forgot that black afternoon. Gertrude Oliver walked the floor — they all walked the floor; except Susan, who got out her grey war sock.

"Mrs. Dr. dear, I must knit on Sunday at last. I have never dreamed of doing it before for, say what might be said, I have considered it was a violation of the third commandment. But whether it is or whether it is not I must knit today or I shall go mad."

"Knit if you can, Susan," said Mrs. Blythe restlessly. "I would knit if I could — but I cannot — I cannot."

"If we could only get fuller information," moaned Rilla. "There might be something to encourage us — if we knew all."

"We know that the Germans are shelling Paris," said Miss Oliver bitterly. "In that case they must have smashed through everywhere and be at the very gates. No, we have lost — let us face the fact as other peoples in the past have had to face it. Other nations, with right on their side, have given their best and bravest — and gone down to defeat in spite of it. Ours is 'but one more To baffled millions who have gone before.'"

"I won't give up like that," cried Rilla, her pale face suddenly flushing. "I won't despair. We are not conquered — no, if Germany overruns all France we are not conquered. I am ashamed of myself for this hour of despair. You won't see me slump again like that, I'm going to ring up town at once and ask for particulars."

But town could not be got. The long-distance operator there was submerged by similar calls from every part of the distracted country. Rilla finally gave up and slipped away to Rainbow Valley. There she knelt down on the withered grey grasses in the little nook where she and Walter had had their last talk together, with her head bowed against the mossy trunk of a fallen tree. The sun had broken through the black clouds and drenched the valley with a pale golden splendour. The bells on the Tree Lovers twinkled elfinly and fitfully in the gusty March wind.

“Oh God, give me strength,” Rilla whispered. “Just strength — and courage.” Then like a child she clasped her hands together and said, as simply as Jims could have done, “Please send us better news tomorrow.”

She knelt there a long time, and when she went back to Ingleside she was calm and resolute. The doctor had arrived home, tired but triumphant, little Douglas Haig Marwood having made a safe landing on the shores of time. Gertrude was still pacing restlessly but Mrs. Blythe and Susan had reacted from the shock, and Susan was already planning a new line of defence for the channel ports.

“As long as we can hold them,” she declared, “the situation is saved. Paris has really no military significance.”

“Don’t,” said Gertrude sharply, as if Susan had run something into her. She thought the old worn phrase ‘no military significance’ nothing short of ghastly mockery under the circumstances, and more terrible to endure than the voice of despair would have been.

“I heard up at Marwood’s of the line being broken,” said the doctor, “but this story of the Germans shelling Paris seems to be rather incredible. Even if they broke through they were fifty miles from Paris at the nearest point and how could they get their artillery close enough to shell it in so short a time? Depend upon it, girls, that part of the message can’t be true. I’m going to try to try a long-distance call to town myself.”

The doctor was no more successful than Rilla had been, but his point of view cheered them all a little, and helped them through the evening. And at nine o’clock a long-distance message came through at last, that helped them through the night.

“The line broke only in one place, before St. Quentin,” said the doctor, as he hung up the receiver, “and the British troops are retreating in good order. That’s not so bad. As for the shells that are falling on Paris, they are coming from a distance of seventy miles — from some amazing long-range gun the Germans have invented and sprung with the opening offensive. That is all the news to date, and Dr. Holland says it is reliable.”

“It would have been dreadful news yesterday,” said Gertrude, “but compared to what we heard this morning it is almost like good news. But still,” she added, trying to smile, “I am afraid I will not sleep much tonight.”

“There is one thing to be thankful for at any rate, Miss Oliver, dear,” said Susan, “and that is that Cousin Sophia did not come in today. I really could not have endured her on top of all the rest.”

CHAPTER XXI X

“WOUNDED AND MISSING”

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“Battered but Not Broken” was the headline in Monday’s paper, and Susan repeated it over and over to herself as she went about her work. The gap caused by the St. Quentin disaster had been patched up in time, but the Allied line was being pushed relentlessly back from the territory they had purchased in 1917 with half a million lives. On Wednesday the headline was “British and French Check Germans”; but still the retreat went on. Back — and back — and back! Where would it end? Would the line break again — this time disastrously?

On Saturday the headline was “Even Berlin Admits Offensive Checked,” and for the first time in that terrible week the Ingleside folk dared to draw a long breath.

“Well, we have got one week over — now for the next,” said Susan staunchly.

“I feel like a prisoner on the rack when they stopped turning it,” Miss Oliver said to Rilla, as they went to church on Easter morning. “But I am not off the rack. The torture may begin again at any time.”

“I doubted God last Sunday,” said Rilla, “but I don’t doubt him today. Evil cannot win. Spirit is on our side and it is bound to outlast flesh.”

Nevertheless her faith was often tried in the dark spring that followed. Armageddon was not, as they had hoped, a matter of a few days. It stretched out into weeks and months. Again and again Hindenburg struck his savage, sudden blows, with alarming, though futile success. Again and again the military critics declared the situation extremely perilous. Again and again Cousin Sophia agreed with the military critics.

“If the Allies go back three miles more the war is lost,” she wailed.

“Is the British navy anchored in those three miles?” demanded Susan scornfully.

“It is the opinion of a man who knows all about it,” said Cousin Sophia solemnly.

“There is no such person,” retorted Susan. “As for the military critics, they do not know one blessed thing about it, any more than you or I. They have been mistaken times out of number. Why do you always look on the dark side, Sophia Crawford?”

“Because there ain’t any bright side, Susan Baker.”

“Oh, is there not? It is the twentieth of April, and Hindy is not in Paris yet, although he said he would be there by April first. Is that not a bright spot at least?”

“It is my opinion that the Germans will be in Paris before very long and more than that, Susan Baker, they will be in Canada.”

“Not in this part of it. The Huns shall never set foot in Prince Edward Island as long as I can handle a pitchfork,” declared Susan, looking, and feeling quite equal to routing the entire German army single-handed. “No, Sophia Crawford, to tell you the plain truth I am sick and tired of your gloomy predictions. I do not deny that some mistakes have been made. The Germans would never have got back Passchendaele if the Canadians had been left there; and it was bad business trusting to those Portuguese at the Lys River. But that is no reason why you or anyone should go about proclaiming the war is lost. I do not want to quarrel with you, least of all at such a time as this, but our morale must be kept up, and I am going to speak my mind out plainly and tell you that if you cannot keep from such croaking your room is better than your company.”

Cousin Sophia marched home in high dudgeon to digest her affront, and did not reappear in Susan’s kitchen for many weeks. Perhaps it was just as well, for they were hard weeks, when the Germans continued to strike,

now here, now there, and seemingly vital points fell to them at every blow. And one day in early May, when wind and sunshine frolicked in Rainbow Valley and the maple grove was golden-green and the harbour all blue and dimpled and white-capped, the news came about Jem.

There had been a trench raid on the Canadian front — a little trench raid so insignificant that it was never even mentioned in the dispatches and when it was over Lieutenant James Blythe was reported “wounded and missing.”

“I think this is even worse than the news of his death would have been,” moaned Rilla through her white lips, that night.

“No — no — ‘missing’ leaves a little hope, Rilla,” urged Gertrude Oliver.

“Yes — torturing, agonized hope that keeps you from ever becoming quite resigned to the worst,” said Rilla. “Oh, Miss Oliver — must we go for weeks and months — not knowing whether Jem is alive or dead? Perhaps we will never know. I — I cannot bear it — I cannot. Walter — and now Jem. This will kill mother — look at her face, Miss Oliver, and you will see that. And Faith — poor Faith — how can she bear it?”

Gertrude shivered with pain. She looked up at the pictures hanging over Rilla’s desk and felt a sudden hatred of Mona Lisa’s endless smile.

“Will not even this blot it off your face?” she thought savagely.

But she said gently, “No, it won’t kill your mother. She’s made of finer mettle than that. Besides, she refuses to believe Jem is dead; she will cling to hope and we must all do that. Faith, you may be sure, will do it.”

“I cannot,” moaned Rilla, “Jem was wounded — what chance would he have? Even if the Germans found him — we know how they have treated wounded prisoners. I wish I could hope, Miss Oliver — it would help, I suppose. But hope seems dead in me. I can’t hope without some reason for it — and there is no reason.”

When Miss Oliver had gone to her own room and Rilla was lying on her bed in the moonlight, praying desperately for a little strength, Susan stepped in like a gaunt shadow and sat down beside her.

“Rilla, dear, do not you worry. Little Jem is not dead.”

“Oh, how can you believe that, Susan?”

“Because I know. Listen you to me. When that word came this morning the first thing I thought of was Dog Monday. And tonight, as soon as I got the supper dishes washed and the bread set, I went down to the station. There was Dog Monday, waiting for the train, just as patient as usual. Now, Rilla, dear, that trench raid was four days ago — last Monday — and I said to the station-agent, ‘Can you tell me if that dog howled or made any kind of a fuss last Monday night?’ He thought it over a bit, and then he said, ‘No, he did not.’ ‘Are you sure?’ I said. ‘There’s more depends on it than you think!’ ‘Dead sure,’ he said. ‘I was up all night last Monday night because my mare was sick, and there was never a sound out of him. I would have heard if there had been, for the stable door was open all the time and his kennel is right across from it!’ Now Rilla dear, those were the man’s very words. And you know how that poor little dog howled all night after the battle of Courcelette. Yet he did not love Walter as much as he loved Jem. If he mourned for Walter like that, do you suppose he would sleep sound in his kennel the night after Jem had been killed? No, Rilla dear, little Jem is not dead, and that you may tie to. If he were, Dog Monday would have known, just as he knew before, and he would not be still waiting for the trains.”

It was absurd — and irrational — and impossible. But Rilla believed it, for all that; and Mrs. Blythe believed it; and the doctor, though he smiled faintly in pretended derision, felt an odd confidence replace his first despair; and foolish and absurd or not, they all plucked up heart and courage to carry on, just because a faithful little dog at the Glen station was still watching with unbroken faith for his master to come home. Common sense might scorn — incredulity might mutter “Mere superstition” — but in their hearts the folk of Ingleside stood by their belief that Dog Monday knew.

CHAPTER XX X

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

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Susan was very sorrowful when she saw the beautiful old lawn of Ingleside ploughed up that spring and planted with potatoes. Yet she made no protest, even when her beloved peony bed was sacrificed. But when the Government passed the Daylight Saving law Susan balked. There was a Higher Power than the Union Government, to which Susan owed allegiance.

“Do you think it right to meddle with the arrangements of the Almighty?” she demanded indignantly of the doctor. The doctor, quite unmoved, responded that the law must be observed, and the Ingleside clocks were moved on accordingly. But the doctor had no power over Susan’s little alarm.

“I bought that with my own money, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said firmly, “and it shall go on God’s time and not Borden’s time.”

Susan got up and went to bed by “God’s time,” and regulated her own goings and comings by it. She served the meals, under protest, by Borden’s time, and she had to go to church by it, which was the crowning injury. But she said her prayers by her own clock, and fed the hens by it; so that there was always a furtive triumph in her eye when she looked at the doctor. She had got the better of him by so much at least.

“Whiskers-on-the-moon is very much delighted with this daylight saving business,” she told him one evening. “Of course he naturally would be, since I understand that the Germans invented it. I hear he came near losing his entire wheat-crop lately. Warren Mead’s cows broke into the field one day last week — it was the very day the Germans captured the Chemang-de-dam, which may have been a coincidence or may not — and were

making fine havoc of it when Mrs. Dick Clow happened to see them from her attic window. At first she had no intention of letting Mr. Pryor know. She told me she had just gloated over the sight of those cows pasturing on his wheat. She felt it served him exactly right. But presently she reflected that the wheat-crop was a matter of great importance and that 'save and serve' meant that those cows must be routed out as much as it meant anything. So she went down and phoned over to Whiskers about the matter. All the thanks she got was that he said something queer right out to her. She is not prepared to state that it was actually swearing for you cannot be sure just what you hear over the phone; but she has her own opinion, and so have I, but I will not express it for here comes Mr. Meredith, and Whiskers is one of his elders, so we must be discreet."

"Are you looking for the new star?" asked Mr. Meredith, joining Miss Oliver and Rilla, who were standing among the blossoming potatoes gazing skyward.

"Yes — we have found it — see, it is just above the tip of the tallest old pine."

"It's wonderful to be looking at something that happened three thousand years ago, isn't it?" said Rilla. "That is when astronomers think the collision took place which produced this new star. It makes me feel horribly insignificant," she added under her breath.

"Even this event cannot dwarf into what may be the proper perspective in star systems the fact that the Germans are again only one leap from Paris," said Gertrude restlessly.

"I think I would like to have been an astronomer," said Mr. Meredith dreamily, gazing at the star.

"There must be a strange pleasure in it," agreed Miss Oliver, "an unearthly pleasure, in more senses than one. I would like to have a few astronomers for my friends."

"Fancy talking the gossip of the hosts of heaven," laughed Rilla.

“I wonder if astronomers feel a very deep interest in earthly affairs?” said the doctor. “Perhaps students of the canals of Mars would not be so keenly sensitive to the significance of a few yards of trenches lost or won on the western front.”

“I have read somewhere,” said Mr. Meredith, “that Ernest Renan wrote one of his books during the siege of Paris in 1870 and ‘enjoyed the writing of it very much.’ I suppose one would call him a philosopher.”

“I have read also,” said Miss Oliver, “that shortly before his death he said that his only regret in dying was that he must die before he had seen what that ‘extremely interesting young man, the German Emperor,’ would do in his life. If Ernest Renan ‘walked’ today and saw what that interesting young man had done to his beloved France, not to speak of the world, I wonder if his mental detachment would be as complete as it was in 1870.”

“I wonder where Jem is tonight,” thought Rilla, in a sudden bitter inrush of remembrance.

It was over a month since the news had come about Jem. Nothing had been discovered concerning him, in spite of all efforts. Two or three letters had come from him, written before the trench raid, and since then there had been only unbroken silence. Now the Germans were again at the Marne, pressing nearer and nearer Paris; now rumours were coming of another Austrian offensive against the Piave line. Rilla turned away from the new star, sick at heart. It was one of the moments when hope and courage failed her utterly — when it seemed impossible to go on even one more day. If only they knew what had happened to Jem — you can face anything you know. But a beleaguerment of fear and doubt and suspense is a hard thing for the morale. Surely, if Jem were alive, some word would have come through. He must be dead. Only — they would never know — they could never be quite sure; and Dog Monday would wait for the train until he died of old age. Monday was only a poor, faithful, rheumatic little dog, who knew nothing more of his master’s fate than they did.

Rilla had a “white night” and did not fall asleep until late. When she wakened Gertrude Oliver was sitting at her window leaning out to meet the silver mystery of the dawn. Her clever, striking profile, with the masses of

black hair behind it, came out clearly against the pallid gold of the eastern sky. Rilla remembered Jem's admiration of the curve of Miss Oliver's brow and chin, and she shuddered. Everything that reminded her of Jem was beginning to give intolerable pain. Walter's death had inflicted on her heart a terrible wound. But it had been a clean wound and had healed slowly, as such wounds do, though the scar must remain for ever. But the torture of Jem's disappearance was another thing: there was a poison in it that kept it from healing. The alternations of hope and despair, the endless watching each day for the letter that never came — that might never come — the newspaper tales of ill-usage of prisoners — the bitter wonder as to Jem's wound — all were increasingly hard to bear.

Gertrude Oliver turned her head. There was an odd brilliancy in her eyes.

"Rilla, I've had another dream."

"Oh, no — no," cried Rilla, shrinking. Miss Oliver's dreams had always foretold coming disaster.

"Rilla, it was a good dream. Listen — I dreamed just as I did four years ago, that I stood on the veranda steps and looked down the Glen. And it was still covered by waves that lapped about my feet. But as I looked the waves began to ebb — and they ebbed as swiftly as, four years ago, they rolled in — ebbed out and out, to the gulf; and the Glen lay before me, beautiful and green, with a rainbow spanning Rainbow Valley — a rainbow of such splendid colour that it dazzled me — and I woke. Rilla — Rilla Blythe — the tide has turned."

"I wish I could believe it," sighed Rilla.

"Sooth was my prophecy of fear
Believe it when it augurs cheer,"

quoted Gertrude, almost gaily. "I tell you I have no doubt."

Yet, in spite of the great Italian victory at the Piave that came a few days later, she had doubt many a time in the hard month that followed; and when in mid-July the Germans crossed the Marne again despair came

sickeningly. It was idle, they all felt, to hope that the miracle of the Marne would be repeated. But it was: again, as in 1914, the tide turned at the Marne. The French and the American troops struck their sudden smashing blow on the exposed flank of the enemy and, with the almost inconceivable rapidity of a dream, the whole aspect of the war changed.

“The Allies have won two tremendous victories,” said the doctor on 20th July.

“It is the beginning of the end — I feel it — I feel it,” said Mrs. Blythe.

“Thank God,” said Susan, folding her trembling old hands, Then she added, under her breath, “but it won’t bring our boys back.”

Nevertheless she went out and ran up the flag, for the first time since the fall of Jerusalem. As it caught the breeze and swelled gallantly out above her, Susan lifted her hand and saluted it, as she had seen Shirley do.

“We’ve all given something to keep you flying,” she said. “Four hundred thousand of our boys gone overseas — fifty thousand of them killed. But — you are worth it!” The wind whipped her grey hair about her face and the gingham apron that shrouded her from head to foot was cut on lines of economy, not of grace; yet, somehow, just then Susan made an imposing figure. She was one of the women — courageous, unquailing, patient, heroic — who had made victory possible. In her, they all saluted the symbol for which their dearest had fought. Something of this was in the doctor’s mind as he watched her from the door.

“Susan,” he said, when she turned to come in, “from first to last of this business you have been a brick!”

CHAPTER XXX I

MRS. MATILDA PITTMAN

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Rilla and Jims were standing on the rear platform of their car when the train stopped at the little Millward siding. The August evening was so hot and close that the crowded cars were stifling. Nobody ever knew just why trains stopped at Millward siding. Nobody was ever known to get off there or get on. There was only one house nearer to it than four miles, and it was surrounded by acres of blueberry barrens and scrub spruce-trees.

Rilla was on her way into Charlottetown to spend the night with a friend and the next day in Red Cross shopping; she had taken Jims with her, partly because she did not want Susan or her mother to be bothered with his care, partly because of a hungry desire in her heart to have as much of him as she could before she might have to give him up forever. James Anderson had written to her not long before this; he was wounded and in the hospital; he would not be able to go back to the front and as soon as he was able he would be coming home for Jims.

Rilla was heavy-hearted over this, and worried also. She loved Jims dearly and would feel deeply giving him up in any case; but if Jim Anderson were a different sort of a man, with a proper home for the child, it would not be so bad. But to give Jims up to a roving, shiftless, irresponsible father, however kind and goodhearted he might be — and she knew Jim Anderson was kind and goodhearted enough — was a bitter prospect to Rilla. It was not even likely Anderson would stay in the Glen; he had no ties there now; he might even go back to England. She might never see her dear, sunshiny, carefully brought-up little Jims again. With such a father what might his fate be? Rilla meant to beg Jim Anderson to leave him with her, but, from his letter, she had not much hope that he would.

“If he would only stay in the Glen, where I could keep an eye on Jims and have him often with me I wouldn’t feel so worried over it,” she reflected. “But I feel sure he won’t — and Jims will never have any chance. And he is such a bright little chap — he has ambition, wherever he got it — and he isn’t lazy. But his father will never have a cent to give him any education or start in life. Jims, my little war-baby, whatever is going to become of you?”

Jims was not in the least concerned over what was to become of him. He was gleefully watching the antics of a striped chipmunk that was frisking over the roof of the little siding. As the train pulled out Jims leaned eagerly forward for a last look at Chippy, pulling his hand from Rilla’s. Rilla was so engrossed in wondering what was to become of Jims in the future that she forgot to take notice of what was happening to him in the present. What did happen was that Jims lost his balance, shot headlong down the steps, hurtled across the little siding platform, and landed in a clump of bracken fern on the other side.

Rilla shrieked and lost her head. She sprang down the steps and jumped off the train.

Fortunately, the train was still going at a comparatively slow speed; fortunately also, Rilla retained enough sense to jump the way it was going; nevertheless, she fell and sprawled helplessly down the embankment, landing in a ditch full of a rank growth of goldenrod and fireweed.

Nobody had seen what had happened and the train whisked briskly away round a curve in the barrens. Rilla picked herself up, dizzy but unhurt, scrambled out of the ditch, and flew wildly across the platform, expecting to find Jims dead or broken in pieces. But Jims, except for a few bruises, and a big fright, was quite uninjured. He was so badly scared that he didn’t even cry, but Rilla, when she found that he was safe and sound, burst into tears and sobbed wildly.

“Nasty old twain,” remarked Jims in disgust. “And nasty old God,” he added, with a scowl at the heavens.

A laugh broke into Rilla's sobbing, producing something very like what her father would have called hysterics. But she caught herself up before the hysteria could conquer her.

"Rilla Blythe, I'm ashamed of you. Pull yourself together immediately. Jims, you shouldn't have said anything like that."

"God frew me off the twain," declared Jims defiantly. "Somebody frew me; you didn't frow me; so it was God."

"No, it wasn't. You fell because you let go of my hand and bent too far forward. I told you not to do that. So that it was your own fault."

Jims looked to see if she meant it; then glanced up at the sky again.

"Excuse me, then, God," he remarked airily.

Rilla scanned the sky also; she did not like its appearance; a heavy thundercloud was appearing in the northwest. What in the world was to be done? There was no other train that night, since the nine o'clock special ran only on Saturdays. Would it be possible for them to reach Hannah Brewster's house, two miles away, before the storm broke? Rilla thought she could do it alone easily enough, but with Jims it was another matter. Were his little legs good for it?

"We've got to try it," said Rilla desperately. "We might stay in the siding until the thunderstorm is over; but it may keep on raining all night and anyway it will be pitch dark. If we can get to Hannah's she will keep us all night."

Hannah Brewster, when she had been Hannah Crawford, had lived in the Glen and gone to school with Rilla. They had been good friends then, though Hannah had been three years the older. She had married very young and had gone to live in Millward. What with hard work and babies and a ne'er-do-well husband, her life had not been an easy one, and Hannah seldom revisited her old home. Rilla had visited her once soon after her marriage, but had not seen her or even heard of her for years; she knew,

however, that she and Jims would find welcome and harbourage in any house where rosy-faced, open-hearted, generous Hannah lived.

For the first mile they got on very well but the second one was harder. The road, seldom used, was rough and deep-rutted. Jims grew so tired that Rilla had to carry him for the last quarter. She reached the Brewster house, almost exhausted, and dropped Jims on the walk with a sigh of thankfulness. The sky was black with clouds; the first heavy drops were beginning to fall; and the rumble of thunder was growing very loud. Then she made an unpleasant discovery. The blinds were all down and the doors locked. Evidently the Brewsters were not at home. Rilla ran to the little barn. It, too, was locked. No other refuge presented itself. The bare whitewashed little house had not even a veranda or porch.

It was almost dark now and her plight seemed desperate.

“I’m going to get in if I have to break a window,” said Rilla resolutely. “Hannah would want me to do that. She’d never get over it if she heard I came to her house for refuge in a thunderstorm and couldn’t get in.”

Luckily she did not have to go to the length of actual housebreaking. The kitchen window went up quite easily. Rilla lifted Jims in and scrambled through herself, just as the storm broke in good earnest.

“Oh, see all the little pieces of thunder,” cried Jims in delight, as the hail danced in after them. Rilla shut the window and with some difficulty found and lighted a lamp. They were in a very snug little kitchen. Opening off it on one side was a trim, nicely furnished parlour, and on the other a pantry, which proved to be well stocked.

“I’m going to make myself at home,” said Rilla. “I know that is just what Hannah would want me to do. I’ll get a little snack for Jims and me, and then if the rain continues and nobody comes home I’ll just go upstairs to the spare room and go to bed. There is nothing like acting sensibly in an emergency. If I had not been a goose when I saw Jims fall off the train I’d have rushed back into the car and got some one to stop it. Then I wouldn’t have been in this scrape. Since I am in it I’ll make the best of it.

“This house,” she added, looking around, “is fixed up much nicer than when I was here before. Of course Hannah and Ted were just beginning housekeeping then. But somehow I’ve had the idea that Ted hasn’t been very prosperous. He must have done better than I’ve been led to believe, when they can afford furniture like this. I’m awfully glad for Hannah’s sake.”

The thunderstorm passed, but the rain continued to fall heavily. At eleven o’clock Rilla decided that nobody was coming home. Jims had fallen asleep on the sofa; she carried him up to the spare room and put him to bed. Then she undressed, put on a nightgown she found in the washstand drawer, and scrambled sleepily in between very nice lavender-scented sheets. She was so tired, after her adventures and exertions, that not even the oddity of her situation could keep her awake; she was sound asleep in a few minutes.

Rilla slept until eight o’clock the next morning and then wakened with startling suddenness. Somebody was saying in a harsh, gruff voice, “Here, you two, wake up. I want to know what this means.”

Rilla did wake up, promptly and effectually. She had never in all her life wakened up so thoroughly before. Standing in the room were three people, one of them a man, who were absolute strangers to her. The man was a big fellow with a bushy black beard and an angry scowl. Beside him was a woman — a tall, thin, angular person, with violently red hair and an indescribable hat. She looked even crosser and more amazed than the man, if that were possible. In the background was another woman — a tiny old lady who must have been at least eighty. She was, in spite of her tinyness, a very striking-looking personage; she was dressed in unrelieved black, had snow-white hair, a dead-white face, and snapping, vivid, coal-black eyes. She looked as amazed as the other two, but Rilla realized that she didn’t look cross.

Rilla also was realizing that something was wrong — fearfully wrong. Then the man said, more gruffly than ever, “Come now. Who are you and what business have you here?”

Rilla raised herself on one elbow, looking and feeling hopelessly bewildered and foolish. She heard the old black-and-white lady in the background chuckle to herself. "She must be real," Rilla thought. "I can't be dreaming her." Aloud she gasped,

"Isn't this Theodore Brewster's place?"

"No," said the big woman, speaking for the first time, "this place belongs to us. We bought it from the Brewsters last fall. They moved to Greenvale. Our name is Chapley."

Poor Rilla fell back on her pillow, quite overcome.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I — I — thought the Brewsters lived here. Mrs. Brewster is a friend of mine. I am Rilla Blythe — Dr. Blythe's daughter from Glen St. Mary. I — I was going to town with my — my — this little boy — and he fell off the train — and I jumped off after him — and nobody knew of it. I knew we couldn't get home last night and a storm was coming up — so we came here and when we found nobody at home — we — we — just got in through the window and — and — made ourselves at home."

"So it seems," said the woman sarcastically.

"A likely story," said the man.

"We weren't born yesterday," added the woman.

Madam Black-and-White didn't say anything; but when the other two made their pretty speeches she doubled up in a silent convulsion of mirth, shaking her head from side to side and beating the air with her hands.

Rilla, stung by the disagreeable attitude of the Chapleys, regained her selfpossession and lost her temper. She sat up in bed and said in her haughtiest voice, "I do not know when you were born, or where, but it must have been somewhere where very peculiar manners were taught. If you will have the decency to leave my room — er — this room — until I can get up and dress I shall not transgress upon your hospitality" — Rilla

was killingly sarcastic—"any longer. And I shall pay you amply for the food we have eaten and the night's lodging I have taken."

The black-and-white apparition went through the motion of clapping her hands, but not a sound did she make. Perhaps Mr. Chapley was cowed by Rilla's tone — or perhaps he was appeased at the prospect of payment; at all events, he spoke more civilly.

"Well, that's fair. If you pay up it's all right."

"She shall do no such thing as pay you," said Madam Black-and-White in a surprisingly clear, resolute, authoritative tone of voice. "If you haven't got any shame for yourself, Robert Chapley, you've got a mother-in-law who can be ashamed for you. No strangers shall be charged for room and lodging in any house where Mrs. Matilda Pitman lives. Remember that, though I may have come down in the world, I haven't quite forgot all decency for all that. I knew you was a skinflint when Amelia married you, and you've made her as bad as yourself. But Mrs. Matilda Pitman has been boss for a long time, and Mrs. Matilda Pitman will remain boss. Here you, Robert Chapley, take yourself out of here and let that girl get dressed. And you, Amelia, go downstairs and cook a breakfast for her."

Never, in all her life, had Rilla seen anything like the abject meekness with which those two big people obeyed that mite. They went without word or look of protest. As the door closed behind them Mrs. Matilda Pitman laughed silently, and rocked from side to side in her merriment.

"Ain't it funny?" she said. "I mostly lets them run the length of their tether, but sometimes I has to pull them up, and then I does it with a jerk. They don't dast aggravate me, because I've got considerable hard cash, and they're afraid I won't leave it all to them. Neither I will. I'll leave 'em some, but some I won't, just to vex 'em. I haven't made up my mind where I will leave it but I'll have to, soon, for at eighty a body is living on borrowed time. Now, you can take your time about dressing, my dear, and I'll go down and keep them mean scallawags in order. That's a handsome child you have there. Is he your brother?"

“No, he’s a little war-baby I’ve been taking care of, because his mother died and his father was overseas,” answered Rilla in a subdued tone.

“War-baby! Humph! Well, I’d better skin out before he wakes up or he’ll likely start crying. Children don’t like me — never did. I can’t recollect any youngster ever coming near me of its own accord. Never had any of my own. Amelia was my step-daughter. Well, it’s saved me a world of bother. If kids don’t like me I don’t like them, so that’s an even score. But that certainly is a handsome child.”

Jims chose this moment for waking up. He opened his big brown eyes and looked at Mrs. Matilda Pitman unblinkingly. Then he sat up, dimpled deliciously, pointed to her and said solemnly to Rilla, “Pwitty lady, Willa, pwitty lady.”

Mrs. Matilda Pitman smiled. Even eighty-odd is sometimes vulnerable in vanity. “I’ve heard that children and fools tell the truth,” she said. “I was used to compliments when I was young — but they’re scarcer when you get as far along as I am. I haven’t had one for years. It tastes good. I s’pose now, you monkey, you wouldn’t give me a kiss.”

Then Jims did a quite surprising thing. He was not a demonstrative youngster and was chary with kisses even to the Ingleside people. But without a word he stood up in bed, his plump little body encased only in his undershirt, ran to the footboard, flung his arms about Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s neck, and gave her a bear hug, accompanied by three or four hearty, ungrudging smacks.

“Jims,” protested Rilla, aghast at this liberty.

“You leave him be,” ordered Mrs. Matilda Pitman, setting her bonnet straight.

“Laws I like to see some one that isn’t skeered of me. Everybody is — you are, though you’re trying to hide it. And why? Of course Robert and Amelia are because I make ‘em skeered on purpose. But folks always are — no matter how civil I be to them. Are you going to keep this child?”

“I’m afraid not. His father is coming home before long.”

“Is he any good — the father, I mean?”

“Well — he’s kind and nice — but he’s poor — and I’m afraid he always will be,” faltered Rilla.

“I see — shiftless — can’t make or keep. Well, I’ll see — I’ll see. I have an idea. It’s a good idea, and besides it will make Robert and Amelia squirm. That’s its main merit in my eyes, though I like that child, mind you, because he ain’t skeered of me. He’s worth some bother. Now, you get dressed, as I said before, and come down when you’re good and ready.”

Rilla was stiff and sore after her tumble and walk of the night before but she was not long in dressing herself and Jims. When she went down to the kitchen she found a smoking hot breakfast on the table. Mr. Chapley was nowhere in sight and Mrs. Chapley was cutting bread with a sulky air. Mrs. Matilda Pitman was sitting in an armchair, knitting a grey army sock. She still wore her bonnet and her triumphant expression.

“Set right in, dears, and make a good breakfast,” she said.

“I am not hungry,” said Rilla almost pleadingly. “I don’t think I can eat anything. And it is time I was starting for the station. The morning train will soon be along. Please excuse me and let us go — I’ll take a piece of bread and butter for Jims.”

Mrs. Matilda Pitman shook a knitting-needle playfully at Rilla.

“Sit down and take your breakfast,” she said. “Mrs. Matilda Pitman commands you. Everybody obeys Mrs. Matilda Pitman — even Robert and Amelia. You must obey her too.”

Rilla did obey her. She sat down and, such was the influence of Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s mesmeric eye, she ate a tolerable breakfast. The obedient Amelia never spoke; Mrs. Matilda Pitman did not speak either; but she knitted furiously and chuckled. When Rilla had finished, Mrs. Matilda Pitman rolled up her sock.

“Now you can go if you want to,” she said, “but you don’t have to go. You can stay here as long as you want to and I’ll make Amelia cook your meals for you.”

The independent Miss Blythe, whom a certain clique of Junior Red Cross girls accused of being domineering and “bossy,” was thoroughly cowed.

“Thank you,” she said meekly, “but we must really go.”

“Well, then,” said Mrs. Matilda Pitman, throwing open the door, “your conveyance is ready for you. I told Robert he must hitch up and drive you to the station. I enjoy making Robert do things. It’s almost the only sport I have left. I’m over eighty and most things have lost their flavour except bossing Robert.”

Robert sat before the door on the front seat of a trim, double-seated, rubber-tired buggy. He must have heard every word his mother-in-law said but he gave no sign.

“I do wish,” said Rilla, plucking up what little spirit she had left, “that you would let me — oh — ah—” then she quailed again before Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s eye—”recompense you for — for—”

“Mrs. Matilda Pitman said before — and meant it — that she doesn’t take pay for entertaining strangers, nor let other people where she lives do it, much as their natural meanness would like to do it. You go along to town and don’t forget to call the next time you come this way. Don’t be scared. Not that you are scared of much, I reckon, considering the way you sassed Robert back this morning. I like your spunk. Most girls nowadays are such timid, skeery creeturs. When I was a girl I wasn’t afraid of nothing nor nobody. Mind you take good care of that boy. He ain’t any common child. And make Robert drive round all the puddles in the road. I won’t have that new buggy splashed.”

As they drove away Jims threw kisses at Mrs. Matilda Pitman as long as he could see her, and Mrs. Matilda Pitman waved her sock back at him. Robert spoke no word, either good or bad, all the way to the station, but he remembered the puddles. When Rilla got out at the siding she thanked him

courteously. The only response she got was a grunt as Robert turned his horse and started for home.

“Well” — Rilla drew a long breath—”I must try to get back into Rilla Blythe again. I’ve been somebody else these past few hours — I don’t know just who — some creation of that extraordinary old person’s. I believe she hypnotized me. What an adventure this will be to write the boys.”

And then she sighed. Bitter remembrance came that there were only Jerry, Ken, Carl and Shirley to write it to now. Jem — who would have appreciated Mrs. Matilda Pitman keenly — where was Jem?

CHAPTER XXXI I

WORD FROM JEM

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4th August 1918

“It is four years tonight since the dance at the lighthouse — four years of war. It seems like three times four. I was fifteen then. I am nineteen now. I expected that these past four years would be the most delightful years of my life and they have been years of war — years of fear and grief and worry — but I humbly hope, of a little growth in strength and character as well.

“Today I was going through the hall and I heard mother saying something to father about me. I didn’t mean to listen — I couldn’t help hearing her as I went along the hall and upstairs — so perhaps that is why I heard what listeners are said never to hear — something good of myself. And because it was mother who said it I’m going to write it here in my journal, for my comforting when days of discouragement come upon me, in which I feel that I am vain and selfish and weak and that there is no good thing in me.

“‘Rilla has developed in a wonderful fashion these past four years. She used to be such an irresponsible young creature. She has changed into a capable, womanly girl and she is such a comfort to me. Nan and Di have grown a little away from me — they have been so little at home — but Rilla has grown closer and closer to me. We are chums. I don’t see how I could have got through these terrible years without her, Gilbert.’

“There, that is just what mother said — and I feel glad — and sorry — and proud — and humble! It’s beautiful to have my mother think that about me — but I don’t deserve it quite. I’m not as good and strong as all that. There are heaps of times when I have felt cross and impatient and woeful and

despairing. It is mother and Susan who have been this family's backbone. But I have helped a little, I believe, and I am so glad and thankful.

"The war news has been good right along. The French and Americans are pushing the Germans back and back and back. Sometimes I am afraid it is too good to last — after nearly four years of disasters one has a feeling that this constant success is unbelievable. We don't rejoice noisily over it. Susan keeps the flag up but we go softly. The price paid has been too high for jubilation. We are just thankful that it has not been paid in vain.

"No word has come from Jem. We hope — because we dare not do anything else. But there are hours when we all feel — though we never say so — that such hoping is foolishness. These hours come more and more frequently as the weeks go by. And we may never know. That is the most terrible thought of all. I wonder how Faith is bearing it. To judge from her letters she has never for a moment given up hope, but she must have had her dark hours of doubt like the rest of us."

20th August 1918

"The Canadians have been in action again and Mr. Meredith had a cable today saying that Carl had been slightly wounded and is in the hospital. It did not say where the wound was, which is unusual, and we all feel worried. There is news of a fresh victory every day now."

30th August 1918

"The Merediths had a letter from Carl today. His wound was "only a slight one" — but it was in his right eye and the sight is gone for ever!

"'One eye is enough to watch bugs with,' Carl writes cheerfully. And we know it might have been oh so much worse! If it had been both eyes! But I cried all the afternoon after I saw Carl's letter. Those beautiful, fearless blue eyes of his!

"There is one comfort — he will not have to go back to the front. He is coming home as soon as he is out of the hospital — the first of our boys to return. When will the others come?

“And there is one who will never come. At least we will not see him if he does. But, oh, I think he will be there — when our Canadian soldiers return there will be a shadow army with them — the army of the fallen. We will not see them — but they will be there!”

1st September 1918

“Mother and I went into Charlottetown yesterday to see the moving picture, “Hearts of the World.” I made an awful goose of myself — father will never stop teasing me about it for the rest of my life. But it all seemed so horribly real — and I was so intensely interested that I forgot everything but the scenes I saw enacted before my eyes. And then, quite near the last came a terribly exciting one. The heroine was struggling with a horrible German soldier who was trying to drag her away. I knew she had a knife — I had seen her hide it, to have it in readiness — and I couldn’t understand why she didn’t produce it and finish the brute. I thought she must have forgotten it, and just at the tensest moment of the scene I lost my head altogether. I just stood right up on my feet in that crowded house and shrieked at the top of my voice—’The knife is in your stocking — the knife is in your stocking!’

“I created a sensation!

“The funny part was, that just as I said it, the girl did snatch out the knife and stab the soldier with it!

“Everybody in the house laughed. I came to my senses and fell back in my seat, overcome with mortification. Mother was shaking with laughter. I could have shaken her. Why hadn’t she pulled me down and choked me before I had made such an idiot of myself. She protests that there wasn’t time.

“Fortunately the house was dark, and I don’t believe there was anybody there who knew me. And I thought I was becoming sensible and self-controlled and womanly! It is plain I have some distance to go yet before I attain that devoutly desired consummation.”

20th September 1918

“In the east Bulgaria has asked for peace, and in the west the British have smashed the Hindenburg line; and right here in Glen St. Mary little Bruce Meredith has done something that I think wonderful — wonderful because of the love behind it. Mrs. Meredith was here tonight and told us about it — and mother and I cried, and Susan got up and clattered the things about the stove.

“Bruce always loved Jem very devotedly, and the child has never forgotten him in all these years. He has been as faithful in his way as Dog Monday was in his. We have always told him that Jem would come back. But it seems that he was in Carter Flagg’s store last night and he heard his Uncle Norman flatly declaring that Jem Blythe would never come back and that the Ingleside folk might as well give up hoping he would. Bruce went home and cried himself to sleep. This morning his mother saw him going out of the yard, with a very sorrowful and determined look, carrying his pet kitten. She didn’t think much more about it until later on he came in, with the most tragic little face, and told her, his little body shaking with sobs, that he had drowned Stripey.

“‘Why did you do that?’ Mrs. Meredith exclaimed.

“‘To bring Jem back,’ sobbed Bruce. ‘I thought if I sacrificed Stripey God would send Jem back. So I drowned him — and, oh mother, it was awful hard — but surely God will send Jem back now, ‘cause Stripey was the dearest thing I had. I just told God I would give Him Stripey if He would send Jem back. And He will, won’t He, mother?’

“Mrs. Meredith didn’t know what to say to the poor child. She just could not tell him that perhaps his sacrifice wouldn’t bring Jem back — that God didn’t work that way. She told him that he mustn’t expect it right away — that perhaps it would be quite a long time yet before Jem came back.

“But Bruce said, ‘It oughtn’t to take longer’n a week, mother. Oh, mother, Stripey was such a nice little cat. He purred so pretty. Don’t you think God ought to like him enough to let us have Jem?’

“Mr. Meredith is worried about the effect on Bruce’s faith in God, and Mrs. Meredith is worried about the effect on Bruce himself if his hope

isn't fulfilled. And I feel as if I must cry every time I think of it. It was so splendid — and sad — and beautiful. The dear devoted little fellow! He worshipped that kitten. And if it all goes for nothing — as so many sacrifices seem to go for nothing — he will be brokenhearted, for he isn't old enough to understand that God doesn't answer our prayers just as we hope — and doesn't make bargains with us when we yield something we love up to Him."

24th September 1918

"I have been kneeling at my window in the moonshine for a long time, just thanking God over and over again. The joy of last night and today has been so great that it seemed half pain — as if our hearts weren't big enough to hold it.

"Last night I was sitting here in my room at eleven o'clock writing a letter to Shirley. Every one else was in bed, except father, who was out. I heard the telephone ring and I ran out to the hall to answer it, before it should waken mother. It was long-distance calling, and when I answered it said 'This is the telegraph Company's office in Charlottetown. There is an overseas cable for Dr. Blythe.'

"I thought of Shirley — my heart stood still — and then I heard him saying, 'It's from Holland.'

"The message was,

'Just arrived. Escaped from Germany. Quite well. Writing.
James Blythe.'

"I didn't faint or fall or scream. I didn't feel glad or surprised. I didn't feel anything. I felt numb, just as I did when I heard Walter had enlisted. I hung up the receiver and turned round. Mother was standing in her doorway. She wore her old rose kimono, and her hair was hanging down her back in a long thick braid, and her eyes were shining. She looked just like a young girl.

"'There is word from Jem?' she said.

“How did she know? I hadn’t said a word at the phone except ‘Yes — yes — yes.’ She says she doesn’t know how she knew, but she did know. She was awake and she heard the ring and she knew that there was word from Jem.

“‘He’s alive — he’s well — he’s in Holland,’ I said.

“Mother came out into the hall and said, ‘I must get your father on the ‘phone and tell him. He is in the Upper Glen.’

“She was very calm and quiet — not a bit like I would have expected her to be. But then I wasn’t either. I went and woke up Gertrude and Susan and told them. Susan said ‘Thank God,’ firstly, and secondly she said ‘Did I not tell you Dog Monday knew?’ and thirdly, ‘I’ll go down and make a cup of tea’ — and she stalked down in her nightdress to make it. She did make it — and made mother and Gertrude drink it — but I went back to my room and shut my door and locked it, and I knelt by my window and cried — just as Gertrude did when her great news came.

“I think I know at last exactly what I shall feel like on the resurrection morning.”

4th October 1918

“Today Jem’s letter came. It has been in the house only six hours and it is almost read to pieces. The postmistress told everybody in the Glen it had come, and everybody came up to hear the news.

“Jem was badly wounded in the thigh — and he was picked up and taken to prison, so delirious with fever that he didn’t know what was happening to him or where he was. It was weeks before he came to his senses and was able to write. Then he did write — but it never came. He wasn’t treated at all badly at his camp — only the food was poor. He had nothing to eat but a little black bread and boiled turnips and now and then a little soup with black peas in it. And we sat down every one of those days to three good square luxurious meals! He wrote us as often as he could but he was afraid we were not getting his letters because no reply came. As soon as he was strong enough he tried to escape, but was caught and brought back; a

month later he and a comrade made another attempt and succeeded in reaching Holland.

“Jem can’t come home right away. He isn’t quite so well as his cable said, for his wound has not healed properly and he has to go into a hospital in England for further treatment. But he says he will be all right eventually, and we know he is safe and will be back home sometime, and oh, the difference it makes in everything!

“I had a letter from Jim Anderson today, too. He has married an English girl, got his discharge, and is coming right home to Canada with his bride. I don’t know whether to be glad or sorry. It will depend on what kind of a woman she is. I had a second letter also of a somewhat mysterious tenor. It is from a Charlottetown lawyer, asking me to go in to see him at my earliest convenience in regard to a certain matter connected with the estate of the ‘late Mrs. Matilda Pitman.’

“I read a notice of Mrs. Pitman’s death — from heart failure — in the Enterprise a few weeks ago. I wonder if this summons has anything to do with Jims.”

5th October 1918

“I went into town this morning and had an interview with Mrs. Pitman’s lawyer — a little thin, wispy man, who spoke of his late client with such a profound respect that it is evident that he as was much under her thumb as Robert and Amelia were. He drew up a new will for her a short time before her death. She was worth thirty thousand dollars, the bulk of which was left to Amelia Chapley. But she left five thousand to me in trust for Jims. The interest is to be used as I see fit for his education, and the principal is to be paid over to him on his twentieth birthday. Certainly Jims was born lucky. I saved him from slow extinction at the hands of Mrs. Conover — Mary Vance saved him from death by diphtheritic croup — his star saved him when he fell off the train. And he tumbled not only into a clump of bracken, but right into this nice little legacy.

“Evidently, as Mrs. Matilda Pitman said, and as I have always believed, he is no common child and he has no common destiny in store for him.

“At all events he is provided for, and in such a fashion that Jim Anderson can’t squander his inheritance if he wanted to. Now, if the new English stepmother is only a good sort I shall feel quite easy about the future of my war-baby.

“I wonder what Robert and Amelia think of it. I fancy they will nail down their windows when they leave home after this!”

CHAPTER XXXII I

VICTORY!

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“A day ‘of chilling winds and gloomy skies,’” Rilla quoted one Sunday afternoon — the sixth of October to be exact. It was so cold that they had lighted a fire in the livingroom and the merry little flames were doing their best to counteract the outside dourness. “It’s more like November than October — November is such an ugly month.”

Cousin Sophia was there, having again forgiven Susan, and Mrs. Martin Clow, who was not visiting on Sunday but had dropped in to borrow Susan’s cure for rheumatism — that being cheaper than getting one from the doctor. “I’m afeared we’re going to have an airly winter,” foreboded Cousin Sophia. “The muskrats are building awful big houses round the pond, and that’s a sign that never fails. Dear me, how that child has grown!” Cousin Sophia sighed again, as if it were an unhappy circumstance that a child should grow. “When do you expect his father?”

“Next week,” said Rilla.

“Well, I hope the stepmother won’t abuse the pore child,” sighed Cousin Sophia, “but I have my doubts — I have my doubts. Anyhow, he’ll be sure to feel the difference between his usage here and what he’ll get anywhere else. You’ve spoiled him so, Rilla, waiting on him hand and foot the way you’ve always done.”

Rilla smiled and pressed her cheek to Jims’ curls. She knew sweet-tempered, sunny, little Jims was not spoiled. Nevertheless her heart was anxious behind her smile. She, too, thought much about the new Mrs. Anderson and wondered uneasily what she would be like.

“I can’t give Jims up to a woman who won’t love him,” she thought rebelliously.

“I b’lieve it’s going to rain,” said Cousin Sophia. “We have had an awful lot of rain this fall already. It’s going to make it awful hard for people to get their roots in. It wasn’t so in my young days. We gin’rally had beautiful Octobers then. But the seasons is altogether different now from what they used to be.” Clear across Cousin Sophia’s doleful voice cut the telephone bell. Gertrude Oliver answered it. “Yes — what? What? Is it true — is it official? Thank you — thank you.”

Gertrude turned and faced the room dramatically, her dark eyes flashing, her dark face flushed with feeling. All at once the sun broke through the thick clouds and poured through the big crimson maple outside the window. Its reflected glow enveloped her in a weird immaterial flame. She looked like a priestess performing some mystic, splendid rite.

“Germany and Austria are suing for peace,” she said.

Rilla went crazy for a few minutes. She sprang up and danced around the room, clapping her hands, laughing, crying.

“Sit down, child,” said Mrs. Clow, who never got excited over anything, and so had missed a tremendous amount of trouble and delight in her journey through life.

“Oh,” cried Rilla, “I have walked the floor for hours in despair and anxiety in these past four years. Now let me walk in joy. It was worth living long dreary years for this minute, and it would be worth living them again just to look back to it. Susan, let’s run up the flag — and we must phone the news to every one in the Glen.”

“Can we have as much sugar as we want to now?” asked Jims eagerly.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon. As the news spread excited people ran about the village and dashed up to Ingleside. The Merediths came over and stayed to supper and everybody talked and nobody listened. Cousin Sophia tried to protest that Germany and Austria were not to be

trusted and it was all part of a plot, but nobody paid the least attention to her.

“This Sunday makes up for that one in March,” said Susan.

“I wonder,” said Gertrude dreamily, apart to Rilla, “if things won’t seem rather flat and insipid when peace really comes. After being fed for four years on horrors and fears, terrible reverses, amazing victories, won’t anything less be tame and uninteresting? How strange — and blessed — and dull it will be not to dread the coming of the mail every day.”

“We must dread it for a little while yet, I suppose,” said Rilla. “Peace won’t come — can’t come — for some weeks yet. And in those weeks dreadful things may happen. My excitement is over. We have won the victory — but oh, what a price we have paid!”

“Not too high a price for freedom,” said Gertrude softly. “Do you think it was, Rilla?”

“No,” said Rilla, under her breath. She was seeing a little white cross on a battlefield of France. “No — not if those of us who live will show ourselves worthy of it — if we ‘keep faith.’”

“We will keep faith,” said Gertrude. She rose suddenly. A silence fell around the table, and in the silence Gertrude repeated Walter’s famous poem “The Piper.” When she finished Mr. Meredith stood up and held up his glass. “Let us drink,” he said, “to the silent army — to the boys who followed when the Piper summoned. ‘For our tomorrow they gave their today’ — theirs is the victory!”

CHAPTER XXXI V

MR. HYDE GOES TO HIS OWN PLACE AND SUSAN TAKES A HONEYMOON

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Early in November Jims left Ingleside. Rilla saw him go with many tears but a heart free from boding. Mrs. Jim Anderson, Number Two, was such a nice little woman that one was rather inclined to wonder at the luck which bestowed her on Jim. She was rosy-faced and blue-eyed and wholesome, with the roundness and trigness of a geranium leaf. Rilla saw at first glance that she was to be trusted with Jims.

“I’m fond of children, miss,” she said heartily. “I’m used to them — I’ve left six little brothers and sisters behind me. Jims is a dear child and I must say you’ve done wonders in bringing him up so healthy and handsome. I’ll be as good to him as if he was my own, miss. And I’ll make Jim toe the line all right. He’s a good worker — all he needs is some one to keep him at it, and to take charge of his money. We’ve rented a little farm just out of the village, and we’re going to settle down there. Jim wanted to stay in England but I says ‘No.’ I hankered to try a new country and I’ve always thought Canada would suit me.”

“I’m so glad you are going to live near us. You’ll let Jims come here often, won’t you? I love him dearly.”

“No doubt you do, miss, for a lovable child I never did see. We understand, Jim and me, what you’ve done for him, and you won’t find us ungrateful. He can come here whenever you want him and I’ll always be glad of any advice from you about his bringing up. He is more your baby than anyone else’s I should say, and I’ll see that you get your fair share of him, miss.”

So Jims went away — with the soup tureen, though not in it. Then the news of the Armistice came, and even Glen St. Mary went mad. That night the village had a bonfire, and burned the Kaiser in effigy. The fishing village boys turned out and burned all the sandhills off in one grand glorious conflagration that extended for seven miles. Up at Ingleside Rilla ran laughing to her room.

“Now I’m going to do a most unladylike and inexcusable thing,” she said, as she pulled her green velvet hat out of its box. “I’m going to kick this hat about the room until it is without form and void; and I shall never as long as I live wear anything of that shade of green again.”

“You’ve certainly kept your vow pluckily,” laughed Miss Oliver.

“It wasn’t pluck — it was sheer obstinacy — I’m rather ashamed of it,” said Rilla, kicking joyously. “I wanted to show mother. It’s mean to want to show your own mother — most unfilial conduct! But I have shown her. And I’ve shown myself a few things! Oh, Miss Oliver, just for one moment I’m really feeling quite young again — young and frivolous and silly. Did I ever say November was an ugly month? Why it’s the most beautiful month in the whole year. Listen to the bells ringing in Rainbow Valley! I never heard them so clearly. They’re ringing for peace — and new happiness — and all the dear, sweet, sane, homey things that we can have again now, Miss Oliver. Not that I am sane just now — I don’t pretend to be. The whole world is having a little crazy spell today. Soon we’ll sober down — and ‘keep faith’ — and begin to build up our new world. But just for today let’s be mad and glad.”

Susan came in from the outdoor sunlight looking supremely satisfied.

“Mr. Hyde is gone,” she announced.

“Gone! Do you mean he is dead, Susan?”

“No, Mrs. Dr. dear, that beast is not dead. But you will never see him again. I feel sure of that.”

“Don’t be so mysterious, Susan. What has happened to him?”

“Well, Mrs. Dr. dear, he was sitting out on the back steps this afternoon. It was just after the news came that the Armistice had been signed and he was looking his Hydest. I can assure you he was an awesome looking beast. All at once, Mrs. Dr. dear, Bruce Meredith came around the corner of the kitchen walking on his stilts. He has been learning to walk on them lately and came over to show me how well he could do it. Mr. Hyde just took a look and one bound carried him over the yard fence. Then he went tearing through the maple grove in great leaps with his ears laid back. You never saw a creature so terrified, Mrs. Dr. dear. He has never returned.”

“Oh, he’ll come back, Susan, probably chastened in spirit by his fright.”

“We will see, Mrs. Dr. dear — we will see. Remember, the Armistice has been signed. And that reminds me that Whiskers-on-the-moon had a paralytic stroke last night. I am not saying it is a judgment on him, because I am not in the counsels of the Almighty, but one can have one’s own thoughts about it. Neither Whiskers-on-the-moon or Mr. Hyde will be much more heard of in Glen St. Mary, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that you may tie to.”

Mr. Hyde certainly was heard of no more. As it could hardly have been his fright that kept him away the Ingleside folk decided that some dark fate of shot or poison had descended on him — except Susan, who believed and continued to affirm that he had merely “gone to his own place.” Rilla lamented him, for she had been very fond of her stately golden pussy, and had liked him quite as well in his weird Hyde moods as in his tame Jekyll ones.

“And now, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, “since the fall housecleaning is over and the garden truck is all safe in cellar, I am going to take a honeymoon to celebrate the peace.”

“A honeymoon, Susan?”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, a honeymoon,” repeated Susan firmly. “I shall never be able to get a husband but I am not going to be cheated out of everything and a honeymoon I intend to have. I am going to Charlottetown to visit my married brother and his family. His wife has been ailing all the fall, but

nobody knows whether she is going to die not. She never did tell anyone what she was going to do until she did it. That is the main reason why she was never liked in our family. But to be on the safe side I feel that I should visit her. I have not been in town for over a day for twenty years and I have a feeling that I might as well see one of those moving pictures there is so much talk of, so as not to be wholly out of the swim. But have no fear that I shall be carried away with them, Mrs. Dr. dear. I shall be away a fortnight if you can spare me so long.”

“You certainly deserve a good holiday, Susan. Better take a month — that is the proper length for a honeymoon.”

“No, Mrs. Dr. dear, a fortnight is all I require. Besides, I must be home for at least three weeks before Christmas to make the proper preparations. We will have a Christmas that is a Christmas this year, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think there is any chance of our boys being home for it?”

“No, I think not, Susan. Both Jem and Shirley write that they don’t expect to be home before spring — it may be even midsummer before Shirley comes. But Carl Meredith will be home, and Nan and Di, and we will have a grand celebration once more. We’ll set chairs for all, Susan, as you did our first war Christmas — yes, for all — for my dear lad whose chair must always be vacant, as well as for the others, Susan.”

“It is not likely I would forget to set his place, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, wiping her eyes as she departed to pack up for her “honeymoon.”

CHAPTER XXX V

“RILLA-MY-RILLA!”

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Carl Meredith and Miller Douglas came home just before Christmas and Glen St. Mary met them at the station with a brass band borrowed from Lowbridge and speeches of home manufacture. Miller was brisk and beaming in spite of his wooden leg; he had developed into a broad-shouldered, imposing looking fellow and the D. C. Medal he wore reconciled Miss Cornelia to the shortcomings of his pedigree to such a degree that she tacitly recognized his engagement to Mary.

The latter put on a few airs — especially when Carter Flagg took Miller into his store as head clerk — but nobody grudged them to her.

“Of course farming’s out of the question for us now,” she told Rilla, “but Miller thinks he’ll like storekeeping fine once he gets used to a quiet life again, and Carter Flagg will be a more agreeable boss than old Kitty. We’re going to be married in the fall and live in the old Mead house with the bay windows and the mansard roof. I’ve always thought that the handsomest house in the Glen, but never did I dream I’d ever live there. We’re only renting it, of course, but if things go as we expect and Carter Flagg takes Miller into partnership we’ll own it some day. Say, I’ve got on some in society, haven’t I, considering what I come from? I never aspired to being a storekeeper’s wife. But Miller’s real ambitious and he’ll have a wife that’ll back him up. He says he never saw a French girl worth looking at twice and that his heart beat true to me every moment he was away.”

Jerry Meredith and Joe Milgrave came back in January, and all winter the boys from the Glen and its environs came home by twos and threes. None of them came back just as they went away, not even those who had been so fortunate as to escape injury.

One spring day, when the daffodils were blowing on the Ingleside lawn, and the banks of the brook in Rainbow Valley were sweet with white and purple violets, the little, lazy afternoon accommodation train pulled into the Glen station. It was very seldom that passengers for the Glen came by that train, so nobody was there to meet it except the new station agent and a small black-and-yellow dog, who for four and a half years had met every train that had steamed into Glen St. Mary. Thousands of trains had Dog Monday met and never had the boy he waited and watched for returned. Yet still Dog Monday watched on with eyes that never quite lost hope. Perhaps his dog-heart failed him at times; he was growing old and rheumatic; when he walked back to his kennel after each train had gone his gait was very sober now — he never trotted but went slowly with a drooping head and a depressed tail that had quite lost its old saucy uplift.

One passenger stepped off the train — a tall fellow in a faded lieutenant's uniform, who walked with a barely perceptible limp. He had a bronzed face and there were some grey hairs in the ruddy curls that clustered around his forehead. The new station agent looked at him anxiously. He was used to seeing the khaki-clad figures come off the train, some met by a tumultuous crowd, others, who had sent no word of their coming, stepping off quietly like this one. But there was a certain distinction of bearing and features in this soldier that caught his attention and made him wonder a little more interestedly who he was.

A black-and-yellow streak shot past the station agent. Dog Monday stiff? Dog Monday rheumatic? Dog Monday old? Never believe it. Dog Monday was a young pup, gone clean mad with rejuvenating joy.

He flung himself against the tall soldier, with a bark that choked in his throat from sheer rapture. He flung himself on the ground and writhed in a frenzy of welcome. He tried to climb the soldier's khaki legs and slipped down and groveled in an ecstasy that seemed as if it must tear his little body in pieces. He licked his boots and when the lieutenant had, with laughter on his lips and tears in his eyes, succeeded in gathering the little creature up in his arms Dog Monday laid his head on the khaki shoulder and licked the sunburned neck, making queer sounds between barks and sobs.

The station agent had heard the story of Dog Monday. He knew now who the returned soldier was. Dog Monday's long vigil was ended. Jem Blythe had come home.

"We are all very happy — and sad — and thankful," wrote Rilla in her diary a week later, "though Susan has not yet recovered — never will recover, I believe — from the shock of having Jem come home the very night she had, owing to a strenuous day, prepared a 'pick up' supper. I shall never forget the sight of her, tearing madly about from pantry to cellar, hunting out stored away goodies. Just as if anybody cared what was on the table — none of us could eat, anyway. It was meat and drink just to look at Jem. Mother seemed afraid to take her eyes off him lest he vanish out of her sight. It is wonderful to have Jem back — and little Dog Monday. Monday refuses to be separated from Jem for a moment. He sleeps on the foot of his bed and squats beside him at meal-times. And on Sunday he went to church with him and insisted on going right into our pew, where he went to sleep on Jem's feet. In the middle of the sermon he woke up and seemed to think he must welcome Jem all over again, for he bounded up with a series of barks and wouldn't quiet down until Jem took him up in his arms. But nobody seemed to mind, and Mr. Meredith came and patted his head after the service and said, "'Faith and affection and loyalty are precious things wherever they are found. That little dog's love is a treasure, Jem.'"

"One night when Jem and I were talking things over in Rainbow Valley, I asked him if he had ever felt afraid at the front.

"Jem laughed.

"'Afraid! I was afraid scores of times — sick with fear — I who used to laugh at Walter when he was frightened. Do you know, Walter was never frightened after he got to the front. Realities never scared him — only his imagination could do that. His colonel told me that Walter was the bravest man in the regiment. Rilla, I never realized that Walter was dead till I came back home. You don't know how I miss him now — you folks here have got used to it in a sense — but it's all fresh to me. Walter and I grew up together — we were chums as well as brothers — and now here, in this

old valley we loved when we were children, it has come home to me that I'm not to see him again.'

"Jem is going back to college in the fall and so are Jerry and Carl. I suppose Shirley will, too. He expects to be home in July. Nan and Di will go on teaching. Faith doesn't expect to be home before September. I suppose she will teach then too, for she and Jem can't be married until he gets through his course in medicine. Una Meredith has decided, I think, to take a course in Household Science at Kingsport — and Gertrude is to be married to her Major and is frankly happy about it—'shamelessly happy' she says; but I think her attitude is very beautiful. They are all talking of their plans and hopes — more soberly than they used to do long ago, but still with interest, and a determination to carry on and make good in spite of lost years.

"'We're in a new world,' Jem says, 'and we've got to make it a better one than the old. That isn't done yet, though some folks seem to think it ought to be. The job isn't finished — it isn't really begun. The old world is destroyed and we must build up the new one. It will be the task of years. I've seen enough of war to realize that we've got to make a world where wars can't happen. We've given Prussianism its mortal wound but it isn't dead yet and it isn't confined to Germany either. It isn't enough to drive out the old spirit — we've got to bring in the new.'

"I'm writing down those words of Jem's in my diary so that I can read them over occasionally and get courage from them, when moods come when I find it not so easy to 'keep faith.'"

Rilla closed her journal with a little sigh. Just then she was not finding it easy to keep faith. All the rest seemed to have some special aim or ambition about which to build up their lives — she had none. And she was very lonely, horribly lonely. Jem had come back — but he was not the laughing boy-brother who had gone away in 1914 and he belonged to Faith. Walter would never come back. She had not even Jims left. All at once her world seemed wide and empty — that is, it had seemed wide and empty from the moment yesterday when she had read in a Montreal paper a fortnight-old list of returned soldiers in which was the name of Captain Kenneth Ford.

So Ken was home — and he had not even written her that he was coming. He had been in Canada two weeks and she had not had a line from him. Of course he had forgotten — if there was ever anything to forget — a handclasp — a kiss — a look — a promise asked under the influence of a passing emotion. It was all absurd — she had been a silly, romantic, inexperienced goose. Well, she would be wiser in the future — very wise — and very discreet — and very contemptuous of men and their ways.

“I suppose I’d better go with Una and take up Household Science too,” she thought, as she stood by her window and looked down through a delicate emerald tangle of young vines on Rainbow Valley, lying in a wonderful lilac light of sunset. There did not seem anything very attractive just then about Household Science, but, with a whole new world waiting to be built, a girl must do something.

The door bell rang, Rilla turned reluctantly stairwards. She must answer it — there was no one else in the house; but she hated the idea of callers just then. She went downstairs slowly, and opened the front door.

A man in khaki was standing on the steps — a tall fellow, with dark eyes and hair, and a narrow white scar running across his brown cheek. Rilla stared at him foolishly for a moment. Who was it?

She ought to know him — there was certainly something very familiar about him—”Rilla-my-Rilla,” he said.

“Ken,” gasped Rilla. Of course, it was Ken — but he looked so much older — he was so much changed — that scar — the lines about his eyes and lips — her thoughts went whirling helplessly.

Ken took the uncertain hand she held out, and looked at her. The slim Rilla of four years ago had rounded out into symmetry. He had left a school girl, and he found a woman — a woman with wonderful eyes and a dented lip, and rose-bloom cheek — a woman altogether beautiful and desirable — the woman of his dreams.

“Is it Rilla-my-Rilla?” he asked, meaningly.

Emotion shook Rilla from head to foot. Joy — happiness — sorrow — fear — every passion that had wrung her heart in those four long years seemed to surge up in her soul for a moment as the deeps of being were stirred. She had tried to speak; at first voice would not come. Then — "Yeth," said Rilla.

THE END

THE STORY GIRL (1911)

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“She was a form of life and light
That seen, became a part of sight,

And rose, where'er I turn'd mine eye,
The morning-star of Memory!" — Byron.

TO MY COUSIN

Frederica E. Campbell

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OLD DAYS, OLD DREAMS, AND OLD
LAUGHTER

CHAPTER I.

THE HOME OF OUR FATHERS

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“I do like a road, because you can be always wondering what is at the end of it.”

The Story Girl said that once upon a time. Felix and I, on the May morning when we left Toronto for Prince Edward Island, had not then heard her say it, and, indeed, were but barely aware of the existence of such a person as the Story Girl. We did not know her at all under that name. We knew only that a cousin, Sara Stanley, whose mother, our Aunt Felicity, was dead, was living down on the Island with Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia King, on a farm adjoining the old King homestead in Carlisle. We supposed we should get acquainted with her when we reached there, and we had an idea, from Aunt Olivia's letters to father, that she would be quite a jolly creature. Further than that we did not think about her. We were more interested in Felicity and Cecily and Dan, who lived on the homestead and would therefore be our roofmates for a season.

But the spirit of the Story Girl's yet unuttered remark was thrilling in our hearts that morning, as the train pulled out of Toronto. We were faring forth on a long road; and, though we had some idea what would be at the end of it, there was enough glamour of the unknown about it to lend a wonderful charm to our speculations concerning it.

We were delighted at the thought of seeing father's old home, and living among the haunts of his boyhood. He had talked so much to us about it, and described its scenes so often and so minutely, that he had inspired us with some of his own deep-seated affection for it — an affection that had never waned in all his years of exile. We had a vague feeling that we, somehow, belonged there, in that cradle of our family, though we had never seen it. We had always looked forward eagerly to the promised day

when father would take us “down home,” to the old house with the spruces behind it and the famous “King orchard” before it — when we might ramble in “Uncle Stephen’s Walk,” drink from the deep well with the Chinese roof over it, stand on “the Pulpit Stone,” and eat apples from our “birthday trees.”

The time had come sooner than we had dared to hope; but father could not take us after all. His firm asked him to go to Rio de Janeiro that spring to take charge of their new branch there. It was too good a chance to lose, for father was a poor man and it meant promotion and increase of salary; but it also meant the temporary breaking up of our home. Our mother had died before either of us was old enough to remember her; father could not take us to Rio de Janeiro. In the end he decided to send us to Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet down on the homestead; and our housekeeper, who belonged to the Island and was now returning to it, took charge of us on the journey. I fear she had an anxious trip of it, poor woman! She was constantly in a quite justifiable terror lest we should be lost or killed; she must have felt great relief when she reached Charlottetown and handed us over to the keeping of Uncle Alec. Indeed, she said as much.

“The fat one isn’t so bad. He isn’t so quick to move and get out of your sight while you’re winking as the thin one. But the only safe way to travel with those young ones would be to have ‘em both tied to you with a short rope — a MIGHTY short rope.”

“The fat one” was Felix, who was very sensitive about his plumpness. He was always taking exercises to make him thin, with the dismal result that he became fatter all the time. He vowed that he didn’t care; but he DID care terribly, and he glowered at Mrs. MacLaren in a most undutiful fashion. He had never liked her since the day she had told him he would soon be as broad as he was long.

For my own part, I was rather sorry to see her going; and she cried over us and wished us well; but we had forgotten all about her by the time we reached the open country, driving along, one on either side of Uncle Alec, whom we loved from the moment we saw him. He was a small man, with thin, delicate features, close-clipped gray beard, and large, tired, blue eyes — father’s eyes over again. We knew that Uncle Alec was fond of children

and was heart-glad to welcome “Alan’s boys.” We felt at home with him, and were not afraid to ask him questions on any subject that came uppermost in our minds. We became very good friends with him on that twenty-four mile drive.

Much to our disappointment it was dark when we reached Carlisle — too dark to see anything very distinctly, as we drove up the lane of the old King homestead on the hill. Behind us a young moon was hanging over southwestern meadows of springtime peace, but all about us were the soft, moist shadows of a May night. We peered eagerly through the gloom.

“There’s the big willow, Bev,” whispered Felix excitedly, as we turned in at the gate.

There it was, in truth — the tree Grandfather King had planted when he returned one evening from ploughing in the brook field and stuck the willow switch he had used all day in the soft soil by the gate.

It had taken root and grown; our father and our uncles and aunts had played in its shadow; and now it was a massive thing, with a huge girth of trunk and great spreading boughs, each of them as large as a tree in itself.

“I’m going to climb it tomorrow,” I said joyfully.

Off to the right was a dim, branching place which we knew was the orchard; and on our left, among sibilant spruces and firs, was the old, whitewashed house — from which presently a light gleamed through an open door, and Aunt Janet, a big, bustling, sonsy woman, with full-blown peony cheeks, came to welcome us.

Soon after we were at supper in the kitchen, with its low, dark, raftered ceiling from which substantial hams and flitches of bacon were hanging. Everything was just as father had described it. We felt that we had come home, leaving exile behind us.

Felicity, Cecily, and Dan were sitting opposite us, staring at us when they thought we would be too busy eating to see them. We tried to stare at them

when THEY were eating; and as a result we were always catching each other at it and feeling cheap and embarrassed.

Dan was the oldest; he was my age — thirteen. He was a lean, freckled fellow with rather long, lank, brown hair and the shapely King nose. We recognized it at once. His mouth was his own, however, for it was like to no mouth on either the King or the Ward side; and nobody would have been anxious to claim it, for it was an undeniably ugly one — long and narrow and twisted. But it could grin in friendly fashion, and both Felix and I felt that we were going to like Dan.

Felicity was twelve. She had been called after Aunt Felicity, who was the twin sister of Uncle Felix. Aunt Felicity and Uncle Felix, as father had often told us, had died on the same day, far apart, and were buried side by side in the old Carlisle graveyard.

We had known from Aunt Olivia's letters, that Felicity was the beauty of the connection, and we had been curious to see her on that account. She fully justified our expectations. She was plump and dimpled, with big, dark-blue, heavy-lidded eyes, soft, feathery, golden curls, and a pink and white skin—"the King complexion." The Kings were noted for their noses and complexion. Felicity had also delightful hands and wrists. At every turn of them a dimple showed itself. It was a pleasure to wonder what her elbows must be like.

She was very nicely dressed in a pink print and a frilled muslin apron; and we understood, from something Dan said, that she had "dressed up" in honour of our coming. This made us feel quite important. So far as we knew, no feminine creatures had ever gone to the pains of dressing up on our account before.

Cecily, who was eleven, was pretty also — or would have been had Felicity not been there. Felicity rather took the colour from other girls. Cecily looked pale and thin beside her; but she had dainty little features, smooth brown hair of satin sheen, and mild brown eyes, with just a hint of demureness in them now and again. We remembered that Aunt Olivia had written to father that Cecily was a true Ward — she had no sense of

humour. We did not know what this meant, but we thought it was not exactly complimentary.

Still, we were both inclined to think we would like Cecily better than Felicity. To be sure, Felicity was a stunning beauty. But, with the swift and unerring intuition of childhood, which feels in a moment what it sometimes takes maturity much time to perceive, we realized that she was rather too well aware of her good looks. In brief, we saw that Felicity was vain.

“It’s a wonder the Story Girl isn’t over to see you,” said Uncle Alec. “She’s been quite wild with excitement about your coming.”

“She hasn’t been very well all day,” explained Cecily, “and Aunt Olivia wouldn’t let her come out in the night air. She made her go to bed instead. The Story Girl was awfully disappointed.”

“Who is the Story Girl?” asked Felix.

“Oh, Sara — Sara Stanley. We call her the Story Girl partly because she’s such a hand to tell stories — oh, I can’t begin to describe it — and partly because Sara Ray, who lives at the foot of the hill, often comes up to play with us, and it is awkward to have two girls of the same name in the same crowd. Besides, Sara Stanley doesn’t like her name and she’d rather be called the Story Girl.”

Dan speaking for the first time, rather sheepishly volunteered the information that Peter had also been intending to come over but had to go home to take some flour to his mother instead.

“Peter?” I questioned. I had never heard of any Peter.

“He is your Uncle Roger’s handy boy,” said Uncle Alec. “His name is Peter Craig, and he is a real smart little chap. But he’s got his share of mischief, that same lad.”

“He wants to be Felicity’s beau,” said Dan slyly.

“Don’t talk silly nonsense, Dan,” said Aunt Janet severely.

Felicity tossed her golden head and shot an unsisterly glance at Dan.

“I wouldn’t be very likely to have a hired boy for a beau,” she observed.

We saw that her anger was real, not affected. Evidently Peter was not an admirer of whom Felicity was proud.

We were very hungry boys; and when we had eaten all we could — and oh, what suppers Aunt Janet always spread! — we discovered that we were very tired also — too tired to go out and explore our ancestral domains, as we would have liked to do, despite the dark.

We were quite willing to go to bed; and presently we found ourselves tucked away upstairs in the very room, looking out eastward into the spruce grove, which father had once occupied. Dan shared it with us, sleeping in a bed of his own in the opposite corner. The sheets and pillowslips were fragrant with lavender, and one of Grandmother King’s noted patchwork quilts was over us. The window was open and we heard the frogs singing down in the swamp of the brook meadow. We had heard frogs sing in Ontario, of course; but certainly Prince Edward Island frogs were more tuneful and mellow. Or was it simply the glamour of old family traditions and tales which was over us, lending its magic to all sights and sounds around us? This was home — father’s home — OUR home! We had never lived long enough in any one house to develop a feeling of affection for it; but here, under the roof-tree built by Great-Grandfather King ninety years ago, that feeling swept into our boyish hearts and souls like a flood of living sweetness and tenderness.

“Just think, those are the very frogs father listened to when he was a little boy,” whispered Felix.

“They can hardly be the SAME frogs,” I objected doubtfully, not feeling very certain about the possible longevity of frogs. “It’s twenty years since father left home.”

“Well, they’re the descendants of the frogs he heard,” said Felix, “and they’re singing in the same swamp. That’s near enough.”

Our door was open and in their room across the narrow hall the girls were preparing for bed, and talking rather more loudly than they might have done had they realized how far their sweet, shrill voices carried.

“What do you think of the boys?” asked Cecily.

“Beverley is handsome, but Felix is too fat,” answered Felicity promptly.

Felix twitched the quilt rather viciously and grunted. But I began to think I would like Felicity. It might not be altogether her fault that she was vain. How could she help it when she looked in the mirror?

“I think they’re both nice and nice looking,” said Cecily.

Dear little soul!

“I wonder what the Story Girl will think of them,” said Felicity, as if, after all, that was the main thing.

Somehow, we, too, felt that it was. We felt that if the Story Girl did not approve of us it made little difference who else did or did not.

“I wonder if the Story Girl is pretty,” said Felix aloud.

“No, she isn’t,” said Dan instantly, from across the room. “But you’ll think she is while she’s talking to you. Everybody does. It’s only when you go away from her that you find out she isn’t a bit pretty after all.”

The girls’ door shut with a bang. Silence fell over the house. We drifted into the land of sleep, wondering if the Story Girl would like us.

CHAPTER II.

A QUEEN OF HEARTS

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I wakened shortly after sunrise. The pale May sunshine was showering through the spruces, and a chill, inspiring wind was tossing the boughs about.

“Felix, wake up,” I whispered, shaking him.

“What’s the matter?” he murmured reluctantly.

“It’s morning. Let’s get up and go down and out. I can’t wait another minute to see the places father has told us of.”

We slipped out of bed and dressed, without arousing Dan, who was still slumbering soundly, his mouth wide open, and his bedclothes kicked off on the floor. I had hard work to keep Felix from trying to see if he could “shy” a marble into that tempting open mouth. I told him it would waken Dan, who would then likely insist on getting up and accompanying us, and it would be so much nicer to go by ourselves for the first time.

Everything was very still as we crept downstairs. Out in the kitchen we heard some one, presumably Uncle Alec, lighting the fire; but the heart of house had not yet begun to beat for the day.

We paused a moment in the hall to look at the big “Grandfather” clock. It was not going, but it seemed like an old, familiar acquaintance to us, with the gilt balls on its three peaks; the little dial and pointer which would indicate the changes of the moon, and the very dent in its wooden door which father had made when he was a boy, by kicking it in a fit of naughtiness.

Then we opened the front door and stepped out, rapture swelling in our bosoms. There was a rare breeze from the south blowing to meet us; the shadows of the spruces were long and clear-cut; the exquisite skies of early morning, blue and wind-winnowed, were over us; away to the west, beyond the brook field, was a long valley and a hill purple with firs and laced with still leafless beeches and maples.

Behind the house was a grove of fir and spruce, a dim, cool place where the winds were fond of purring and where there was always a resinous, woodsy odour. On the further side of it was a thick plantation of slender silver birches and whispering poplars; and beyond it was Uncle Roger's house.

Right before us, girt about with its trim spruce hedge, was the famous King orchard, the history of which was woven into our earliest recollections. We knew all about it, from father's descriptions, and in fancy we had roamed in it many a time and oft.

It was now nearly sixty years since it had had its beginning, when Grandfather King brought his bride home. Before the wedding he had fenced off the big south meadow that sloped to the sun; it was the finest, most fertile field on the farm, and the neighbours told young Abraham King that he would raise many a fine crop of wheat in that meadow. Abraham King smiled and, being a man of few words, said nothing; but in his mind he had a vision of the years to be, and in that vision he saw, not rippling acres of harvest gold, but great, leafy avenues of widespreading trees laden with fruit to gladden the eyes of children and grandchildren yet unborn.

It was a vision to develop slowly into fulfilment. Grandfather King was in no hurry. He did not set his whole orchard out at once, for he wished it to grow with his life and history, and be bound up with all of good and joy that should come to his household. So the morning after he had brought his young wife home they went together to the south meadow and planted their bridal trees. These trees were no longer living; but they had been when father was a boy, and every spring bedecked themselves in blossom as delicately tinted as Elizabeth King's face when she walked through the old south meadow in the morn of her life and love.

When a son was born to Abraham and Elizabeth a tree was planted in the orchard for him. They had fourteen children in all, and each child had its “birth tree.” Every family festival was commemorated in like fashion, and every beloved visitor who spent a night under their roof was expected to plant a tree in the orchard. So it came to pass that every tree in it was a fair green monument to some love or delight of the vanished years. And each grandchild had its tree, there, also, set out by grandfather when the tidings of its birth reached him; not always an apple tree — perhaps it was a plum, or cherry or pear. But it was always known by the name of the person for whom, or by whom, it was planted; and Felix and I knew as much about “Aunt Felicity’s pears,” and “Aunt Julia’s cherries,” and “Uncle Alec’s apples,” and the “Rev. Mr. Scott’s plums,” as if we had been born and bred among them.

And now we had come to the orchard; it was before us; we had only to open that little whitewashed gate in the hedge and we might find ourselves in its storied domain. But before we reached the gate we glanced to our left, along the grassy, spruce-bordered lane which led over to Uncle Roger’s; and at the entrance of that lane we saw a girl standing, with a gray cat at her feet. She lifted her hand and beckoned blithely to us; and, the orchard forgotten, we followed her summons. For we knew that this must be the Story Girl; and in that gay and graceful gesture was an allurement not to be gainsaid or denied.

We looked at her as we drew near with such interest that we forgot to feel shy. No, she was not pretty. She was tall for her fourteen years, slim and straight; around her long, white face — rather too long and too white — fell sleek, dark-brown curls, tied above either ear with rosettes of scarlet ribbon. Her large, curving mouth was as red as a poppy, and she had brilliant, almond-shaped, hazel eyes; but we did not think her pretty.

Then she spoke; she said,

“Good morning.”

Never had we heard a voice like hers. Never, in all my life since, have I heard such a voice. I cannot describe it. I might say it was clear; I might say it was sweet; I might say it was vibrant and far-reaching and bell-like;

all this would be true, but it would give you no real idea of the peculiar quality which made the Story Girl's voice what it was.

If voices had colour, hers would have been like a rainbow. It made words LIVE. Whatever she said became a breathing entity, not a mere verbal statement or utterance. Felix and I were too young to understand or analyze the impression it made upon us; but we instantly felt at her greeting that it WAS a good morning — a surpassingly good morning — the very best morning that had ever happened in this most excellent of worlds.

"You are Felix and Beverley," she went on, shaking our hands with an air of frank comradeship, which was very different from the shy, feminine advances of Felicity and Cecily. From that moment we were as good friends as if we had known each other for a hundred years. "I am glad to see you. I was so disappointed I couldn't go over last night. I got up early this morning, though, for I felt sure you would be up early, too, and that you'd like to have me tell you about things. I can tell things so much better than Felicity or Cecily. Do you think Felicity is VERY pretty?"

"She's the prettiest girl I ever saw," I said enthusiastically, remembering that Felicity had called me handsome.

"The boys all think so," said the Story Girl, not, I fancied, quite well pleased. "And I suppose she is. She is a splendid cook, too, though she is only twelve. I can't cook. I am trying to learn, but I don't make much progress. Aunt Olivia says I haven't enough natural gumption ever to be a cook; but I'd love to be able to make as good cakes and pies as Felicity can make. But then, Felicity is stupid. It's not ill-natured of me to say that. It's just the truth, and you'd soon find it out for yourselves. I like Felicity very well, but she IS stupid. Cecily is ever so much cleverer. Cecily's a dear. So is Uncle Alec; and Aunt Janet is pretty nice, too."

"What is Aunt Olivia like?" asked Felix.

"Aunt Olivia is very pretty. She is just like a pansy — all velvety and purply and goldy."

Felix and I SAW, somewhere inside of our heads, a velvet and purple and gold pansy-woman, just as the Story Girl spoke.

“But is she NICE?” I asked. That was the main question about grownups. Their looks mattered little to us.

“She is lovely. But she is twenty-nine, you know. That’s pretty old. She doesn’t bother me much. Aunt Janet says that I’d have no bringing up at all, if it wasn’t for her. Aunt Olivia says children should just be let COME up — that everything else is settled for them long before they are born. I don’t understand that. Do you?”

No, we did not. But it was our experience that grownups had a habit of saying things hard to understand.

“What is Uncle Roger like?” was our next question.

“Well, I like Uncle Roger,” said the Story Girl meditatively. “He is big and jolly. But he teases people too much. You ask him a serious question and you get a ridiculous answer. He hardly ever scolds or gets cross, though, and THAT is something. He is an old bachelor.”

“Doesn’t he ever mean to get married?” asked Felix.

“I don’t know. Aunt Olivia wishes he would, because she’s tired keeping house for him, and she wants to go to Aunt Julia in California. But she says he’ll never get married, because he is looking for perfection, and when he finds her she won’t have HIM.”

By this time we were all sitting down on the gnarled roots of the spruces, and the big gray cat came over and made friends with us. He was a lordly animal, with a silver-gray coat beautifully marked with darker stripes. With such colouring most cats would have had white or silver feet; but he had four black paws and a black nose. Such points gave him an air of distinction, and marked him out as quite different from the common or garden variety of cats. He seemed to be a cat with a tolerably good opinion of himself, and his response to our advances was slightly tinged with condescension.

“This isn’t Topsy, is it?” I asked. I knew at once that the question was a foolish one. Topsy, the cat of which father had talked, had flourished thirty years before, and all her nine lives could scarcely have lasted so long.

“No, but it is Topsy’s great-great-great-great-grandson,” said the Story Girl gravely. “His name is Paddy and he is my own particular cat. We have barn cats, but Paddy never associates with them. I am very good friends with all cats. They are so sleek and comfortable and dignified. And it is so easy to make them happy. Oh, I’m so glad you boys have come to live here. Nothing ever happens here, except days, so we have to make our own good times. We were short of boys before — only Dan and Peter to four girls.”

“FOUR girls? Oh, yes, Sara Ray. Felicity mentioned her. What is she like? Where does she live?”

“Just down the hill. You can’t see the house for the spruce bush. Sara is a nice girl. She’s only eleven, and her mother is dreadfully strict. She never allows Sara to read a single story. JUST you fancy! Sara’s conscience is always troubling her for doing things she’s sure her mother won’t approve, but it never prevents her from doing them. It only spoils her fun. Uncle Roger says that a mother who won’t let you do anything, and a conscience that won’t let you enjoy anything is an awful combination, and he doesn’t wonder Sara is pale and thin and nervous. But, between you and me, I believe the real reason is that her mother doesn’t give her half enough to eat. Not that she’s mean, you know — but she thinks it isn’t healthy for children to eat much, or anything but certain things. Isn’t it fortunate we weren’t born into that sort of a family?”

“I think it’s awfully lucky we were all born into the same family,” Felix remarked.

“Isn’t it? I’ve often thought so. And I’ve often thought what a dreadful thing it would have been if Grandfather and Grandmother King had never got married to each other. I don’t suppose there would have been a single one of us children here at all; or if we were, we would be part somebody else and that would be almost as bad. When I think it all over I can’t feel too thankful that Grandfather and Grandmother King happened to marry

each other, when there were so many other people they might have married.”

Felix and I shivered. We felt suddenly that we had escaped a dreadful danger — the danger of having been born somebody else. But it took the Story Girl to make us realize just how dreadful it was and what a terrible risk we had run years before we, or our parents either, had existed.

“Who lives over there?” I asked, pointing to a house across the fields.

“Oh, that belongs to the Awkward Man. His name is Jasper Dale, but everybody calls him the Awkward Man. And they do say he writes poetry. He calls his place Golden Milestone. I know why, because I’ve read Longfellow’s poems. He never goes into society because he is so awkward. The girls laugh at him and he doesn’t like it. I know a story about him and I’ll tell it to you sometime.”

“And who lives in that other house?” asked Felix, looking over the westering valley where a little gray roof was visible among the trees.

“Old Peg Bowen. She’s very queer. She lives there with a lot of pet animals in winter, and in summer she roams over the country and begs her meals. They say she is crazy. People have always tried to frighten us children into good behaviour by telling us that Peg Bowen would catch us if we didn’t behave. I’m not so frightened of her as I once was, but I don’t think I would like to be caught by her. Sara Ray is dreadfully scared of her. Peter Craig says she is a witch and that he bets she’s at the bottom of it when the butter won’t come. But I don’t believe THAT. Witches are so scarce nowadays. There may be some somewhere in the world, but it’s not likely there are any here right in Prince Edward Island. They used to be very plenty long ago. I know some splendid witch stories I’ll tell you some day. They’ll just make your blood freeze in your veins.”

We hadn’t a doubt of it. If anybody could freeze the blood in our veins this girl with the wonderful voice could. But it was a May morning, and our young blood was running blithely in our veins. We suggested a visit to the orchard would be more agreeable.

“All right. I know stories about it, too,” she said, as we walked across the yard, followed by Paddy of the waving tail. “Oh, aren’t you glad it is spring? The beauty of winter is that it makes you appreciate spring.”

The latch of the gate clicked under the Story Girl’s hand, and the next moment we were in the King orchard.

CHAPTER III.

LEGENDS OF THE OLD ORCHARD

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Outside of the orchard the grass was only beginning to grow green; but here, sheltered by the spruce hedges from uncertain winds and sloping to southern suns, it was already like a wonderful velvet carpet; the leaves on the trees were beginning to come out in woolly, grayish clusters; and there were purple-pencilled white violets at the base of the Pulpit Stone.

“It’s all just as father described it,” said Felix with a blissful sigh, “and there’s the well with the Chinese roof.”

We hurried over to it, treading on the spears of mint that were beginning to shoot up about it. It was a very deep well, and the curb was of rough, undressed stones. Over it, the queer, pagoda-like roof, built by Uncle Stephen on his return from a voyage to China, was covered with yet leafless vines.

“It’s so pretty, when the vines leaf out and hang down in long festoons,” said the Story Girl. “The birds build their nests in it. A pair of wild canaries come here every summer. And ferns grow out between the stones of the well as far down as you can see. The water is lovely. Uncle Edward preached his finest sermon about the Bethlehem well where David’s soldiers went to get him water, and he illustrated it by describing his old well at the homestead — this very well — and how in foreign lands he had longed for its sparkling water. So you see it is quite famous.”

“There’s a cup just like the one that used to be here in father’s time,” exclaimed Felix, pointing to an old-fashioned shallow cup of clouded blue ware on a little shelf inside the curb.

“It is the very same cup,” said the Story Girl impressively. “Isn’t it an amazing thing? That cup has been here for forty years, and hundreds of people have drunk from it, and it has never been broken. Aunt Julia dropped it down the well once, but they fished it up, not hurt a bit except for that little nick in the rim. I think it is bound up with the fortunes of the King family, like the Luck of Edenhall in Longfellow’s poem. It is the last cup of Grandmother King’s second best set. Her best set is still complete. Aunt Olivia has it. You must get her to show it to you. It’s so pretty, with red berries all over it, and the funniest little pot-bellied cream jug. Aunt Olivia never uses it except on a family anniversary.”

We took a drink from the blue cup and then went to find our birthday trees. We were rather disappointed to find them quite large, sturdy ones. It seemed to us that they should still be in the sapling stage corresponding to our boyhood.

“Your apples are lovely to eat,” the Story Girl said to me, “but Felix’s are only good for pies. Those two big trees behind them are the twins’ trees — my mother and Uncle Felix, you know. The apples are so dead sweet that nobody but us children and the French boys can eat them. And that tall, slender tree over there, with the branches all growing straight up, is a seedling that came up of itself, and NOBODY can eat its apples, they are so sour and bitter. Even the pigs won’t eat them. Aunt Janet tried to make pies of them once, because she said she hated to see them going to waste. But she never tried again. She said it was better to waste apples alone than apples and sugar too. And then she tried giving them away to the French hired men, but they wouldn’t even carry them home.”

The Story Girl’s words fell on the morning air like pearls and diamonds. Even her prepositions and conjunctions had untold charm, hinting at mystery and laughter and magic bound up in everything she mentioned. Apple pies and sour seedlings and pigs became straightway invested with a glamour of romance.

“I like to hear you talk,” said Felix in his grave, stodgy way.

“Everybody does,” said the Story Girl coolly. “I’m glad you like the way I talk. But I want you to like ME, too — AS WELL as you like Felicity and

Cecily. Not BETTER. I wanted that once but I've got over it. I found out in Sunday School, the day the minister taught our class, that it was selfish. But I want you to like me AS WELL."

"Well, I will, for one," said Felix emphatically. I think he was remembering that Felicity had called him fat.

Cecily now joined us. It appeared that it was Felicity's morning to help prepare breakfast, therefore she could not come. We all went to Uncle Stephen's Walk.

This was a double row of apple trees, running down the western side of the orchard. Uncle Stephen was the first born of Abraham and Elizabeth King. He had none of grandfather's abiding love for woods and meadows and the kindly ways of the warm red earth. Grandmother King had been a Ward, and in Uncle Stephen the blood of the seafaring race claimed its own. To sea he must go, despite the pleadings and tears of a reluctant mother; and it was from the sea he came to set out his avenue in the orchard with trees brought from a foreign land.

Then he sailed away again — and the ship was never heard of more. The gray first came in grandmother's brown hair in those months of waiting. The, for the first time, the orchard heard the sound of weeping and was consecrated by a sorrow.

"When the blossoms come out it's wonderful to walk here," said the Story Girl. "It's like a dream of fairyland — as if you were walking in a king's palace. The apples are delicious, and in winter it's a splendid place for coasting."

From the Walk we went to the Pulpit Stone — a huge gray boulder, as high as a man's head, in the southeastern corner. It was straight and smooth in front, but sloped down in natural steps behind, with a ledge midway on which one could stand. It had played an important part in the games of our uncles and aunts, being fortified castle, Indian ambush, throne, pulpit, or concert platform, as occasion required. Uncle Edward had preached his first sermon at the age of eight from that old gray boulder; and Aunt Julia, whose voice was to delight thousands, sang her earliest madrigals there.

The Story Girl mounted to the ledge, sat on the rim, and looked at us. Pat sat gravely at its base and daintily washed his face with his black paws.

“Now for your stories about the orchard,” said I.

“There are two important ones,” said the Story Girl. “The story of the Poet Who Was Kissed, and the Tale of the Family Ghost. Which one shall I tell?”

“Tell them both,” said Felix greedily, “but tell the ghost one first.”

“I don’t know.” The Story Girl looked dubious. “That sort of story ought to be told in the twilight among the shadows. Then it would frighten the souls out of your bodies.”

We thought it might be more agreeable not to have the souls frightened out of our bodies, and we voted for the Family Ghost.

“Ghost stories are more comfortable in daytime,” said Felix.

The Story Girl began it and we listened avidly. Cecily, who had heard it many times before, listened just as eagerly as we did. She declared to me afterwards that no matter how often the Story Girl told a story it always seemed as new and exciting as if you had just heard it for the first time.

“Long, long ago,” began the Story Girl, her voice giving us an impression of remote antiquity, “even before Grandfather King was born, an orphan cousin of his lived here with his parents. Her name was Emily King. She was very small and very sweet. She had soft brown eyes that were too timid to look straight at anybody — like Cecily’s there — and long, sleek, brown curls — like mine; and she had a tiny birthmark like a pink butterfly on one cheek — right here.

“Of course, there was no orchard here then. It was just a field; but there was a clump of white birches in it, right where that big, spreading tree of Uncle Alec’s is now, and Emily liked to sit among the ferns under the birches and read or sew. She had a lover. His name was Malcolm Ward and he was as handsome as a prince. She loved him with all her heart and he

loved her the same; but they had never spoken about it. They used to meet under the birches and talk about everything except love. One day he told her he was coming the next day to ask A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION, and he wanted to find her under the birches when he came. Emily promised to meet him there. I am sure she stayed awake that night, thinking about it, and wondering what the important question would be, although she knew perfectly well. I would have. And the next day she dressed herself beautifully in her best pale blue muslin and sleeked her curls and went smiling to the birches. And while she was waiting there, thinking such lovely thoughts, a neighbour's boy came running up — a boy who didn't know about her romance — and cried out that Malcolm Ward had been killed by his gun going off accidentally. Emily just put her hands to her heart — so — and fell, all white and broken among the ferns. And when she came back to life she never cried or lamented. She was CHANGED. She was never, never like herself again; and she was never contented unless she was dressed in her blue muslin and waiting under the birches. She got paler and paler every day, but the pink butterfly grew redder, until it looked just like a stain of blood on her white cheek. When the winter came she died. But next spring" — the Story Girl dropped her voice to a whisper that was as audible and thrilling as her louder tones — "people began to tell that Emily was sometimes seen waiting under the birches still. Nobody knew just who told it first. But more than one person saw her. Grandfather saw her when he was a little boy. And my mother saw her once."

"Did YOU ever see her?" asked Felix skeptically.

"No, but I shall some day, if I keep on believing in her," said the Story Girl confidently.

"I wouldn't like to see her. I'd be afraid," said Cecily with a shiver.

"There wouldn't be anything to be afraid of," said the Story Girl reassuringly. "It's not as if it were a strange ghost. It's our own family ghost, so of course it wouldn't hurt us."

We were not so sure of this. Ghosts were unchancy folk, even if they were our family ghosts. The Story Girl had made the tale very real to us. We

were glad we had not heard it in the evening. How could we ever have got back to the house through the shadows and swaying branches of a darkening orchard? As it was, we were almost afraid to look up it, lest we should see the waiting, blue-clad Emily under Uncle Alec's tree. But all we saw was Felicity, tearing over the green sward, her curls streaming behind her in a golden cloud.

"Felicity's afraid she's missed something," remarked the Story Girl in a tone of quiet amusement. "Is your breakfast ready, Felicity, or have I time to tell the boys the Story of the Poet Who Was Kissed?"

"Breakfast is ready, but we can't have it till father is through attending to the sick cow, so you will likely have time," answered Felicity.

Felix and I couldn't keep our eyes off her. Crimson-cheeked, shining-eyed from her haste, her face was like a rose of youth. But when the Story Girl spoke, we forgot to look at Felicity.

"About ten years after Grandfather and Grandmother King were married, a young man came to visit them. He was a distant relative of grandmother's and he was a Poet. He was just beginning to be famous. He was VERY famous afterward. He came into the orchard to write a poem, and he fell asleep with his head on a bench that used to be under grandfather's tree. Then Great-Aunt Edith came into the orchard. She was not a Great-Aunt then, of course. She was only eighteen, with red lips and black, black hair and eyes. They say she was always full of mischief. She had been away and had just come home, and she didn't know about the Poet. But when she saw him, sleeping there, she thought he was a cousin they had been expecting from Scotland. And she tiptoed up — so — and bent over — so — and kissed his cheek. Then he opened his big blue eyes and looked up into Edith's face. She blushed as red as a rose, for she knew she had done a dreadful thing. This could not be her cousin from Scotland. She knew, for he had written so to her, that he had eyes as black as her own. Edith ran away and hid; and of course she felt still worse when she found out that he was a famous poet. But he wrote one of his most beautiful poems on it afterwards and sent it to her — and it was published in one of his books."

We had SEEN it all — the sleeping genius — the roguish, red-lipped girl — the kiss dropped as lightly as a rose-petal on the sunburned cheek.

“They should have got married,” said Felix.

“Well, in a book they would have, but you see this was in real life,” said the Story Girl. “We sometimes act the story out. I like it when Peter plays the poet. I don’t like it when Dan is the poet because he is so freckled and screws his eyes up so tight. But you can hardly ever coax Peter to be the poet — except when Felicity is Edith — and Dan is so obliging that way.”

“What is Peter like?” I asked.

“Peter is splendid. His mother lives on the Markdale road and washes for a living. Peter’s father ran away and left them when Peter was only three years old. He has never come back, and they don’t know whether he is alive or dead. Isn’t that a nice way to behave to your family? Peter has worked for his board ever since he was six. Uncle Roger sends him to school, and pays him wages in summer. We all like Peter, except Felicity.”

“I like Peter well enough in his place,” said Felicity primly, “but you make far too much of him, mother says. He is only a hired boy, and he hasn’t been well brought up, and hasn’t much education. I don’t think you should make such an equal of him as you do.”

Laughter rippled over the Story Girl’s face as shadow waves go over ripe wheat before a wind.

“Peter is a real gentleman, and he is more interesting than YOU could ever be, if you were brought up and educated for a hundred years,” she said.

“He can hardly write,” said Felicity.

“William the Conqueror couldn’t write at all,” said the Story Girl crushingly.

“He never goes to church, and he never says his prayers,” retorted Felicity, uncrushed.

“I do, too,” said Peter himself, suddenly appearing through a little gap in the hedge. “I say my prayers sometimes.”

This Peter was a slim, shapely fellow, with laughing black eyes and thick black curls. Early in the season as it was, he was barefooted. His attire consisted of a faded, gingham shirt and a scanty pair of corduroy knickerbockers; but he wore it with such an unconscious air of purple and fine linen that he seemed to be much better dressed than he really was.

“You don’t pray very often,” insisted Felicity.

“Well, God will be all the more likely to listen to me if I don’t pester Him all the time,” argued Peter.

This was rank heresy to Felicity, but the Story Girl looked as if she thought there might be something in it.

“You NEVER go to church, anyhow,” continued Felicity, determined not to be argued down.

“Well, I ain’t going to church till I’ve made up my mind whether I’m going to be a Methodist or a Presbyterian. Aunt Jane was a Methodist. My mother ain’t much of anything but I mean to be something. It’s more respectable to be a Methodist or a Presbyterian, or SOMETHING, than not to be anything. When I’ve settled what I’m to be I’m going to church same as you.”

“That’s not the same as being BORN something,” said Felicity loftily.

“I think it’s a good deal better to pick your own religion than have to take it just because it was what your folks had,” retorted Peter.

“Now, never mind quarrelling,” said Cecily. “You leave Peter alone, Felicity. Peter, this is Beverley King, and this is Felix. And we’re all going to be good friends and have a lovely summer together. Think of the games we can have! But if you go squabbling you’ll spoil it all. Peter, what are you going to do to-day?”

“Harrow the wood field and dig your Aunt Olivia’s flower beds.”

“Aunt Olivia and I planted sweet peas yesterday,” said the Story Girl, “and I planted a little bed of my own. I am NOT going to dig them up this year to see if they have sprouted. It is bad for them. I shall try to cultivate patience, no matter how long they are coming up.”

“I am going to help mother plant the vegetable garden to-day,” said Felicity.

“Oh, I never like the vegetable garden,” said the Story Girl. “Except when I am hungry. Then I DO like to go and look at the nice little rows of onions and beets. But I love a flower garden. I think I could be always good if I lived in a garden all the time.”

“Adam and Eve lived in a garden all the time,” said Felicity, “and THEY were far from being always good.”

“They mightn’t have kept good as long as they did if they hadn’t lived in a garden,” said the Story Girl.

We were now summoned to breakfast. Peter and the Story Girl slipped away through the gap, followed by Paddy, and the rest of us walked up the orchard to the house.

“Well, what do you think of the Story Girl?” asked Felicity.

“She’s just fine,” said Felix, enthusiastically. “I never heard anything like her to tell stories.”

“She can’t cook,” said Felicity, “and she hasn’t a good complexion. Mind you, she says she’s going to be an actress when she grows up. Isn’t that dreadful?”

We didn’t exactly see why.

“Oh, because actresses are always wicked people,” said Felicity in a shocked tone. “But I daresay the Story Girl will go and be one just as soon as she can. Her father will back her up in it. He is an artist, you know.”

Evidently Felicity thought artists and actresses and all such poor trash were members one of another.

“Aunt Olivia says the Story Girl is fascinating,” said Cecily.

The very adjective! Felix and I recognized its beautiful fitness at once. Yes, the Story Girl WAS fascinating and that was the final word to be said on the subject.

Dan did not come down until breakfast was half over, and Aunt Janet talked to him after a fashion which made us realize that it would be well to keep, as the piquant country phrase went, from the rough side of her tongue. But all things considered, we liked the prospect of our summer very much. Felicity to look at — the Story Girl to tell us tales of wonder — Cecily to admire us — Dan and Peter to play with — what more could reasonable fellows want?

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING VEIL OF THE PROUD PRINCESS

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When we had lived for a fortnight in Carlisle we belonged there, and the freedom of all its small fry was conferred on us. With Peter and Dan, with Felicity and Cecily and the Story Girl, with pale, grayeyed little Sara Ray, we were boon companions. We went to school, of course; and certain home chores were assigned to each of us for the faithful performance of which we were held responsible. But we had long hours for play. Even Peter had plenty of spare time when the planting was over.

We got along very well with each other in the main, in spite of some minor differences of opinion. As for the grownup denizens of our small world, they suited us also.

We adored Aunt Olivia; she was pretty and merry and kind; and, above all, she had mastered to perfection the rare art of letting children alone. If we kept ourselves tolerably clean, and refrained from quarrelling or talking slang, Aunt Olivia did not worry us. Aunt Janet, on the contrary, gave us so much good advice and was so constantly telling us to do this or not to do the other thing, that we could not remember half her instructions, and did not try.

Uncle Roger was, as we had been informed, quite jolly and fond of teasing. We liked him; but we had an uncomfortable feeling that the meaning of his remarks was not always that which met the ear. Sometimes we believed Uncle Roger was making fun of us, and the deadly seriousness of youth in us resented that.

The Uncle Alec we gave our warmest love. We felt that we always had a friend at court in Uncle Alec, no matter what we did or left undone. And we never had to turn HIS speeches inside out to discover their meaning.

The social life of juvenile Carlisle centred in the day and Sunday Schools. We were especially interested in our Sunday School, for we were fortunate enough to be assigned to a teacher who made our lessons so interesting that we no longer regarded Sunday School attendance as a disagreeable weekly duty; but instead looked forward to it with pleasure, and tried to carry out our teacher's gentle precepts — at least on Mondays and Tuesdays. I am afraid the remembrance grew a little dim the rest of the week.

She was also deeply interested in missions; and one talk on this subject inspired the Story Girl to do a little home missionary work on her own account. The only thing she could think of, along this line, was to persuade Peter to go to church.

Felicity did not approve of the design, and said so plainly.

“He won't know how to behave, for he's never been inside a church door in his life,” she warned the Story Girl. “He'll likely do something awful, and then you'll feel ashamed and wish you'd never asked him to go, and we'll all be disgraced. It's all right to have our mite boxes for the heathen, and send missionaries to them. They're far away and we don't have to associate with them. But I don't want to have to sit in a pew with a hired boy.”

But the Story Girl undauntedly continued to coax the reluctant Peter. It was not an easy matter. Peter did not come of a churchgoing stock; and besides, he alleged, he had not yet made up his mind whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist.

“It isn't a bit of difference which you are,” pleaded the Story Girl. “They both go to heaven.”

“But one way must be easier or better than the other, or else they'd all be one kind,” argued Peter. “I want to find the easiest way. And I've got a hankering after the Methodists. My Aunt Jane was a Methodist.”

“Isn't she one still?” asked Felicity pertly.

“Well, I don’t know exactly. She’s dead,” said Peter rebukingly.

“Do people go on being just the same after they’re dead?”

“No, of course not. They’re angels then — not Methodists or anything, but just angels. That is, if they go to heaven.”

“S’posen they went to the other place?”

But Felicity’s theology broke down at this point. She turned her back on Peter and walked disdainfully away.

The Story Girl returned to the main point with a new argument.

“We have such a lovely minister, Peter. He looks just like the picture of St. John my father sent me, only he is old and his hair is white. I know you’d like him. And even if you are going to be a Methodist it won’t hurt you to go to the Presbyterian church. The nearest Methodist church is six miles away, at Markdale, and you can’t attend there just now. Go to the Presbyterian church until you’re old enough to have a horse.”

“But s’posen I got too fond of being Presbyterian and couldn’t change if I wanted to?” objected Peter.

Altogether, the Story Girl had a hard time of it; but she persevered; and one day she came to us with the announcement that Peter had yielded.

“He’s going to church with us tomorrow,” she said triumphantly.

We were out in Uncle Roger’s hill pasture, sitting on some smooth, round stones under a clump of birches. Behind us was an old gray fence, with violets and dandelions thick in its corners. Below us was the Carlisle valley, with its orchard-embowered homesteads, and fertile meadows. Its upper end was dim with a delicate spring mist. Winds blew up the field like wave upon wave of sweet savour — spice of bracken and balsam.

We were eating little jam “turnovers,” which Felicity had made for us. Felicity’s turnovers were perfection. I looked at her and wondered why it was not enough that she should be so pretty and capable of making such

turnovers. If she were only more interesting! Felicity had not a particle of the nameless charm and allurements which hung about every motion of the Story Girl, and made itself manifest in her lightest word and most careless glance. Ah well, one cannot have every good gift! The Story Girl had no dimples at her slim, brown wrists.

We all enjoyed our turnovers except Sara Ray. She ate hers but she knew she should not have done so. Her mother did not approve of snacks between meals, or of jam turnovers at any time. Once, when Sara was in a brown study, I asked her what she was thinking of.

"I'm trying to think of something ma hasn't forbid," she answered with a sigh.

We were all glad to hear that Peter was going to church, except Felicity. She was full of gloomy forebodings and warnings.

"I'm surprised at you, Felicity King," said Cecily severely. "You ought to be glad that poor boy is going to get started in the right way."

"There's a great big patch on his best pair of trousers," protested Felicity.

"Well, that's better than a hole," said the Story Girl, addressing herself daintily to her turnover. "God won't notice the patch."

"No, but the Carlisle people will," retorted Felicity, in a tone which implied that what the Carlisle people thought was far more important. "And I don't believe that Peter has got a decent stocking to his name. What will you feel like if he goes to church with the skin of his legs showing through the holes, Miss Story Girl?"

"I'm not a bit afraid," said the Story Girl staunchly. "Peter knows better than that."

"Well, all I hope is that he'll wash behind his ears," said Felicity resignedly.

"How is Pat to-day?" asked Cecily, by way of changing the conversation.

“Pat isn’t a bit better. He just mopes about the kitchen,” said the Story Girl anxiously. “I went out to the barn and I saw a mouse. I had a stick in my hand and I fetched a swipe at it — so. I killed it stone dead. Then I took it in to Paddy. Will you believe it? He wouldn’t even look at it. I’m so worried. Uncle Roger says he needs a dose of physic. But how is he to be made take it, that’s the question. I mixed a powder in some milk and tried to pour it down his throat while Peter held him. Just look at the scratches I got! And the milk went everywhere except down Pat’s throat.”

“Wouldn’t it be awful if — if anything happened to Pat?” whispered Cecily.

“Well, we could have a jolly funeral, you know,” said Dan.

We looked at him in such horror that Dan hastened to apologize.

“I’d be awful sorry myself if Pat died. But if he DID, we’d have to give him the right kind of a funeral,” he protested. “Why, Paddy just seems like one of the family.”

The Story Girl finished her turnover, and stretched herself out on the grasses, pillowing her chin in her hands and looking at the sky. She was bare headed, as usual, and her scarlet ribbon was bound filletwise about her head. She had twined freshly plucked dandelions around it and the effect was that of a crown of brilliant golden stars on her sleek, brown curls.

“Look at that long, thin, lacy cloud up there,” she said. “What does it make you think of, girls?”

“A wedding veil,” said Cecily.

“That is just what it is — the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess. I know a story about it. I read it in a book. Once upon a time” — the Story Girl’s eyes grew dreamy, and her accents floated away on the summer air like windblown rose petals— “there was a princess who was the most beautiful princess in the world, and kings from all lands came to woo her for a bride. But she was as proud as she was beautiful. She laughed all her

suitors to scorn. And when her father urged her to choose one of them as her husband she drew herself up haughtily — so—”

The Story Girl sprang to her feet and for a moment we saw the proud princess of the old tale in all her scornful loveliness —

“and she said,

“‘I will not wed until a king comes who can conquer all kings. Then I shall be the wife of the king of the world and no one can hold herself higher than I.’

“So every king went to war to prove that he could conquer every one else, and there was a great deal of bloodshed and misery. But the proud princess laughed and sang, and she and her maidens worked at a wonderful lace veil which she meant to wear when the king of all kings came. It was a very beautiful veil; but her maidens whispered that a man had died and a woman’s heart had broken for every stitch set in it.

“Just when a king thought he had conquered everybody some other king would come and conquer HIM; and so it went on until it did not seem likely the proud princess would ever get a husband at all. But still her pride was so great that she would not yield, even though everybody except the kings who wanted to marry her, hated her for the suffering she had caused. One day a horn was blown at the palace gate; and there was one tall man in complete armor with his visor down, riding on a white horse. When he said he had come to marry the princess every one laughed, for he had no retinue and no beautiful apparel, and no golden crown.

“‘But I am the king who conquers all kings,’ he said.

“‘You must prove it before I shall marry you,’ said the proud princess. But she trembled and turned pale, for there was something in his voice that frightened her. And when he laughed, his laughter was still more dreadful.

“‘I can easily prove it, beautiful princess,’ he said, ‘but you must go with me to my kingdom for the proof. Marry me now, and you and I and your father and all your court will ride straightway to my kingdom; and if you

are not satisfied then that I am the king who conquers all kings you may give me back my ring and return home free of me forever more.'

"It was a strange wooing and the friends of the princess begged her to refuse. But her pride whispered that it would be such a wonderful thing to be the queen of the king of the world; so she consented; and her maidens dressed her, and put on the long lace veil that had been so many years a-making. Then they were married at once, but the bridegroom never lifted his visor and no one saw his face. The proud princess held herself more proudly than ever, but she was as white as her veil. And there was no laughter or merrymaking, such as should be at a wedding, and every one looked at every one else with fear in his eyes.

"After the wedding the bridegroom lifted his bride before him on his white horse, and her father and all the members of his court mounted, too, and rode after them. On and on they rode, and the skies grew darker and the wind blew and wailed, and the shades of evening came down. And just in the twilight they rode into a dark valley, filled with tombs and graves.

"'Why have you brought me here?' cried the proud princess angrily.

"'This is my kingdom,' he answered. 'These are the tombs of the kings I have conquered. Behold me, beautiful princess. I am Death!'

"He lifted his visor. All saw his awful face. The proud princess shrieked.

"'Come to my arms, my bride,' he cried. 'I have won you fairly. I am the king who conquers all kings!'

"He clasped her fainting form to his breast and spurred his white horse to the tombs. A tempest of rain broke over the valley and blotted them from sight. Very sadly the old king and courtiers rode home, and never, never again did human eye behold the proud princess. But when those long, white clouds sweep across the sky, the country people in the land where she lived say, 'Look you, there is the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess.'"

The weird spell of the tale rested on us for some moments after the Story Girl had finished. We had walked with her in the place of death and grown cold with the horror that chilled the heart of the poor princess. Dan presently broke the spell.

“You see it doesn’t do to be too proud, Felicity,” he remarked, giving her a poke. “You’d better not say too much about Peter’s patches.”

CHAPTER V.

PETER GOES TO CHURCH

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There was no Sunday School the next afternoon, as superintendent and teachers wished to attend a communion service at Markdale. The Carlisle service was in the evening, and at sunset we were waiting at Uncle Alec's front door for Peter and the Story Girl.

None of the grownups were going to church. Aunt Olivia had a sick headache and Uncle Roger stayed home with her. Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec had gone to the Markdale service and had not yet returned.

Felicity and Cecily were wearing their new summer muslins for the first time — and were acutely conscious of the fact. Felicity, her pink and white face shadowed by her drooping, forget-me-not-wreathed, leghorn hat, was as beautiful as usual; but Cecily, having tortured her hair with curl papers all night, had a rampant bush of curls all about her head which quite destroyed the sweet, nun-like expression of her little features. Cecily cherished a grudge against fate because she had not been given naturally curly hair as had the other two girls. But she attained the desire of her heart on Sundays at least, and was quite well satisfied. It was impossible to convince her that the satin smooth lustre of her weekday tresses was much more becoming to her.

Presently Peter and the Story Girl appeared, and we were all more or less relieved to see that Peter looked quite respectable, despite the indisputable patch on his trousers. His face was rosy, his thick black curls were smoothly combed, and his tie was neatly bowed; but it was his legs which we scrutinized most anxiously. At first glance they seemed well enough; but closer inspection revealed something not altogether customary.

“What is the matter with your stockings, Peter?” asked Dan bluntly.

“Oh, I hadn’t a pair without holes in the legs,” answered Peter easily, “because ma hadn’t time to darn them this week. So I put on two pairs. The holes don’t come in the same places, and you’d never notice them unless you looked right close.”

“Have you got a cent for collection?” demanded Felicity.

“I’ve got a Yankee cent. I s’pose it will do, won’t it?”

Felicity shook her head vehemently.

“Oh, no, no. It may be all right to pass a Yankee cent on a store keeper or an egg peddler, but it would never do for church.”

“I’ll have to go without any, then,” said Peter. “I haven’t another cent. I only get fifty cents a week and I give it all to ma last night.”

But Peter must have a cent. Felicity would have given him one herself — and she was none too lavish of her coppers — rather than have him go without one. Dan, however, lent him one, on the distinct understanding that it was to be repaid the next week.

Uncle Roger wandered by at this moment and, beholding Peter, said,

“‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ What can have induced you to turn churchgoer, Peter, when all Olivia’s gentle persuasions were of no avail? The old, old argument I suppose—’beauty draws us with a single hair.’”

Uncle Roger looked quizzically at Felicity. We did not know what his quotations meant, but we understood he thought Peter was going to church because of Felicity. Felicity tossed her head.

“It isn’t my fault that he’s going to church,” she said snappishly. “It’s the Story Girl’s doings.”

Uncle Roger sat down on the doorstep, and gave himself over to one of the silent, inward paroxysms of laughter we all found so very aggravating. He shook his big, blond head, shut his eyes, and murmured,

“Not her fault! Oh, Felicity, Felicity, you’ll be the death of your dear Uncle yet if you don’t watch out.”

Felicity started off indignantly, and we followed, picking up Sara Ray at the foot of the hill.

The Carlisle church was a very old-fashioned one, with a square, ivy-hung tower. It was shaded by tall elms, and the graveyard surrounded it completely, many of the graves being directly under its windows. We always took the corner path through it, passing the King plot where our kindred of four generations slept in a green solitude of wavering light and shadow.

There was Great-grandfather King’s flat tombstone of rough Island sandstone, so overgrown with ivy that we could hardly read its lengthy inscription, recording his whole history in brief, and finishing with eight lines of original verse composed by his widow. I do not think that poetry was Great-grandmother King’s strong point. When Felix read it, on our first Sunday in Carlisle, he remarked dubiously that it LOOKED like poetry but didn’t SOUND like it.

There, too, slept the Emily whose faithful spirit was supposed to haunt the orchard; but Edith who had kissed the poet lay not with her kindred. She had died in a far, foreign land, and the murmur of an alien sea sounded about her grave.

White marble tablets, ornamented with weeping willow trees, marked where Grandfather and Grandmother King were buried, and a single shaft of red Scotch granite stood between the graves of Aunt Felicity and Uncle Felix. The Story Girl lingered to lay a bunch of wild violets, misty blue and faintly sweet, on her mother’s grave; and then she read aloud the verse on the stone.

““They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided.””

The tones of her voice brought out the poignant and immortal beauty and pathos of that wonderful old lament. The girls wiped their eyes; and we

boys felt as if we might have done so, too, had nobody been looking. What better epitaph could any one wish than to have it said that he was lovely and pleasant in his life? When I heard the Story Girl read it I made a secret compact with myself that I would try to deserve such an epitaph.

“I wish I had a family plot,” said Peter, rather wistfully. “I haven’t ANYTHING you fellows have. The Craigs are just buried anywhere they happen to die.”

“I’d like to be buried here when I die,” said Felix. “But I hope it won’t be for a good while yet,” he added in a livelier tone, as we moved onward to the church.

The interior of the church was as old-fashioned as its exterior. It was furnished with square box pews; the pulpit was a “wine-glass” one, and was reached by a steep, narrow flight of steps. Uncle Alec’s pew was at the top of the church, quite near the pulpit.

Peter’s appearance did not attract as much attention as we had fondly expected. Indeed, nobody seemed to notice him at all. The lamps were not yet lighted and the church was filled with a soft twilight and hush. Outside, the sky was purple and gold and silvery green, with a delicate tangle of rosy cloud above the elms.

“Isn’t it awful nice and holy in here?” whispered Peter reverently. “I didn’t know church was like this. It’s nice.”

Felicity frowned at him, and the Story Girl touched her with her slippered foot to remind him that he must not talk in church. Peter stiffened up and sat at attention during the service. Nobody could have behaved better. But when the sermon was over and the collection was being taken up, he made the sensation which his entrance had not produced.

Elder Frewen, a tall, pale man, with long, sandy sidewhiskers, appeared at the door of our pew with the collection plate. We knew Elder Frewen quite well and like him; he was Aunt Janet’s cousin and often visited her. The contrast between his weekday jollity and the unearthly solemnity of his

countenance on Sundays always struck us as very funny. It seemed so to strike Peter; for as Peter dropped his cent into the plate he laughed aloud!

Everybody looked at our pew. I have always wondered why Felicity did not die of mortification on the spot. The Story Girl turned white, and Cecily turned red. As for that poor, unlucky Peter, the shame of his countenance was pitiful to behold. He never lifted his head for the remainder of the service; and he followed us down the aisle and across the graveyard like a beaten dog. None of us uttered a word until we reached the road, lying in the white moonshine of the May night. Then Felicity broke the tense silence by remarking to the Story Girl,

“I told you so!”

The Story Girl made no response. Peter sidled up to her.

“I’m awful sorry,” he said contritely. “I never meant to laugh. It just happened before I could stop myself. It was this way—”

“Don’t you ever speak to me again,” said the Story Girl, in a tone of cold concentrated fury. “Go and be a Methodist, or a Mohammedan, or ANYTHING! I don’t care what you are! You have HUMILIATED me!”

She marched off with Sara Ray, and Peter dropped back to us with a frightened face.

“What is it I’ve done to her?” he whispered. “What does that big word mean?”

“Oh, never mind,” I said crossly — for I felt that Peter HAD disgraced us — “She’s just mad — and no wonder. Whatever made you act so crazy, Peter?”

“Well, I didn’t mean to. And I wanted to laugh twice before that and DIDN’T. It was the Story Girl’s stories made me want to laugh, so I don’t think it’s fair for her to be mad at me. She hadn’t ought to tell me stories about people if she don’t want me to laugh when I see them. When I

looked at Samuel Ward I thought of him getting up in meeting one night, and praying that he might be guided in his upsetting and downrising. I remembered the way she took him off, and I wanted to laugh. And then I looked at the pulpit and thought of the story she told about the old Scotch minister who was too fat to get in at the door of it, and had to h'ist himself by his two hands over it, and then whispered to the other minister so that everybody heard him.

“‘ This pulpit door was made for speerits ’ — and I wanted to laugh. And then Mr. Frewen come — and I thought of her story about his sidewhiskers — how when his first wife died of information of the lungs he went courting Celia Ward, and Celia told him she wouldn't marry him unless he shaved them whiskers off. And he wouldn't, just to be stubborn. And one day one of them caught fire, when he was burning brush, and burned off, and every one thought he'd HAVE to shave the other off then. But he didn't and just went round with one whisker till the burned one grew out. And then Celia gave in and took him, because she saw there wasn't no hope of HIM ever giving in. I just remembered that story, and I thought I could see him, taking up the cents so solemn, with one long whisker; and the laugh just laughed itself before I could help it.”

We all exploded with laughter on the spot, much to the horror of Mrs. Abraham Ward, who was just driving past, and who came up the next day and told Aunt Janet we had “acted scandalous” on the road home from church. We felt ashamed ourselves, because we knew people should conduct themselves decently and in order on Sunday farings-forth. But, as with Peter, it “had laughed itself.”

Even Felicity laughed. Felicity was not nearly so angry with Peter as might have been expected. She even walked beside him and let him carry her Bible. They talked quite confidentially. Perhaps she forgave him the more easily, because he had justified her in her predictions, and thus afforded her a decided triumph over the Story Girl.

“I'm going to keep on going to church,” Peter told her. “I like it. Sermons are more int'resting than I thought, and I like the singing. I wish I could make up my mind whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. I s'pose I might ask the ministers about it.”

“Oh, no, no, don’t do that,” said Felicity in alarm. “Ministers wouldn’t want to be bothered with such questions.”

“Why not? What are ministers for if they ain’t to tell people how to get to heaven?”

“Oh, well, it’s all right for grownups to ask them things, of course. But it isn’t respectful for little boys — especially hired boys.”

“I don’t see why. But anyhow, I s’pose it wouldn’t be much use, because if he was a Presbyterian minister he’d say I ought to be a Presbyterian, and if he was a Methodist he’d tell me to be one, too. Look here, Felicity, what IS the difference between them?”

“I — I don’t know,” said Felicity reluctantly. “I s’pose children can’t understand such things. There must be a great deal of difference, of course, if we only knew what it was. Anyhow, I am a Presbyterian, and I’m glad of it.”

We walked on in silence for a time, thinking our own young thoughts. Presently they were scattered by an abrupt and startling question from Peter.

“What does God look like?” he said.

It appeared that none of us had any idea.

“The Story Girl would prob’ly know,” said Cecily.

“I wish I knew,” said Peter gravely. “I wish I could see a picture of God. It would make Him seem lots more real.”

“I’ve often wondered myself what he looks like,” said Felicity in a burst of confidence. Even in Felicity, so it would seem, there were depths of thought unplumbed.

“I’ve seen pictures of Jesus,” said Felix meditatively. “He looks just like a man, only better and kinder. But now that I come to think of it, I’ve never seen a picture of God.”

“Well, if there isn’t one in Toronto it isn’t likely there’s one anywhere,” said Peter disappointedly. “I saw a picture of the devil once,” he added. “It was in a book my Aunt Jane had. She got it for a prize in school. My Aunt Jane was clever.”

“It couldn’t have been a very good book if there was such a picture in it,” said Felicity.

“It was a real good book. My Aunt Jane wouldn’t have a book that wasn’t good,” retorted Peter sulkily.

He refused to discuss the subject further, somewhat to our disappointment. For we had never seen a picture of the person referred to, and we were rather curious regarding it.

“We’ll ask Peter to describe it sometime when he’s in a better humour,” whispered Felix.

Sara Ray having turned in at her own gate, I ran ahead to join the Story Girl, and we walked up the hill together. She had recovered her calmness of mind, but she made no reference to Peter. When we reached our lane and passed under Grandfather King’s big willow the fragrance of the orchard struck us in the face like a wave. We could see the long rows of trees, a white gladness in the moonshine. It seemed to us that there was in the orchard something different from other orchards that we had known. We were too young to analyze the vague sensation. In later years we were to understand that it was because the orchard blossomed not only apple blossoms but all the love, faith, joy, pure happiness and pure sorrow of those who had made it and walked there.

“The orchard doesn’t seem the same place by moonlight at all,” said the Story Girl dreamily. “It’s lovely, but it’s different. When I was very small I used to believe the fairies danced in it on moonlight nights. I would like to believe it now but I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Oh, it’s so hard to believe things you know are not true. It was Uncle Edward who told me there were no such things as fairies. I was just seven. He is a minister, so of course I knew he spoke the truth. It was his duty to tell me, and I do not blame him, but I have never felt quite the same to Uncle Edward since.”

Ah, do we ever “feel quite the same” towards people who destroy our illusions? Shall I ever be able to forgive the brutal creature who first told me there was no such person as Santa Claus? He was a boy, three years older than myself; and he may now, for aught I know, be a most useful and respectable member of society, beloved by his kind. But I know what he must ever seem to me!

We waited at Uncle Alec’s door for the others to come up. Peter was by way of skulking shamefacedly past into the shadows; but the Story Girl’s brief, bitter anger had vanished.

“Wait for me, Peter,” she called.

She went over to him and held out her hand.

“I forgive you,” she said graciously.

Felix and I felt that it would really be worth while to offend her, just to be forgiven in such an adorable voice. Peter eagerly grasped her hand.

“I tell you what, Story Girl, I’m awfully sorry I laughed in church, but you needn’t be afraid I ever will again. No, sir! And I’m going to church and Sunday School regular, and I’ll say my prayers every night. I want to be like the rest of you. And look here! I’ve thought of the way my Aunt Jane used to give medicine to a cat. You mix the powder in lard, and spread it on his paws and his sides and he’ll lick it off, ‘cause a cat can’t stand being messy. If Paddy isn’t any better tomorrow, we’ll do that.”

They went away together hand in hand, children-wise, up the lane of spruces crossed with bars of moonlight. And there was peace over all that fresh and flowery land, and peace in our little hearts.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERY OF GOLDEN MILESTONE

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Paddy was smeared with medicated lard the next day, all of us assisting at the rite, although the Story Girl was high priestess. Then, out of regard for mats and cushions, he was kept in durance vile in the granary until he had licked his fur clean. This treatment being repeated every day for a week, Pat recovered his usual health and spirits, and our minds were set at rest to enjoy the next excitement — collecting for a school library fund.

Our teacher thought it would be an excellent thing to have a library in connection with the school; and he suggested that each of the pupils should try to see how much money he or she could raise for the project during the month of June. We might earn it by honest toil, or gather it in by contributions levied on our friends.

The result was a determined rivalry as to which pupil should collect the largest sum; and this rivalry was especially intense in our home coterie.

Our relatives started us with a quarter apiece. For the rest, we knew we must depend on our own exertions. Peter was handicapped at the beginning by the fact that he had no family friend to finance him.

“If my Aunt Jane’d been living she’d have given me something,” he remarked. “And if my father hadn’t run away he might have given me something too. But I’m going to do the best I can anyhow. Your Aunt Olivia says I can have the job of gathering the eggs, and I’m to have one egg out of every dozen to sell for myself.”

Felicity made a similar bargain with her mother. The Story Girl and Cecily were each to be paid ten cents a week for washing dishes in their respective homes. Felix and Dan contracted to keep the gardens free from

weeds. I caught brook trout in the westering valley of spruces and sold them for a cent apiece.

Sara Ray was the only unhappy one among us. She could do nothing. She had no relatives in Carlisle except her mother, and her mother did not approve of the school library project, and would not give Sara a cent, or put her in any way of earning one. To Sara, this was humiliation indescribable. She felt herself an outcast and an alien to our busy little circle, where each member counted every day, with miserly delight, his slowly increasing hoard of small cash.

“I’m just going to pray to God to send me some money,” she announced desperately at last.

“I don’t believe that will do any good,” said Dan. “He gives lots of things, but he doesn’t give money, because people can earn that for themselves.”

“I can’t,” said Sara, with passionate defiance. “I think He ought to take that into account.”

“Don’t worry, dear,” said Cecily, who always poured balm. “If you can’t collect any money everybody will know it isn’t your fault.”

“I won’t ever feel like reading a single book in the library if I can’t give something to it,” mourned Sara.

Dan and the girls and I were sitting in a row on Aunt Olivia’s garden fence, watching Felix weed. Felix worked well, although he did not like weeding—“fat boys never do,” Felicity informed him. Felix pretended not to hear her, but I knew he did, because his ears grew red. Felix’s face never blushed, but his ears always gave him away. As for Felicity, she did not say things like that out of malice prepense. It never occurred to her that Felix did not like to be called fat.

“I always feel so sorry for the poor weeds,” said the Story Girl dreamily. “It must be very hard to be rooted up.”

“They shouldn’t grow in the wrong place,” said Felicity mercilessly.

“When weeds go to heaven I suppose they will be flowers,” continued the Story Girl.

“You do think such queer things,” said Felicity.

“A rich man in Toronto has a floral clock in his garden,” I said. “It looks just like the face of a clock, and there are flowers in it that open at every hour, so that you can always tell the time.”

“Oh, I wish we had one here,” exclaimed Cecily.

“What would be the use of it?” asked the Story Girl a little disdainfully. “Nobody ever wants to know the time in a garden.”

I slipped away at this point, suddenly remembering that it was time to take a dose of magic seed. I had bought it from Billy Robinson three days before in school. Billy had assured me that it would make me grow fast.

I was beginning to feel secretly worried because I did not grow. I had overheard Aunt Janet say I was going to be short, like Uncle Alec. Now, I loved Uncle Alec, but I wanted to be taller than he was. So when Billy confided to me, under solemn promise of secrecy, that he had some “magic seed,” which would make boys grow, and would sell me a box of it for ten cents, I jumped at the offer. Billy was taller than any boy of his age in Carlisle, and he assured me it all came from taking magic seed.

“I was a regular runt before I begun,” he said, “and look at me now. I got it from Peg Bowen. She’s a witch, you know. I wouldn’t go near her again for a bushel of magic seed. It was an awful experience. I haven’t much left, but I guess I’ve enough to do me till I’m as tall as I want to be. You must take a pinch of the seed every three hours, walking backward, and you must never tell a soul you’re taking it, or it won’t work. I wouldn’t spare any of it to any one but you.”

I felt deeply grateful to Billy, and sorry that I had not liked him better. Somehow, nobody did like Billy Robinson over and above. But I vowed I WOULD like him in future. I paid him the ten cents cheerfully and took the magic seed as directed, measuring myself carefully every day by a

mark on the hall door. I could not see any advance in growth yet, but then I had been taking it only three days.

One day the Story Girl had an inspiration.

“Let us go and ask the Awkward Man and Mr. Campbell for a contribution to the library fund,” she said. “I am sure no one else has asked them, because nobody in Carlisle is related to them. Let us all go, and if they give us anything we’ll divide it equally among us.”

It was a daring proposition, for both Mr. Campbell and the Awkward Man were regarded as eccentric personages; and Mr. Campbell was supposed to detest children. But where the Story Girl led we would follow to the death. The next day being Saturday, we started out in the afternoon.

We took a short cut to Golden Milestone, over a long, green, dewy land full of placid meadows, where sunshine had fallen asleep. At first all was not harmonious. Felicity was in an ill humour; she had wanted to wear her second best dress, but Aunt Janet had decreed that her school clothes were good enough to go “traipsing about in the dust.” Then the Story Girl arrived, arrayed not in any second best but in her very best dress and hat, which her father had sent her from Paris — a dress of soft, crimson silk, and a white leghorn hat encircled by flame-red poppies. Neither Felicity nor Cecily could have worn it; but it became the Story Girl perfectly. In it she was a thing of fire and laughter and glow, as if the singular charm of her temperament were visible and tangible in its vivid colouring and silken texture.

“I shouldn’t think you’d put on your best clothes to go begging for the library in,” said Felicity cuttingly.

“Aunt Olivia says that when you are going to have an important interview with a man you ought to look your very best,” said the Story Girl, giving her skirt a lustrous swirl and enjoying the effect.

“Aunt Olivia spoils you,” said Felicity.

“She doesn’t either, Felicity King! Aunt Olivia is just sweet. She kisses me goodnight every night, and your mother NEVER kisses you.”

“My mother doesn’t make kisses so common,” retorted Felicity.

“But she gives us pie for dinner every day.”

“So does Aunt Olivia.”

“Yes, but look at the difference in the size of the pieces! And Aunt Olivia only gives you skim milk. My mother gives us cream.”

“Aunt Olivia’s skim milk is as good as your mother’s cream,” cried the Story Girl hotly.

“Oh, girls, don’t fight,” said Cecily, the peacemaker. “It’s such a nice day, and we’ll have a nice time if you don’t spoil it by fighting.”

“We’re NOT fighting,” said Felicity. “And I like Aunt Olivia. But my mother is just as good as Aunt Olivia, there now!”

“Of course she is. Aunt Janet is splendid,” agreed the Story Girl.

They smiled at each other amicably. Felicity and the Story Girl were really quite fond of each other, under the queer surface friction that commonly resulted from their intercourse.

“You said once you knew a story about the Awkward Man,” said Felix. “You might tell it to us.”

“All right,” agreed the Story Girl. “The only trouble is, I don’t know the whole story. But I’ll tell you all I do know. I call it ‘The Mystery of the Golden Milestone.’”

“Oh, I don’t believe that story is true,” said Felicity. “I believe Mrs. Griggs was just romancing. She DOES romance, mother says.”

“Yes; but I don’t believe she could ever have thought of such a thing as this herself, so I believe it must be true,” said the Story Girl. “Anyway,

this is the story, boys. You know the Awkward Man has lived alone ever since his mother died, ten years ago. Abel Griggs is his hired man, and he and his wife live in a little house down the Awkward Man's lane. Mrs. Griggs makes his bread for him, and she cleans up his house now and then. She says he keeps it very neat. But till last fall there was one room she never saw. It was always locked — the west one, looking out over his garden. One day last fall the Awkward Man went to Summerside, and Mrs. Griggs scrubbed his kitchen. Then she went over the whole house and she tried the door of the west room. Mrs. Griggs is a VERY curious woman. Uncle Roger says all women have as much curiosity as is good for them, but Mrs. Griggs has more. She expected to find the door locked as usual. It was NOT locked. She opened it and went in. What do you suppose she found?"

"Something like — like Bluebeard's chamber?" suggested Felix in a scared tone.

"Oh, no, NO! Nothing like THAT could happen in Prince Edward Island. But if there HAD been beautiful wives hanging up by their hair all round the walls I don't believe Mrs. Griggs could have been much more astonished. The room had never been furnished in his mother's time, but now it was ELEGANTLY furnished, though Mrs. Griggs says SHE doesn't know when or how that furniture was brought there. She says she never saw a room like it in a country farmhouse. It was like a bedroom and sitting-room combined. The floor was covered with a carpet like green velvet. There were fine lace curtains at the windows and beautiful pictures on the walls. There was a little white bed, and a dressing-table, a bookcase full of books, a stand with a work basket on it, and a rocking-chair. There was a woman's picture above the bookcase. Mrs. Griggs says she thinks it was a coloured photograph, but she didn't know who it was. Anyway, it was a very pretty girl. But the most amazing thing of all was that A WOMAN'S DRESS was hanging over a chair by the table. Mrs. Griggs says it NEVER belonged to Jasper Dale's mother, for she thought it a sin to wear anything but print and drugget; and this dress was of PALE BLUE silk. Besides that, there was a pair of blue satin slippers on the floor beside it — HIGH-HEELED slippers. And on the fly-leaves of the books the name 'Alice' was written. Now, there never was an Alice in the Dale

connection and nobody ever heard of the Awkward Man having a sweetheart. There, isn't that a lovely mystery?"

"It's a pretty queer yarn," said Felix. "I wonder if it is true — and what it means."

"I intend to find out what it means," said the Story Girl. "I am going to get acquainted with the Awkward Man sometime, and then I'll find out his Alice-secret."

"I don't see how you'll ever get acquainted with him," said Felicity. "He never goes anywhere except to church. He just stays home and reads books when he isn't working. Mother says he is a perfect hermit."

"I'll manage it somehow," said the Story Girl — and we had no doubt that she would. "But I must wait until I'm a little older, for he wouldn't tell the secret of the west room to a little girl. And I mustn't wait till I'm TOO old, for he is frightened of grownup girls, because he thinks they laugh at his awkwardness. I know I will like him. He has such a nice face, even if he is awkward. He looks like a man you could tell things to."

"Well, I'd like a man who could move around without falling over his own feet," said Felicity. "And then the look of him! Uncle Roger says he is long, lank, lean, narrow, and contracted."

"Things always sound worse than they are when Uncle Roger says them," said the Story Girl. "Uncle Edward says Jasper Dale is a very clever man and it's a great pity he wasn't able to finish his college course. He went to college two years, you know. Then his father died, and he stayed home with his mother because she was very delicate. I call him a hero. I wonder if it is true that he writes poetry. Mrs. Griggs says it is. She says she has seen him writing it in a brown book. She said she couldn't get near enough to read it, but she knew it was poetry by the shape of it."

"Very likely. If that blue silk dress story is true, I'd believe ANYTHING of him," said Felicity.

We were near Golden Milestone now. The house was a big, weather-gray structure, overgrown with vines and climbing roses. Something about the three square windows in the second story gave it an appearance of winking at us in a friendly fashion through its vines — at least, so the Story Girl said; and, indeed, we could see it for ourselves after she had once pointed it out to us.

We did not get into the house, however. We met the Awkward man in his yard, and he gave us a quarter apiece for our library. He did not seem awkward or shy; but then we were only children, and his foot was on his native heath.

He was a tall, slender man, who did not look his forty years, so unwrinkled was his high, white forehead, so clear and lustrous his large, dark-blue eyes, so free from silver threads his rather long black hair. He had large hands and feet, and walked with a slight stoop. I am afraid we stared at him rather rudely while the Story Girl talked to him. But was not an Awkward Man, who was also a hermit and kept blue silk dresses in a locked room, and possibly wrote poetry, a legitimate object of curiosity? I leave it to you.

When we got away we compared notes, and found that we all liked him — and this, although he had said little and had appeared somewhat glad to get rid of us.

“He gave us the money like a gentleman,” said the Story Girl. “I felt he didn’t grudge it. And now for Mr. Campbell. It was on HIS account I put on my red silk. I don’t suppose the Awkward Man noticed it at all, but Mr. Campbell will, or I’m much mistaken.”

CHAPTER VII.

HOW BETTY SHERMAN WON A HUSBAND

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The rest of us did not share the Story Girl's enthusiasm regarding our call on Mr. Campbell. We secretly dreaded it. If, as was said, he detested children, who knew what sort of a reception we might meet?

Mr. Campbell was a rich, retired farmer, who took life easily. He had visited New York and Boston, Toronto and Montreal; he had even been as far as the Pacific coast. Therefore he was regarded in Carlisle as a much travelled man; and he was known to be "well read" and intelligent. But it was also known that Mr. Campbell was not always in a good humour. If he liked you there was nothing he would not do for you; if he disliked you — well, you were not left in ignorance of it. In short, we had the impression that Mr. Campbell resembled the famous little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. "When he was good, he was very, very good, and when he was bad he was horrid." What if this were one of his horrid days?

"He can't DO anything to us, you know," said the Story Girl. "He may be rude, but that won't hurt any one but himself."

"Hard words break no bones," observed Felicity philosophically.

"But they hurt your feelings. I am afraid of Mr. Campbell," said Cecily candidly.

"Perhaps we'd better give up and go home," suggested Dan.

"You can go home if you like," said the Story Girl scornfully.

"But I am going to see Mr. Campbell. I know I can manage him. But if I have to go alone, and he gives me anything, I'll keep it all for my own collection, mind you."

That settled it. We were not going to let the Story Girl get ahead of us in the manner of collecting.

Mr. Campbell's housekeeper ushered us into his parlour and left us. Presently Mr. Campbell himself was standing in the doorway, looking us over. We took heart of grace. It seemed to be one of his good days, for there was a quizzical smile on his broad, clean-shaven, strongly-featured face. Mr. Campbell was a tall man, with a massive head, well thatched with thick, black hair, gray-streaked. He had big, black eyes, with many wrinkles around them, and a thin, firm, long-lipped mouth. We thought him handsome, for an old man.

His gaze wandered over us with uncomplimentary indifference until it fell on the Story Girl, leaning back in an armchair. She looked like a slender red lily in the unstudied grace of her attitude. A spark flashed into Mr. Campbell's black eyes.

"Is this a Sunday School deputation?" he inquired rather ironically.

"No. We have come to ask a favour of you," said the Story Girl.

The magic of her voice worked its will on Mr. Campbell, as on all others. He came in, sat down, hooked his thumb into his vest pocket, and smiled at her.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We are collecting for our school library, and we have called to ask you for a contribution," she replied.

"Why should I contribute to your school library?" demanded Mr. Campbell.

This was a poser for us. Why should he, indeed? But the Story Girl was quite equal to it. Leaning forward, and throwing an indescribable witchery into tone and eyes and smile, she said,

"Because a lady asks you."

Mr. Campbell chuckled.

“The best of all reasons,” he said. “But see here, my dear young lady, I’m an old miser and curmudgeon, as you may have heard. I HATE to part with my money, even for a good reason. And I NEVER part with any of it, unless I am to receive some benefit from the expenditure. Now, what earthly good could I get from your three by six school library? None whatever. But I shall make you a fair offer. I have heard from my housekeeper’s urchin of a son that you are a ‘master hand’ to tell stories. Tell me one, here and now. I shall pay you in proportion to the entertainment you afford me. Come now, and do your prettiest.”

There was a fine mockery in his tone that put the Story Girl on her mettle instantly. She sprang to her feet, an amazing change coming over her. Her eyes flashed and burned; crimson spots glowed in her cheeks.

“I shall tell you the story of the Sherman girls, and how Betty Sherman won a husband,” she said.

We gasped. Was the Story Girl crazy? Or had she forgotten that Betty Sherman was Mr. Campbell’s own great-grandmother, and that her method of winning a husband was not exactly in accordance with maidenly traditions.

But Mr. Campbell chuckled again.

“An excellent test,” he said. “If you can amuse ME with that story you must be a wonder. I’ve heard it so often that it has no more interest for me than the alphabet.”

“One cold winter day, eighty years ago,” began the Story Girl without further parley, “Donald Fraser was sitting by the window of his new house, playing his fiddle for company, and looking out over the white, frozen bay before his door. It was bitter, bitter cold, and a storm was brewing. But, storm, or no storm, Donald meant to go over the bay that evening to see Nancy Sherman. He was thinking of her as he played ‘Annie Laurie,’ for Nancy was more beautiful than the lady of the song. ‘Her face, it is the fairest that e’er the sun shone on,’ hummed Donald — and oh, he thought

so, too! He did not know whether Nancy cared for him or not. He had many rivals. But he knew that if she would not come to be the mistress of his new house no one else ever should. So he sat there that afternoon and dreamed of her, as he played sweet old songs and rollicking jigs on his fiddle.

“While he was playing a sleigh drove up to the door, and Neil Campbell came in. Donald was not overly glad to see him, for he suspected where he was going. Neil Campbell, who was Highland Scotch and lived down at Berwick, was courting Nancy Sherman, too; and, what was far worse, Nancy’s father favoured him, because he was a richer man than Donald Fraser. But Donald was not going to show all he thought — Scotch people never do — and he pretended to be very glad to see Neil and made him heartily welcome.

“Neil sat down by the roaring fire, looking quite well satisfied with himself. It was ten miles from Berwick to the bay shore, and a call at a half way house was just the thing. Then Donald brought out the whisky. They always did that eighty years ago, you know. If you were a woman, you could give your visitors a dish of tea; but if you were a man and did not offer them a ‘taste’ of whisky, you were thought either very mean or very ignorant.

“‘You look cold,’ said Donald, in his great, hearty voice. ‘Sit nearer the fire, man, and put a bit of warmth in your veins. It’s bitter cold the day. And now tell me the Berwick news. Has Jean McLean made up with her man yet? And is it true that Sandy McQuarrie is to marry Kate Ferguson? ‘Twill be a match now! Sure, with her red hair, Sandy will not be like to lose his bride past finding.’

“Neil had plenty of news to tell. And the more whisky he drank the more he told. He didn’t notice that Donald was not taking much. Neil talked on and on, and of course he soon began to tell things it would have been much wiser not to tell. Finally he told Donald that he was going over the bay to ask Nancy Sherman that very night to marry him. And if she would have him, then Donald and all the folks should see a wedding that WAS a wedding.

“Oh, wasn’t Donald taken aback! This was more than he had expected. Neil hadn’t been courting Nancy very long, and Donald never dreamed he would propose to her QUITE so soon.

“At first Donald didn’t know what to do. He felt sure deep down in his heart, that Nancy liked HIM. She was very shy and modest, but you know a girl can let a man see she likes him without going out of her way. But Donald knew that if Neil proposed first he would have the best chance. Neil was rich and the Shermans were poor, and old Elias Sherman would have the most to say in the matter. If he told Nancy she must take Neil Campbell she would never dream of disobeying him. Old Elias Sherman was a man who had to be obeyed. But if Nancy had only promised some one else first her father would not make her break her word.

“Wasn’t it a hard plight for poor Donald? But he was a Scotchman, you know, and it’s pretty hard to stick a Scotchman long. Presently a twinkle came into his eyes, for he remembered that all was fair in love and war. So he said to Neil, oh, so persuasively,

“‘Have some more, man, have some more. ‘Twill keep the heart in you in the teeth of that wind. Help yourself. There’s plenty more where that came from.’

“Neil didn’t want MUCH persuasion. He took some more, and said slyly,

“‘Is it going over the bay the night that yourself will be doing?’

“Donald shook his head.

“‘I had thought of it,’ he owned, ‘but it looks a wee like a storm, and my sleigh is at the blacksmith’s to be shod. If I went it must be on Black Dan’s back, and he likes a canter over the ice in a snowstorm as little as I. His own fireside is the best place for a man tonight, Campbell. Have another taste, man, have another taste.’

“Neil went on ‘tasting,’ and that sly Donald sat there with a sober face, but laughing eyes, and coaxed him on. At last Neil’s head fell forward on his

breast, and he was sound asleep. Donald got up, put on his overcoat and cap, and went to the door.

“‘May your sleep be long and sweet, man,’ he said, laughing softly, ‘and as for the waking, ‘twill be betwixt you and me.’

“With that he untied Neil’s horse, climbed into Neil’s sleigh, and tucked Neil’s buffalo robe about him.

“‘Now, Bess, old girl, do your bonniest,’ he said. ‘There’s more than you know hangs on your speed. If the Campbell wakes too soon Black Dan could show you a pair of clean heels for all your good start. On, my girl.’

“Brown Bess went over the ice like a deer, and Donald kept thinking of what he should say to Nancy — and more still of what she would say to him. SUPPOSE he was mistaken. SUPPOSE she said ‘no!’

“‘Neil would have the laugh on me then. Sure he’s sleeping well. And the snow is coming soon. There’ll be a bonny swirl on the bay ere long. I hope no harm will come to the lad if he starts to cross. When he wakes he’ll be in such a fine Highland temper that he’ll never stop to think of danger. Well, Bess, old girl, here we are. Now, Donald Fraser, pluck up heart and play the man. Never flinch because a slip of a lass looks scornful at you out of the bonniest dark-blue eyes on earth.’

“But in spite of his bold words Donald’s heart was thumping as he drove into the Sherman yard. Nancy was there milking a cow by the stable door, but she stood up when she saw Donald coming. Oh, she was very beautiful! Her hair was like a skein of golden silk, and her eyes were as blue as the gulf water when the sun breaks out after a storm. Donald felt more nervous than ever. But he knew he must make the most of his chance. He might not see Nancy alone again before Neil came. He caught her hand and stammered out,

“‘Nan, lass, I love you. You may think ‘tis a hasty wooing, but that’s a story I can tell you later maybe. I know well I’m not worthy of you, but if true love could make a man worthy there’d be none before me. Will you have me, Nan?’

“Nancy didn’t SAY she would have him. She just LOOKED it, and Donald kissed her right there in the snow.

“The next morning the storm was over. Donald knew Neil must be soon on his track. He did not want to make the Sherman house the scene of a quarrel, so he resolved to get away before the Campbell came. He persuaded Nancy to go with him to visit some friends in another settlement. As he brought Neil’s sleigh up to the door he saw a black speck far out on the bay and laughed.

“‘Black Dan goes well, but he’ll not be quick enough,’ he said.

“Half an hour later Neil Campbell rushed into the Sherman kitchen and oh, how angry he was! There was nobody there but Betty Sherman, and Betty was not afraid of him. She was never afraid of anybody. She was very handsome, with hair as brown as October nuts and black eyes and crimson cheeks; and she had always been in love with Neil Campbell herself.

“‘Good morning, Mr. Campbell,’ she said, with a toss of her head. ‘It’s early abroad you are. And on Black Dan, no less! Was I mistaken in thinking that Donald Fraser said once that his favourite horse should never be backed by any man but him? But doubtless a fair exchange is no robbery, and Brown Bess is a good mare in her way.’

“‘Where is Donald Fraser?’ said Neil, shaking his fist. ‘It’s him I’m seeking, and it’s him I will be finding. Where is he, Betty Sherman?’

“‘Donald Fraser is far enough away by this time,’ mocked Betty. ‘He is a prudent fellow, and has some quickness of wit under that sandy thatch of his. He came here last night at sunset, with a horse and sleigh not his own, or lately gotten, and he asked Nan in the stable yard to marry him. Did a man ask ME to marry him at the cow’s side with a milking pail in my hand, it’s a cold answer he’d get for his pains. But Nan thought differently, and they sat late together last night, and ‘twas a bonny story Nan wakened me to hear when she came to bed — the story of a braw lover who let his secret out when the whisky was above the wit, and then fell asleep while his rival was away to woo and win his lass. Did you ever hear a like story, Mr. Campbell?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ said Neil fiercely. ‘It is laughing at me over the country side and telling that story that Donald Fraser will be doing, is it? But when I meet him it is not laughing he will be doing. Oh, no. There will be another story to tell!’

“‘Now, don’t meddle with the man,’ cried Betty. ‘What a state to be in because one goodlooking lass likes sandy hair and gray eyes better than Highland black and blue! You have not the spirit of a wren, Neil Campbell. Were I you, I would show Donald Fraser that I could woo and win a lass as speedily as any Lowlander of them all; that I would! There’s many a girl would gladly say ‘yes’ for your asking. And here stands one! Why not marry ME, Neil Campbell? Folks say I’m as bonny as Nan — and I could love you as well as Nan loves her Donald — ay, and ten times better!’

“What do you suppose the Campbell did? Why, just the thing he ought to have done. He took Betty at her word on the spot; and there was a double wedding soon after. And it is said that Neil and Betty were the happiest couple in the world — happier even than Donald and Nancy. So all was well because it ended well!”

The Story Girl curtsied until her silken skirts swept the floor. Then she flung herself in her chair and looked at Mr. Campbell, flushed, triumphant, daring.

The story was old to us. It had once been published in a Charlottetown paper, and we had read in Aunt Olivia’s scrapbook, where the Story Girl had learned it. But we had listened entranced. I have written down the bare words of the story, as she told it; but I can never reproduce the charm and colour and spirit she infused into it. It LIVED for us. Donald and Neil, Nancy and Betty, were there in that room with us. We saw the flashes of expression on their faces, we heard their voices, angry or tender, mocking or merry, in Lowland and Highland accent. We realized all the mingled coquetry and feeling and defiance and archness in Betty Sherman’s daring speech. We had even forgotten all about Mr. Campbell.

That gentleman, in silence, took out his wallet, extracted a note therefrom, and handed it gravely to the Story Girl.

“There are five dollars for you,” he said, “and your story was well worth it. You ARE a wonder. Some day you will make the world realize it. I’ve been about a bit, and heard some good things, but I’ve never enjoyed anything more than that threadbare old story I heard in my cradle. And now, will you do me a favour?”

“Of course,” said the delighted Story Girl.

“Recite the multiplication table for me,” said Mr. Campbell.

We stared. Well might Mr. Campbell be called eccentric. What on earth did he want the multiplication table recited for? Even the Story Girl was surprised. But she began promptly, with twice one and went through it to twelve times twelve. She repeated it simply, but her voice changed from one tone to another as each in succession grew tired. We had never dreamed that there was so much in the multiplication table. As she announced it, the fact that three times three was nine was exquisitely ridiculous, five times six almost brought tears to our eyes, eight times seven was the most tragic and frightful thing ever heard of, and twelve times twelve rang like a trumpet call to victory.

Mr. Campbell nodded his satisfaction.

“I thought you could do it,” he said. “The other day I found this statement in a book. ‘Her voice would have made the multiplication table charming!’ I thought of it when I heard yours. I didn’t believe it before, but I do now.”

Then he let us go.

“You see,” said the Story Girl as we went home, “you need never be afraid of people.”

“But we are not all Story Girls,” said Cecily.

That night we heard Felicity talking to Cecily in their room.

“Mr. Campbell never noticed one of us except the Story Girl,” she said, “but if I had put on MY best dress as she did maybe she wouldn’t have

taken all the attention.”

“Could you ever do what Betty Sherman did, do you suppose?” asked Cecily absently.

“No; but I believe the Story Girl could,” answered Felicity rather snappishly.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAGEDY OF CHILDHOOD

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The Story Girl went to Charlottetown for a week in June to visit Aunt Louisa. Life seemed very colourless without her, and even Felicity admitted that it was lonesome. But three days after her departure Felix told us something on the way home from school which lent some spice to existence immediately.

“What do you think?” he said in a very solemn, yet excited, tone.

“Jerry Cowan told me at recess this afternoon that he HAD SEEN A PICTURE OF GOD — that he has it at home in an old, red-covered history of the world, and has looked at it OFTEN.”

To think that Jerry Cowan should have seen such a picture often!
We were as deeply impressed as Felix had meant us to be.

“Did he say what it was like?” asked Peter.

“No — only that it was a picture of God, walking in the garden of Eden.”

“Oh,” whispered Felicity — we all spoke in low tones on the subject, for, by instinct and training, we thought and uttered the Great Name with reverence, in spite of our devouring curiosity—”oh, WOULD Jerry Cowan bring it to school and let us see it?”

“I asked him that, soon as ever he told me,” said Felix. “He said he might, but he couldn’t promise, for he’d have to ask his mother if he could bring the book to school. If she’ll let him he’ll bring it tomorrow.”

“Oh, I’ll be almost afraid to look at it,” said Sara Ray tremulously.

I think we all shared her fear to some extent. Nevertheless, we went to school the next day burning with curiosity. And we were disappointed. Possibly night had brought counsel to Jerry Cowan; or perhaps his mother had put him up to it. At all events, he announced to us that he couldn't bring the red-covered history to school, but if we wanted to buy the picture outright he would tear it out of the book and sell it to us for fifty cents.

We talked the matter over in serious conclave in the orchard that evening. We were all rather short of hard cash, having devoted most of our spare means to the school library fund. But the general consensus of opinion was that we must have the picture, no matter what pecuniary sacrifices were involved. If we could each give about seven cents we would have the amount. Peter could only give four, but Dan gave eleven, which squared matters.

"Fifty cents would be pretty dear for any other picture, but of course this is different," said Dan.

"And there's a picture of Eden thrown in, too, you know," added Felicity.

"Fancy selling God's picture," said Cecily in a shocked, awed tone.

"Nobody but a Cowan would do it, and that's a fact," said Dan.

"When we get it we'll keep it in the family Bible," said Felicity. "That's the only proper place."

"Oh, I wonder what it will be like," breathed Cecily.

We all wondered. Next day in school we agreed to Jerry Cowan's terms, and Jerry promised to bring the picture up to Uncle Alec's the following afternoon.

We were all intensely excited Saturday morning. To our dismay, it began to rain just before dinner.

“What if Jerry doesn’t bring the picture to-day because of the rain?” I suggested.

“Never you fear,” answered Felicity decidedly. “A Cowan would come through ANYTHING for fifty cents.”

After dinner we all, without any verbal decision about it, washed our faces and combed our hair. The girls put on their second best dresses, and we boys donned white collars. We all had the unuttered feeling that we must do such honour to that Picture as we could. Felicity and Dan began a small spat over something, but stopped at once when Cecily said severely,

“How DARE you quarrel when you are going to look at a picture of God to-day?”

Owing to the rain we could not foregather in the orchard, where we had meant to transact the business with Jerry. We did not wish our grownups around at our great moment, so we betook ourselves to the loft of the granary in the spruce wood, from whose window we could see the main road and hail Jerry. Sara Ray had joined us, very pale and nervous, having had, so it appeared, a difference of opinion with her mother about coming up the hill in the rain.

“I’m afraid I did very wrong to come against ma’s will,” she said miserably, “but I COULDN’T wait. I wanted to see the picture as soon as you did.”

We waited and watched at the window. The valley was full of mist, and the rain was coming down in slanting lines over the tops of the spruces. But as we waited the clouds broke away and the sun came out flashingly; the drops on the spruce boughs glittered like diamonds.

“I don’t believe Jerry can be coming,” said Cecily in despair. “I suppose his mother must have thought it was dreadful, after all, to sell such a picture.”

“There he is now!” cried Dan, waving excitedly from the window.

“He’s carrying a fish-basket,” said Felicity. “You surely don’t suppose he would bring THAT picture in a fish-basket!”

Jerry HAD brought it in a fish-basket, as appeared when he mounted the granary stairs shortly afterwards. It was folded up in a newspaper packet on top of the dried herring with which the basket was filled. We paid him his money, but we would not open the packet until he had gone.

“Cecily,” said Felicity in a hushed tone. “You are the best of us all. YOU open the parcel.”

“Oh, I’m no gooder than the rest of you,” breathed Cecily, “but I’ll open it if you like.”

With trembling fingers Cecily opened the parcel. We stood around, hardly breathing. She unfolded it and held it up. We saw it.

Suddenly Sara began to cry.

“Oh, oh, oh, does God look like THAT?” she wailed.

Felix and I spoke not. Disappointment, and something worse, sealed our speech. DID God look like that — like that stern, angrily frowning old man with the tossing hair and beard of the woodcut Cecily held.

“I suppose He must, since that is His picture,” said Dan miserably.

“He looks awful cross,” said Peter simply.

“Oh, I wish we’d never, never seen it,” cried Cecily.

We all wished that — too late. Our curiosity had led us into some Holy of Holies, not to be profaned by human eyes, and this was our punishment.

“I’ve always had a feeling right along,” wept Sara, “that it wasn’t RIGHT to buy — or LOOK AT — God’s picture.”

As we stood there wretchedly we heard flying feet below and a blithe voice calling,

“Where are you, children?”

The Story Girl had returned! At any other moment we would have rushed to meet her in wild joy. But now we were too crushed and miserable to move.

“Whatever is the matter with you all?” demanded the Story Girl, appearing at the top of the stairs. “What is Sara crying about? What have you got there?”

“A picture of God,” said Cecily with a sob in her voice, “and oh, it is so dreadful and ugly. Look!”

The Story Girl looked. An expression of scorn came over her face.

“Surely you don’t believe God looks like that,” she said impatiently, while her fine eyes flashed. “He doesn’t — He couldn’t. He is wonderful and beautiful. I’m surprised at you. THAT is nothing but the picture of a cross old man.”

Hope sprang up in our hearts, although we were not wholly convinced.

“I don’t know,” said Dan dubiously. “It says under the picture ‘God in the Garden of Eden.’ It’s PRINTED.”

“Well, I suppose that’s what the man who drew it thought God was like,” answered the Story Girl carelessly. “But HE couldn’t have known any more than you do. HE had never seen Him.”

“It’s all very well for you to say so,” said Felicity, “but YOU don’t know either. I wish I could believe that isn’t like God — but I don’t know what to believe.”

“Well, if you won’t believe me, I suppose you’ll believe the minister,” said the Story Girl. “Go and ask him. He’s in the house this very minute. He came up with us in the buggy.”

At any other time we would never have dared catechize the minister about anything. But desperate cases call for desperate measures. We drew straws

to see who should go and do the asking, and the lot fell to Felix.

“Better wait until Mr. Marwood leaves, and catch him in the lane,” advised the Story Girl. “You’ll have a lot of grownups around you in the house.”

Felix took her advice. Mr. Marwood, presently walking benignantly along the lane, was confronted by a fat, small boy with a pale face but resolute eyes.

The rest of us remained in the background but within hearing.

“Well, Felix, what is it?” asked Mr. Marwood kindly.

“Please, sir, does God really look like this?” asked Felix, holding out the picture. “We hope He doesn’t — but we want to know the truth, and that is why I’m bothering you. Please excuse us and tell me.”

The minister looked at the picture. A stern expression came into his gentle blue eyes and he got as near to frowning as it was possible for him to get.

“Where did you get that thing?” he asked.

THING! We began to breathe easier.

“We bought it from Jerry Cowan. He found it in a red-covered history of the world. It SAYS it’s God’s picture,” said Felix.

“It is nothing of the sort,” said Mr. Marwood indignantly. “There is no such thing as a picture of God, Felix. No human being knows what he looks like — no human being CAN know. We should not even try to think what He looks like. But, Felix, you may be sure that God is infinitely more beautiful and loving and tender and kind than anything we can imagine of Him. Never believe anything else, my boy. As for this — this SACRILEGE — take it and burn it.”

We did not know what a sacrilege meant, but we knew that Mr. Marwood had declared that the picture was not like God. That was enough for us. We felt as if a terrible weight had been lifted from our minds.

“I could hardly believe the Story Girl, but of course the minister KNOWS,” said Dan happily.

“We’ve lost fifty cents because of it,” said Felicity gloomily.

We had lost something of infinitely more value than fifty cents, although we did not realize it just then. The minister’s words had removed from our minds the bitter belief that God was like that picture; but on something deeper and more enduring than mind an impression had been made that was never to be removed. The mischief was done. From that day to this the thought or the mention of God brings up before us involuntarily the vision of a stern, angry, old man. Such was the price we were to pay for the indulgence of a curiosity which each of us, deep in our hearts, had, like Sara Ray, felt ought not to be gratified.

“Mr. Marwood told me to burn it,” said Felix.

“It doesn’t seem reverent to do that,” said Cecily. “Even if it isn’t God’s picture, it has His name on it.”

“Bury it,” said the Story Girl.

We did bury it after tea, in the depths of the spruce grove; and then we went into the orchard. It was so nice to have the Story Girl back again. She

had wreathed her hair with Canterbury Bells, and looked like the incarnation of rhyme and story and dream.

“Canterbury Bells is a lovely name for a flower, isn’t it?” she said. “It makes you think of cathedrals and chimes, doesn’t it? Let’s go over to Uncle Stephen’s Walk, and sit on the branches of the big tree. It’s too wet on the grass, and I know a story — a TRUE story, about an old lady I saw in town at Aunt Louisa’s. Such a dear old lady, with lovely silvery curls.”

After the rain the air seemed dripping with odours in the warm west wind — the tang of fir balsam, the spice of mint, the wild woodsiness of ferns, the aroma of grasses steeping in the sunshine, — and with it all a breath of wild sweetness from far hill pastures.

Scattered through the grass in Uncle Stephen’s Walk, were blossoming pale, aerial flowers which had no name that we could ever discover. Nobody seemed to know anything about them. They had been there when Great-grandfather King bought the place. I have never seen them elsewhere, or found them described in any floral catalogue. We called them the White Ladies. The Story Girl gave them the name. She said they looked like the souls of good women who had had to suffer much and had been very patient. They were wonderfully dainty, with a strange, faint, aromatic perfume which was only to be detected at a little distance and vanished if you bent over them. They faded soon after they were plucked; and, although strangers, greatly admiring them, often carried away roots and seeds, they could never be coaxed to grow elsewhere.

“My story is about Mrs. Dunbar and the Captain of the FANNY,” said the Story Girl, settling herself comfortably on a bough, with her brown head against a gnarled trunk. “It’s sad and beautiful — and true. I do love to tell stories that I know really happened. Mrs. Dunbar lives next door to Aunt Louisa in town. She is so sweet. You wouldn’t think to look at her that she had a tragedy in her life, but she has. Aunt Louisa told me the tale. It all happened long, long ago. Interesting things like this all did happen long ago, it seems to me. They never seem to happen now. This was in ‘49, when people were rushing to the gold fields in California. It was just like a fever, Aunt Louisa says. People took it, right here on the Island; and a number of young men determined they would go to California.

“It is easy to go to California now; but it was a very different matter then. There were no railroads across the land, as there are now, and if you wanted to go to California you had to go in a sailing vessel, all the way around Cape Horn. It was a long and dangerous journey; and sometimes it took over six months. When you got there you had no way of sending word home again except by the same plan. It might be over a year before your people at home heard a word about you — and fancy what their feelings would be!

“But these young men didn’t think of these things; they were led on by a golden vision. They made all their arrangements, and they chartered the brig Fanny to take them to California.

“The captain of the Fanny is the hero of my story. His name was Alan Dunbar, and he was young and handsome. Heroes always are, you know, but Aunt Louisa says he really was. And he was in love — wildly in love, — with Margaret Grant. Margaret was as beautiful as a dream, with soft blue eyes and clouds of golden hair; and she loved Alan Dunbar just as much as he loved her. But her parents were bitterly opposed to him, and they had forbidden Margaret to see him or speak to him. They hadn’t anything against him as a MAN, but they didn’t want her to throw herself away on a sailor.

“Well, when Alan Dunbar knew that he must go to California in the Fanny he was in despair. He felt that he could NEVER go so far away for so long and leave his Margaret behind. And Margaret felt that she could never let him go. I know EXACTLY how she felt.”

“How can you know?” interrupted Peter suddenly. “You ain’t old enough to have a beau. How can you know?”

The Story Girl looked at Peter with a frown. She did not like to be interrupted when telling a story.

“Those are not things one KNOWS about,” she said with dignity.
“One FEELS about them.”

Peter, crushed but not convinced, subsided, and the Story Girl went on.

“Finally, Margaret ran away with Alan, and they were married in Charlottetown. Alan intended to take his wife with him to California in the Fanny. If it was a hard journey for a man it was harder still for a woman, but Margaret would have dared anything for Alan’s sake. They had three days — ONLY three days — of happiness, and then the blow fell. The crew and the passengers of the Fanny refused to let Captain Dunbar take his wife with him. They told him he must leave her behind. And all his prayers were of no avail. They say he stood on the deck of the Fanny and pleaded with the men while the tears ran down his face; but they would not yield, and he had to leave Margaret behind. Oh, what a parting it was!”

There was heartbreak in the Story Girl’s voice and tears came into our eyes. There, in the green bower of Uncle Stephen’s Walk, we cried over the pathos of a parting whose anguish had been stilled for many years.

“When it was all over, Margaret’s father and mother forgave her, and she went back home to wait — to WAIT. Oh, it is so dreadful just to WAIT, and do nothing else. Margaret waited for nearly a year. How long it must have seemed to her! And at last there came a letter — but not from Alan. Alan was DEAD. He had died in California and had been buried there. While Margaret had been thinking of him and longing for him and praying for him he had been lying in his lonely, faraway grave.”

Cecily sprang up, shaking with sobs.

“Oh, don’t — don’t go on,” she implored. “I CAN’T bear any more.”

“There is no more,” said the Story Girl. “That was the end of it — the end of everything for Margaret. It didn’t kill HER, but her heart died.”

“I just wish I’d hold of those fellows who wouldn’t let the Captain take his wife,” said Peter savagely.

“Well, it was awful said,” said Felicity, wiping her eyes. “But it was long ago and we can’t do any good by crying over it now. Let us go and get something to eat. I made some nice little rhubarb tarts this morning.”

We went. In spite of new disappointments and old heartbreaks we had appetites. And Felicity did make scrumptious rhubarb tarts!

CHAPTER IX.

MAGIC SEED

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When the time came to hand in our collections for the library fund Peter had the largest — three dollars. Felicity was a good second with two and a half. This was simply because the hens had laid so well.

“If you’d had to pay father for all the extra handfuls of wheat you’ve fed to those hens, Miss Felicity, you wouldn’t have so much,” said Dan spitefully.

“I didn’t,” said Felicity indignantly. “Look how Aunt Olivia’s hens laid, too, and she fed them herself just the same as usual.”

“Never mind,” said Cecily, “we have all got something to give. If you were like poor Sara Ray, and hadn’t been able to collect anything, you might feel bad.”

But Sara Ray HAD something to give. She came up the hill after tea, all radiant. When Sara Ray smiled — and she did not waste her smiles — she was rather pretty in a plaintive, apologetic way. A dimple or two came into sight, and she had very nice teeth — small and white, like the traditional row of pearls.

“Oh, just look,” she said. “Here are three dollars — and I’m going to give it all to the library fund. I had a letter to-day from Uncle Arthur in Winnipeg, and he sent me three dollars. He said I was to use it ANY way I liked, so ma couldn’t refuse to let me give it to the fund. She thinks it’s an awful waste, but she always goes by what Uncle Arthur says. Oh, I’ve prayed so hard that some money might come some way, and now it has. See what praying does!”

I was very much afraid that we did not rejoice quite as unselfishly in Sara's good fortune as we should have done. WE had earned our contributions by the sweat of our brow, or by the scarcely less disagreeable method of "begging." And Sara's had as good as descended upon her out of the skies, as much like a miracle as anything you could imagine.

"She prayed for it, you know," said Felix, after Sara had gone home.

"That's too easy a way of earning money," grumbled Peter resentfully. "If the rest of us had just set down and done nothing, only prayed, how much do you s'pose we'd have? It don't seem fair to me."

"Oh, well, it's different with Sara," said Dan. "We COULD earn money and she COULDN'T. You see? But come on down to the orchard. The Story Girl had a letter from her father to-day and she's going to read it to us."

We went promptly. A letter from the Story Girl's father was always an event; and to hear her read it was almost as good as hearing her tell a story.

Before coming to Carlisle, Uncle Blair Stanley had been a mere name to us. Now he was a personality. His letters to the Story Girl, the pictures and sketches he sent her, her adoring and frequent mention of him, all combined to make him very real to us.

We FELT then, what we did not understand till later years, that our grownup relatives did not altogether admire or approve of Uncle Blair. He belonged to a different world from theirs. They had never known him very intimately or understood him. I realize now that Uncle Blair was a bit of a Bohemian — a respectable sort of tramp. Had he been a poor man he might have been a more successful artist. But he had a small fortune of his own and, lacking the spur of necessity, or of disquieting ambition, he remained little more than a clever amateur. Once in a while he painted a picture which showed what he could do; but for the rest, he was satisfied to wander over the world, lighthearted and content. We knew that the Story Girl was thought to resemble him strongly in appearance and temperament, but she had far more fire and intensity and strength of will — her inheritance from King and Ward. She would never be satisfied as a

dabbler; whatever her future career should be, into it she would throw all her powers of mind and heart and soul.

But Uncle Blair could do at least one thing surpassingly well. He could write letters. Such letters! By contrast, Felix and I were secretly ashamed of father's epistles. Father could talk well but, as Felix said, he couldn't write worth a cent. The letters we had received from him since his arrival in Rio de Janeiro were mere scrawls, telling us to be good boys and not trouble Aunt Janet, incidentally adding that he was well and lonesome. Felix and I were always glad to get his letters, but we never read them aloud to an admiring circle in the orchard.

Uncle Blair was spending the summer in Switzerland; and the letter the Story Girl read to us, among the fair, frail White Ladies of the Walk, where the west wind came now with a sigh, and again with a rush, and then brushed our faces as softly as the down of a thistle, was full of the glamour of mountain-rimmed lakes, and purple chalets, and "snowy summits old in story." We climbed Mount Blanc, saw the Jungfrau soaring into cloudland, and walked among the gloomy pillars of Bonnivard's prison. Finally, the Story Girl told us the tale of the Prisoner of Chillon, in words that were Byron's, but in a voice that was all her own.

"It must be splendid to go to Europe," sighed Cecily longingly.

"I am going some day," said the Story Girl airily.

We looked at her with a slightly incredulous awe. To us, in those years, Europe seemed almost as remote and unreachable as the moon. It was hard to believe that one of US should ever go there. But Aunt Julia had gone — and SHE had been brought up in Carlisle on this very farm. So it was possible that the Story Girl might go too.

"What will you do there?" asked Peter practically.

"I shall learn how to tell stories to all the world," said the Story Girl dreamily.

It was a lovely, golden-brown evening; the orchard, and the farm-lands beyond, were full of ruby lights and kissing shadows. Over in the east, above the Awkward Man's house, the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess floated across the sky, presently turning as rosy as if bedewed with her heart's blood. We sat there and talked until the first star lighted a white taper over the beech hill.

Then I remembered that I had forgotten to take my dose of magic seed, and I hastened to do it, although I was beginning to lose faith in it. I had not grown a single bit, by the merciless testimony of the hall door.

I took the box of seed out of my trunk in the twilit room and swallowed the decreed pinch. As I did so, Dan's voice rang out behind me.

"Beverley King, what have you got there?"

I thrust the box hastily into my trunk and confronted Dan.

"None of your business," I said defiantly.

"Yes, 'tis." Dan was too much in earnest to resent my blunt speech. "Look here, Bev, is that magic seed? And did you get it from Billy Robinson?"

Dan and I looked at each other, suspicion dawning in our eyes.

"What do you know about Billy Robinson and his magic seed?" I demanded.

"Just this. I bought a box from him for — for — something. He said he wasn't going to sell any of it to anybody else. Did he sell any to you?"

"Yes, he did," I said in disgust — for I was beginning to understand that Billy and his magic seed were arrant frauds.

"What for? YOUR mouth is a decent size," said Dan.

"Mouth? It had nothing to do with my mouth! He said it would make me grow tall. And it hasn't — not an inch! I don't see what you wanted it for! You are tall enough."

“I got it for my mouth,” said Dan with a shamefaced grin. “The girls in school laugh at it so. Kate Marr says it’s like a gash in a pie. Billy said that seed would shrink it for sure.”

Well, there it was! Billy had deceived us both. Nor were we the only victims. We did not find the whole story out at once. Indeed, the summer was almost over before, in one way or another, the full measure of that shameless Billy Robinson’s iniquity was revealed to us. But I shall anticipate the successive relations in this chapter. Every pupil of Carlisle school, so it eventually appeared, had bought magic seed, under solemn promise of secrecy. Felix had believed blissfully that it would make him thin. Cecily’s hair was to become naturally curly, and Sara Ray was not to be afraid of Peg Bowen any more. It was to make Felicity as clever as the Story Girl and it was to make the Story Girl as good a cook as Felicity. What Peter had bought magic seed for remained a secret longer than any of the others. Finally — it was the night before what we expected would be the Judgment Day — he confessed to me that he had taken it to make Felicity fond of him. Skilfully indeed had that astute Billy played on our respective weaknesses.

The keenest edge to our humiliation was given by the discovery that the magic seed was nothing more or less than caraway, which grew in abundance at Billy Robinson’s uncle’s in Markdale. Peg Bowen had had nothing to do with it.

Well, we had all been badly hoaxed. But we did not trumpet our wrongs abroad. We did not even call Billy to account. We thought that least said was soonest mended in such a matter. We went very softly indeed, lest the grownups, especially that terrible Uncle Roger, should hear of it.

“We should have known better than to trust Billy Robinson,” said Felicity, summing up the case one evening when all had been made known. “After all, what could you expect from a pig but a grunt?”

We were not surprised to find that Billy Robinson’s contribution to the library fund was the largest handed in by any of the scholars. Cecily said she didn’t envy him his conscience. But I am afraid she measured his conscience by her own. I doubt very much if Billy’s troubled him at all.

CHAPTER X.

A DAUGHTER OF EVE

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“I hate the thought of growing up,” said the Story Girl reflectively, “because I can never go barefooted then, and nobody will ever see what beautiful feet I have.”

She was sitting, the July sunlight, on the ledge of the open hayloft window in Uncle Roger’s big barn; and the bare feet below her print skirt WERE beautiful. They were slender and shapely and satin smooth with arched insteps, the daintiest of toes, and nails like pink shells.

We were all the hayloft. The Story Girl had been telling us a tale

”Of old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.”

Felicity and Cecily were curled up in a corner, and we boys sprawled idly on the fragrant, sunwarm heaps. We had “stowed” the hay in the loft that morning for Uncle Roger, so we felt that we had earned the right to loll on our sweet-smelling couch. Haylofts are delicious places, with just enough of shadow and soft, uncertain noises to give an agreeable tang of mystery. The swallows flew in and out of their nest above our heads, and whenever a sunbeam fell through a chink the air swarmed with golden dust. Outside of the loft was a vast, sunshiny gulf of blue sky and mellow air, wherein floated argosies of fluffy cloud, and airy tops of maple and spruce.

Pat was with us, of course, prowling about stealthily, or making frantic, bootless leaps at the swallows. A cat in a hayloft is a beautiful example of the eternal fitness of things. We had not heard of this fitness then, but we all felt that Paddy was in his own place in a hayloft.

“I think it is very vain to talk about anything you have yourself being beautiful,” said Felicity.

“I am not a bit vain,” said the Story Girl, with entire truthfulness. “It is not vanity to know your own good points. It would just be stupidity if you didn’t. It’s only vanity when you get puffed up about them. I am not a bit pretty. My only good points are my hair and eyes and feet. So I think it’s real mean that one of them has to be covered up the most of the time. I’m always glad when it gets warm enough to go barefooted. But, when I grow up they’ll have to be covered all the time. It IS mean.”

“You’ll have to put your shoes and stockings on when you go to the magic lantern show tonight,” said Felicity in a tone of satisfaction.

“I don’t know that. I’m thinking of going barefooted.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t! Sara Stanley, you’re not in earnest!” exclaimed Felicity, her blue eyes filling with horror.

The Story Girl winked with the side of her face next to Felix and me, but the side next the girls changed not a muscle. She dearly loved to “take a rise” out of Felicity now and then.

“Indeed, I would if I just made up my mind to. Why not? Why not bare feet — if they’re clean — as well as bare hands and face?”

“Oh, you wouldn’t! It would be such a disgrace!” said poor Felicity in real distress.

“We went to school barefooted all June,” argued that wicked Story Girl. “What is the difference between going to the schoolhouse barefooted in the daytime and going in the evening?”

“Oh, there’s EVERY difference. I can’t just explain it — but every one KNOWS there is a difference. You know it yourself. Oh, PLEASE, don’t do such a thing, Sara.”

“Well, I won’t, just to oblige you,” said the Story Girl, who would have died the death before she would have gone to a “public meeting” barefooted.

We were all rather excited over the magic lantern show which an itinerant lecturer was to give in the schoolhouse that evening. Even Felix and I, who had seen such shows galore, were interested, and the rest were quite wild. There had never been such a thing in Carlisle before. We were all going, Peter included. Peter went everywhere with us now. He was a regular attendant at church and Sunday School, where his behaviour was as irreproachable as if he had been “raised” in the caste of Vere de Vere. It was feather in the Story Girl’s cap, for she took all the credit of having started Peter on the right road. Felicity was resigned, although the fatal patch on Peter’s best trousers was still an eyesore to her. She declared she never got any good of the singing, because Peter stood up then and every one could see the patch. Mrs. James Clark, whose pew was behind ours, never took her eye off it — or so Felicity averred.

But Peter’s stockings were always darned. Aunt Olivia had seen to that, ever since she heard of Peter’s singular device regarding them on his first Sunday. She had also given Peter a Bible, of which he was so proud that he hated to use it lest he should soil it.

“I think I’ll wrap it up and keep it in my box,” he said. “I’ve an old Bible of Aunt Jane’s at home that I can use. I s’pose it’s just the same, even if it is old, isn’t it?”

“Oh, yes,” Cecily had assured him. “The Bible is always the same.”

“I thought maybe they’d got some new improvements on it since Aunt Jane’s day,” said Peter, relieved.

“Sara Ray is coming along the lane, and she’s crying,” announced Dan, who was peering out of a knothole on the opposite side of the loft.

“Sara Ray is crying half her time,” said Cecily impatiently. “I’m sure she cries a quartful of tears a month. There are times when you can’t help crying. But I hide then. Sara just goes and cries in public.”

The lachrymose Sara presently joined us and we discovered the cause of her tears to be the doleful fact that her mother had forbidden her to go to the magic lantern show that night. We all showed the sympathy we felt.

“She SAID yesterday you could go,” said the Story Girl indignantly. “Why has she changed her mind?”

“Because of the measles in Markdale,” sobbed Sara. “She says Markdale is full of them, and there’ll be sure to be some of the Markdale people at the show. So I’m not to go. And I’ve never seen a magic lantern — I’ve never seen ANYTHING.”

“I don’t believe there’s any danger of catching measles,” said Felicity. “If there was we wouldn’t be allowed to go.”

“I wish I COULD get the measles,” said Sara defiantly. “Maybe I’d be of some importance to ma then.”

“Suppose Cecily goes down with you and coaxes your mother,” suggested the Story Girl. “Perhaps she’d let you go then. She likes Cecily. She doesn’t like either Felicity or me, so it would only make matters worse for us to try.”

“Ma’s gone to town — pa and her went this afternoon — and they’re not coming back till tomorrow. There’s nobody home but Judy Pineau and me.”

“Then,” said the Story Girl, “why don’t you just go to the show anyhow? Your mother won’t ever know, if you coax Judy to hold her tongue.”

“Oh, but that’s wrong,” said Felicity. “You shouldn’t put Sara up to disobeying her mother.”

Now, Felicity for once was undoubtedly right. The Story Girl’s suggestion WAS wrong; and if it had been Cecily who protested, the Story Girl would probably have listened to her, and proceeded no further in the matter. But Felicity was one of those unfortunate people whose protests against wrong-doing serve only to drive the wrong-doer further on her sinful way.

The Story Girl resented Felicity's superior tone, and proceeded to tempt Sara in right good earnest. The rest of us held our tongues. It was, we told ourselves, Sara's own lookout.

"I have a good mind to do it," said Sara. "but I can't get my good clothes; they're in the spare room, and ma locked the door, for fear somebody would get at the fruit cake. I haven't a single thing to wear, except my school gingham."

"Well, that's new and pretty," said the Story Girl. "We'll lend you some things. You can have my lace collar. That'll make the gingham quite elegant. And Cecily will lend you her second best hat."

"But I've no shoes or stockings. They're locked up too."

"You can have a pair of mine," said Felicity, who probably thought that since Sara was certain to yield to temptation, she might as well be garbed decently for her transgression.

Sara did yield. When the Story Girl's voice entreated it was not easy to resist its temptation, even if you wanted to. That evening, when we started for the schoolhouse, Sara Ray was among us, decked out in borrowed plumes.

"Suppose she DOES catch the measles?" Felicity said aside.

"I don't believe there'll be anybody there from Markdale. The lecturer is going to Markdale next week. They'll wait for that," said the Story Girl airily.

It was a cool, dewy evening, and we walked down the long, red hill in the highest of spirits. Over a valley filled with beech and spruce was a sunset afterglow — creamy yellow and a hue that was not so much red as the dream of red, with a young moon swung low in it. The air was sweet with the breath of mown hayfields where swaths of clover had been steeping in the sun. Wild roses grew pinkly along the fences, and the roadsides were star-dusted with buttercups.

Those of us who had nothing the matter with our consciences enjoyed our walk to the little whitewashed schoolhouse in the valley. Felicity and Cecily were void of offence towards all men. The Story Girl walked uprightly like an incarnate flame in her crimson silk. Her pretty feet were hidden in the tan-coloured, buttoned Paris boots which were the secret envy of every school girl in Carlisle.

But Sara Ray was not happy. Her face was so melancholy that the Story Girl lost patience with her. The Story Girl herself was not altogether at ease. Probably her own conscience was troubling her. But admit it she would not.

“Now, Sara,” she said, “you just take my advice and go into this with all your heart if you go at all. Never mind if it is bad. There’s no use being naughty if you spoil your fun by wishing all the time you were good. You can repent afterwards, but there is no use in mixing the two things together.”

“I’m not repenting,” protested Sara. “I’m only scared of ma finding it out.”

“Oh!” The Story Girl’s voice expressed her scorn. For remorse she had understanding and sympathy; but fear of her fellow creatures was something unknown to her. “Didn’t Judy Pineau promise you solemnly she wouldn’t tell?”

“Yes; but maybe some one who sees me there will mention it to ma.”

“Well, if you’re so scared you’d better not go. It isn’t too late. Here’s your own gate,” said Cecily.

But Sara could not give up the delights of the show. So she walked on, a small, miserable testimony that the way of the transgressor is never easy, even when said transgressor is only a damsel of eleven.

The magic lantern show was a splendid one. The views were good and the lecturer witty. We repeated his jokes to each other all the way home. Sara, who had not enjoyed the exhibition at all, seemed to feel more cheerful

when it was over and she was going home. The Story Girl on the contrary was gloomy.

“There WERE Markdale people there,” she confided to me, “and the Williamsons live next door to the Cowans, who have measles. I wish I’d never egged Sara on to going — but don’t tell Felicity I said so. If Sara Ray had really enjoyed the show I wouldn’t mind. But she didn’t. I could see that. So I’ve done wrong and made her do wrong — and there’s nothing to show for it.”

The night was scented and mysterious. The wind was playing an eerie fleshless melody in the reeds of the brook hollow. The sky was dark and starry, and across it the Milky Way flung its shimmering misty ribbons.

“There’s four hundred million stars in the Milky Way,” quoth Peter, who frequently astonished us by knowing more than any hired boy could be expected to. He had a retentive memory, and never forgot anything he heard or read. The few books left to him by his oft-referred-to Aunt Jane had stocked his mind with a miscellaneous information which sometimes made Felix and me doubt if we knew as much as Peter after all. Felicity was so impressed by his knowledge of astronomy that she dropped back from the other girls and walked beside him. She had not done so before because he was barefooted. It was permissible for hired boys to go to public meetings — when not held in the church — with bare feet, and no particular disgrace attached to it. But Felicity would not walk with a barefooted companion. It was dark now, so nobody would notice his feet.

“I know a story about the Milky Way,” said the Story Girl, brightening up. “I read it in a book of Aunt Louisa’s in town, and I learned it off by heart. Once there were two archangels in heaven, named Zerah and Zulamith—”

“Have angels names — same as people?” interrupted Peter.

“Yes, of course. They MUST have. They’d be all mixed up if they hadn’t.”

“And when I’m an angel — if I ever get to be one — will my name still be Peter?”

“No. You’ll have a new name up there,” said Cecily gently. “It says so in the Bible.”

“Well, I’m glad of that. Peter would be such a funny name for an angel. And what is the difference between angels and archangels?”

“Oh, archangels are angels that have been angels so long that they’ve had time to grow better and brighter and more beautiful than newer angels,” said the Story Girl, who probably made that explanation up on the spur of the moment, just to pacify Peter.

“How long does it take for an angel to grow into an archangel?” pursued Peter.

“Oh, I don’t know. Millions of years likely. And even then I don’t suppose ALL the angels do. A good many of them must just stay plain angels, I expect.”

“I shall be satisfied just to be a plain angel,” said Felicity modestly.

“Oh, see here, if you’re going to interrupt and argue over everything, we’ll never get the story told,” said Felix. “Dry up, all of you, and let the Story Girl go on.”

We dried up, and the Story Girl went on.

“Zerah and Zulamith loved each other, just as mortals love, and this is forbidden by the laws of the Almighty. And because Zerah and Zulamith had so broken God’s law they were banished from His presence to the uttermost bounds of the universe. If they had been banished TOGETHER it would have been no punishment; so Zerah was exiled to a star on one side of the universe, and Zulamith was sent to a star on the other side of the universe; and between them was a fathomless abyss which thought itself could not cross. Only one thing could cross it — and that was love. Zulamith yearned for Zerah with such fidelity and longing that he began to build up a bridge of light from his star; and Zerah, not knowing this, but loving and longing for him, began to build a similar bridge of light from her star. For a thousand thousand years they both built the bridge of light,

and at last they met and sprang into each other's arms. Their toil and loneliness and suffering were all over and forgotten, and the bridge they had built spanned the gulf between their stars of exile.

"Now, when the other archangels saw what had been done they flew in fear and anger to God's white throne, and cried to Him,

"See what these rebellious ones have done! They have built them a bridge of light across the universe, and set Thy decree of separation at naught. Do Thou, then, stretch forth Thine arm and destroy their impious work.'

"They ceased — and all heaven was hushed. Through the silence sounded the voice of the Almighty.

"Nay,' He said, 'whatsoever in my universe true love hath builded not even the Almighty can destroy. The bridge must stand forever.'

"And," concluded the Story Girl, her face upturned to the sky and her big eyes filled with starlight, "it stands still. That bridge is the Milky Way."

"What a lovely story," sighed Sara Ray, who had been wooed to a temporary forgetfulness of her woes by its charm.

The rest of us came back to earth, feeling that we had been wandering among the hosts of heaven. We were not old enough to appreciate fully the wonderful meaning of the legend; but we felt its beauty and its appeal. To us forevermore the Milky Way would be, not Peter's overwhelming garland of suns, but the lucent bridge, love-created, on which the banished archangels crossed from star to star.

We had to go up Sara Ray's lane with her to her very door, for she was afraid Peg Bowen would catch her if she went alone. Then the Story Girl and I walked up the hill together. Peter and Felicity lagged behind. Cecily and Dan and Felix were walking before us, hand in hand, singing a hymn. Cecily had a very sweet voice, and I listened in delight. But the Story Girl sighed.

"What if Sara does take the measles?" she asked miserably.

“Everyone has to have the measles sometime,” I said comfortingly, “and the younger you are the better.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY GIRL DOES PENANCE

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Ten days later, Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger went to town one evening, to remain over night, and the next day. Peter and the Story Girl were to stay at Uncle Alec's during their absence.

We were in the orchard at sunset, listening to the story of King Cophetua and the beggar maid — all of us, except Peter, who was hoeing turnips, and Felicity, who had gone down the hill on an errand to Mrs. Ray.

The Story Girl impersonated the beggar maid so vividly, and with such an illusion of beauty, that we did not wonder in the least at the king's love for her. I had read the story before, and it had been my opinion that it was "rot." No king, I felt certain, would ever marry a beggar maid when he had princesses galore from whom to choose. But now I understood it all.

When Felicity returned we concluded from her expression that she had news. And she had.

"Sara is real sick," she said, with regret, and something that was not regret mingled in her voice. "She has a cold and sore throat, and she is feverish. Mrs. Ray says if she isn't better by the morning she's going to send for the doctor. AND SHE IS AFRAID IT'S THE MEASLES."

Felicity flung the last sentence at the Story Girl, who turned very pale.

"Oh, do you suppose she caught them at the magic lantern show?" she said miserably.

"Where else could she have caught them?" said Felicity mercilessly. "I didn't see her, of course — Mrs. Ray met me at the door and told me not

to come in. But Mrs. Ray says the measles always go awful hard with the Rays — if they don't die completely of them it leaves them deaf or half blind, or something like that. Of course," added Felicity, her heart melting at sight of the misery in the Story Girl's piteous eyes, "Mrs. Ray always looks on the dark side, and it may not be the measles Sara has after all."

But Felicity had done her work too thoroughly. The Story Girl was not to be comforted.

"I'd give anything if I'd never put Sara up to going to that show," she said. "It's all my fault — but the punishment falls on Sara, and that isn't fair. I'd go this minute and confess the whole thing to Mrs. Ray; but if I did it might get Sara into more trouble, and I mustn't do that. I sha'n't sleep a wink tonight."

I don't think she did. She looked very pale and woebegone when she came down to breakfast. But, for all that, there was a certain exhilaration about her.

"I'm going to do penance all day for coaxing Sara to disobey her mother," she announced with chastened triumph.

"Penance?" we murmured in bewilderment.

"Yes. I'm going to deny myself everything I like, and do everything I can think of that I don't like, just to punish myself for being so wicked. And if any of you think of anything I don't, just mention it to me. I thought it out last night. Maybe Sara won't be so very sick if God sees I'm truly sorry."

"He can see it anyhow, without you're doing anything," said Cecily.

"Well, my conscience will feel better."

"I don't believe Presbyterians ever do penance," said Felicity dubiously. "I never heard of one doing it."

But the rest of us rather looked with favour on the Story Girl's idea. We felt sure that she would do penance as picturesquely and thoroughly as she did everything else.

"You might put peas in your shoes, you know," suggested Peter.

"The very thing! I never thought of that. I'll get some after breakfast. I'm not going to eat a single thing all day, except bread and water — and not much of that!"

This, we felt, was a heroic measure indeed. To sit down to one of Aunt Janet's meals, in ordinary health and appetite, and eat nothing but bread and water — that would be penance with a vengeance! We felt WE could never do it. But the Story Girl did it. We admired and pitied her. But now I do not think that she either needed our pity or deserved our admiration. Her ascetic fare was really sweeter to her than honey of Hymettus. She was, though quite unconsciously, acting a part, and tasting all the subtle joy of the artist, which is so much more exquisite than any material pleasure.

Aunt Janet, of course, noticed the Story Girl's abstinence and asked if she was sick.

"No. I am just doing penance, Aunt Janet, for a sin I committed. I can't confess it, because that would bring trouble on another person. So I'm going to do penance all day. You don't mind, do you?"

Aunt Janet was in a very good humour that morning, so she merely laughed.

"Not if you don't go too far with your nonsense," she said tolerantly.

"Thank you. And will you give me a handful of hard peas after breakfast, Aunt Janet? I want to put them in my shoes."

"There isn't any; I used the last in the soup yesterday."

“Oh!” The Story Girl was much disappointed. “Then I suppose I’ll have to do without. The new peas wouldn’t hurt enough. They’re so soft they’d just squash flat.”

“I’ll tell you,” said Peter, “I’ll pick up a lot of those little round pebbles on Mr. King’s front walk. They’ll be just as good as peas.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort,” said Aunt Janet. “Sara must not do penance in that way. She would wear holes in her stockings, and might seriously bruise her feet.”

“What would you say if I took a whip and whipped my bare shoulders till the blood came?” demanded the Story Girl aggrieved.

“I wouldn’t SAY anything,” retorted Aunt Janet. “I’d simply turn you over my knee and give you a sound, solid spanking, Miss Sara. You’d find that penance enough.”

The Story Girl was crimson with indignation. To have such a remark made to you — when you were fourteen and a half — and before the boys, too! Really, Aunt Janet could be very dreadful.

It was vacation, and there was not much to do that day; we were soon free to seek the orchard. But the Story Girl would not come. She had seated herself in the darkest, hottest corner of the kitchen, with a piece of old cotton in her hand.

“I am not going to play to-day,” she said, “and I’m not going to tell a single story. Aunt Janet won’t let me put pebbles in my shoes, but I’ve put a thistle next my skin on my back and it sticks into me if I lean back the least bit. And I’m going to work buttonholes all over this cotton. I hate working buttonholes worse than anything in the world, so I’m going to work them all day.”

“What’s the good of working buttonholes on an old rag?” asked Felicity.

“It isn’t any good. The beauty of penance is that it makes you feel uncomfortable. So it doesn’t matter what you do, whether it’s useful or not, so long as it’s nasty. Oh, I wonder how Sara is this morning.”

“Mother’s going down this afternoon,” said Felicity. “She says none of us must go near the place till we know whether it is the measles or not.”

“I’ve thought of a great penance,” said Cecily eagerly. “Don’t go to the missionary meeting tonight.”

The Story Girl looked piteous.

“I thought of that myself — but I CAN’T stay home, Cecily. It would be more than flesh and blood could endure. I MUST hear that missionary speak. They say he was all but eaten by cannibals once. Just think how many new stories I’d have to tell after I’d heard him! No, I must go, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll wear my school dress and hat. THAT will be penance. Felicity, when you set the table for dinner, put the broken-handled knife for me. I hate it so. And I’m going to take a dose of Mexican Tea every two hours. It’s such dreadful tasting stuff — but it’s a good blood purifier, so Aunt Janet can’t object to it.”

The Story Girl carried out her self-imposed penance fully. All day she sat in the kitchen and worked buttonholes, subsisting on bread and water and Mexican Tea.

Felicity did a mean thing. She went to work and made little raisin pies, right there in the kitchen before the Story Girl. The smell of raisin pies is something to tempt an anchorite; and the Story Girl was exceedingly fond of them. Felicity ate two in her very presence, and then brought the rest out to us in the orchard. The Story Girl could see us through the window, carousing without stint on raisin pies and Uncle Edward’s cherries. But she worked on at her buttonholes. She would not look at the exciting serial in the new magazine Dan brought home from the postoffice, neither would she open a letter from her father. Pat came over, but his most seductive purrs won no notice from his mistress, who refused herself the pleasure of even patting him.

Aunt Janet could not go down the hill in the afternoon to find out how Sara was because company came to tea — the Millwards from Markdale. Mr. Millward was a doctor, and Mrs. Millward was a B.A. Aunt Janet was very desirous that everything should be as nice as possible, and we were all sent to our rooms before tea to wash and dress up. The Story Girl slipped over home, and when she came back we gasped. She had combed her hair out straight, and braided it in a tight, kinky, pudgy braid; and she wore an old dress of faded print, with holes in the elbows and ragged flounces, which was much too short for her.

“Sara Stanley, have you taken leave of your senses?” demanded Aunt Janet. “What do you mean by putting on such a rig! Don’t you know I have company to tea?”

“Yes, and that is just why I put it on, Aunt Janet. I want to mortify the flesh—”

“I’ll ‘mortify’ you, if I catch you showing yourself to the Millwards like that, my girl! Go right home and dress yourself decently — or eat your supper in the kitchen.”

The Story Girl chose the latter alternative. She was highly indignant. I verily believe that to sit at the dining-room table, in that shabby, outgrown dress, conscious of looking her ugliest, and eating only bread and water before the critical Millwards would have been positive bliss to her.

When we went to the missionary meeting that evening, the Story Girl wore her school dress and hat, while Felicity and Cecily were in their pretty muslins. And she had tied her hair with a snuff-brown ribbon which was very unbecoming to her.

The first person we saw in the church porch was Mrs. Ray. She told us that Sara had nothing worse than a feverish cold.

The missionary had at least seven happy listeners that night. We were all glad that Sara did not have measles, and the Story Girl was radiant.

“Now you see all your penance was wasted,” said Felicity, as we walked home, keeping close together because of the rumour that Peg Bowen was abroad.

“Oh, I don’t know. I feel better since I punished myself. But I’m going to make up for it tomorrow,” said the Story Girl energetically. “In fact, I’ll begin tonight. I’m going to the pantry as soon as I get home, and I’ll read father’s letter before I go to bed. Wasn’t the missionary splendid? That cannibal story was simply grand. I tried to remember every word, so that I can tell it just as he told it. Missionaries are such noble people.”

“I’d like to be a missionary and have adventures like that,” said Felix.

“It would be all right if you could be sure the cannibals would be interrupted in the nick of time as his were,” said Dan. “But sposen they weren’t?”

“Nothing would prevent cannibals from eating Felix if they once caught him,” giggled Felicity. “He’s so nice and fat.”

I am sure Felix felt very unlike a missionary at that precise moment.

“I’m going to put two cents more a week in my missionary box than I’ve been doing,” said Cecily determinedly.

Two cents more a week out of Cecily’s egg money, meant something of a sacrifice. It inspired the rest of us. We all decided to increase our weekly contribution by a cent or so. And Peter, who had had no missionary box at all, up to this time, determined to start one.

“I don’t seem to be able to feel as int’rested in missionaries as you folks do,” he said, “but maybe if I begin to give something I’ll get int’rested. I’ll want to know how my money’s being spent. I won’t be able to give much. When your father’s run away, and your mother goes out washing, and you’re only old enough to get fifty cents a week, you can’t give much to the heathen. But I’ll do the best I can. My Aunt Jane was fond of

missions. Are there any Methodist heathen? I s'pose I ought to give my box to them, rather than to Presbyterian heathen."

"No, it's only after they're converted that they're anything in particular," said Felicity. "Before that, they're just plain heathen. But if you want your money to go to a Methodist missionary you can give it to the Methodist minister at Markdale. I guess the Presbyterians can get along without it, and look after their own heathen."

"Just smell Mrs. Sampson's flowers," said Cecily, as we passed a trim white paling close to the road, over which blew odours sweeter than the perfume of Araby's shore. "Her roses are all out and that bed of Sweet William is a sight by daylight."

"Sweet William is a dreadful name for a flower," said the Story Girl. "William is a man's name, and men are NEVER sweet. They are a great many nice things, but they are NOT sweet and shouldn't be. That is for women. Oh, look at the moonshine on the road in that gap between the spruces! I'd like a dress of moonshine, with stars for buttons."

"It wouldn't do," said Felicity decidedly. "You could see through it."

Which seemed to settle the question of moonshine dresses effectually.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLUE CHEST OF RACHEL WARD

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“It’s utterly out of the question,” said Aunt Janet seriously. When Aunt Janet said seriously that anything was out of the question it meant that she was thinking about it, and would probably end up by doing it. If a thing really was out of the question she merely laughed and refused to discuss it at all.

The particular matter in or out of the question that opening day of August was a project which Uncle Edward had recently mooted. Uncle Edward’s youngest daughter was to be married; and Uncle Edward had written over, urging Uncle Alec, Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia to go down to Halifax for the wedding and spend a week there.

Uncle Alec and Aunt Olivia were eager to go; but Aunt Janet at first declared it was impossible.

“How could we go away and leave the place to the mercy of all those young ones?” she demanded. “We’d come home and find them all sick, and the house burned down.”

“Not a bit of fear of it,” scoffed Uncle Roger. “Felicity is as good a housekeeper as you are; and I shall be here to look after them all, and keep them from burning the house down. You’ve been promising Edward for years to visit him, and you’ll never have a better chance. The haying is over and harvest isn’t on, and Alec needs a change. He isn’t looking well at all.”

I think it was Uncle Roger’s last argument which convinced Aunt Janet. In the end she decided to go. Uncle Roger’s house was to be closed, and he and Peter and the Story Girl were to take up their abode with us.

We were all delighted. Felicity, in especial, seemed to be in seventh heaven. To be left in sole charge of a big house, with three meals a day to plan and prepare, with poultry and cows and dairy and garden to superintend, apparently furnished forth Felicity's conception of Paradise. Of course, we were all to help; but Felicity was to "run things," and she gloried in it.

The Story Girl was pleased, too.

"Felicity is going to give me cooking lessons," she confided to me, as we walked in the orchard. "Isn't that fine? It will be easier when there are no grownups around to make me nervous, and laugh if I make mistakes."

Uncle Alec and aunts left on Monday morning. Poor Aunt Janet was full of dismal forebodings, and gave us so many charges and warnings that we did not try to remember any of them; Uncle Alec merely told us to be good and mind what Uncle Roger said. Aunt Olivia laughed at us out of her pansy-blue eyes, and told us she knew exactly what we felt like and hoped we'd have a gorgeous time.

"Mind they go to bed at a decent hour," Aunt Janet called back to Uncle Roger as she drove out of the gate. "And if anything dreadful happens telegraph us."

Then they were really gone and we were all left "to keep house."

Uncle Roger and Peter went away to their work. Felicity at once set the preparations for dinner a-going, and allotted to each of us his portion of service. The Story Girl was to prepare the potatoes; Felix and Dan were to pick and shell the peas; Cecily was to attend the fire; I was to peel the turnips. Felicity made our mouths water by announcing that she was going to make a roly-poly jam pudding for dinner.

I peeled my turnips on the back porch, put them in their pot, and set them on the stove. Then I was at liberty to watch the others, who had longer jobs. The kitchen was a scene of happy activity. The Story Girl peeled her potatoes, somewhat slowly and awkwardly — for she was not deft at household tasks; Dan and Felix shelled peas and tormented Pat by

attaching pods to his ears and tail; Felicity, flushed and serious, measured and stirred skilfully.

“I am sitting on a tragedy,” said the Story Girl suddenly.

Felix and I stared. We were not quite sure what a “tragedy” was, but we did not think it was an old blue wooden chest, such as the Story Girl was undoubtedly sitting on, if eyesight counted for anything.

The old chest filled up the corner between the table and the wall. Neither Felix nor I had ever thought about it particularly. It was very large and heavy, and Felicity generally said hard things of it when she swept the kitchen.

“This old blue chest holds a tragedy,” explained the Story Girl.

“I know a story about it.”

“Cousin Rachel Ward’s wedding things are all in that old chest,” said Felicity.

Who was Cousin Rachel Ward? And why were her wedding things shut up in an old blue chest in Uncle Alec’s kitchen? We demanded the tale instantly. The Story Girl told it to us as she peeled her potatoes. Perhaps the potatoes suffered — Felicity declared the eyes were not properly done at all — but the story did not.

“It is a sad story,” said the Story Girl, “and it happened fifty years ago, when Grandfather and Grandmother King were quite young.

Grandmother’s cousin Rachel Ward came to spend a winter with them. She belonged to Montreal and she was an orphan too, just like the Family Ghost. I have never heard what she looked like, but she **MUST** have been beautiful, of course.”

“Mother says she was awful sentimental and romantic,” interjected Felicity.

“Well, anyway, she met Will Montague that winter. He was handsome — everybody says so” —

“And an awful flirt,” said Felicity.

“Felicity, I WISH you wouldn’t interrupt. It spoils the effect. What would you feel like if I went and kept stirring things that didn’t belong to it into that pudding? I feel just the same way. Well, Will Montague fell in love with Rachel Ward, and she with him, and it was all arranged that they were to be married from here in the spring. Poor Rachel was so happy that winter; she made all her wedding things with her own hands. Girls did, then, you know, for there was no such thing as a sewing-machine. Well, at last in April the wedding day came, and all the guests were here, and Rachel was dressed in her wedding robes, waiting for her bridegroom. And” — the Story Girl laid down her knife and potato and clasped her wet hands—”WILL MONTAGUE NEVER CAME!”

We felt as much of a shock as if we had been one of the expectant guests ourselves.

“What happened to him? Was HE killed too?” asked Felix.

The Story Girl sighed and resumed her work.

“No, indeed. I wish he had been. THAT would have been suitable and romantic. No, it was just something horrid. He had to run away for debt! Fancy! He acted mean right through, Aunt Janet says. He never sent even a word to Rachel, and she never heard from him again.”

“Pig!” said Felix forcibly.

“She was brokenhearted of course. When she found out what had happened, she took all her wedding things, and her supply of linen, and some presents that had been given her, and packed them all away in this old blue chest. Then she went away back to Montreal, and took the key with her. She never came back to the Island again — I suppose she couldn’t bear to. And she has lived in Montreal ever since and never married. She is an old woman now — nearly seventy-five. And this chest has never been opened since.”

“Mother wrote to Cousin Rachel ten years ago,” said Cecily, “and asked her if she might open the chest to see if the moths had got into it. There’s a crack in the back as big as your finger. Cousin Rachel wrote back that if it wasn’t for one thing that was in the trunk she would ask mother to open the chest and dispose of the things as she liked. But she could not bear that any one but herself should see or touch that one thing. So she wanted it left as it was. Ma said she washed her hands of it, moths or no moths. She said if Cousin Rachel had to move that chest every time the floor had to be scrubbed it would cure her of her sentimental nonsense. But I think,” concluded Cecily, “that I would feel just like Cousin Rachel in her place.”

“What was the thing she couldn’t bear any one to see?” I asked.

“Ma thinks it was her wedding dress. But father says he believes it was Will Montague’s picture,” said Felicity. “He saw her put it in. Father knows some of the things that are in the chest. He was ten years old, and he saw her pack it. There’s a white muslin wedding dress and a veil — and — and — a — a” — Felicity dropped her eyes and blushed painfully.

“A petticoat, embroidered by hand from hem to belt,” said the Story Girl calmly.

“And a china fruit basket with an apple on the handle,” went on Felicity, much relieved. “And a tea set, and a blue candlestick.”

“I’d dearly love to see all the things that are in it,” said the Story Girl.

“Pa says it must never be opened without Cousin Rachel’s permission,” said Cecily.

Felix and I looked at the chest reverently. It had taken on a new significance in our eyes, and seemed like a tomb wherein lay buried some dead romance of the vanished years.

“What happened to Will Montague?” I asked.

“Nothing!” said the Story Girl viciously. “He just went on living and flourishing. He patched up matters with his creditors after awhile, and came back to the Island; and in the end he married a real nice girl, with money, and was very happy. Did you ever HEAR of anything so unjust?”

“Beverley King,” suddenly cried Felicity, who had been peering into a pot, “YOU’VE GONE AND PUT THE TURNIPS ON TO BOIL WHOLE JUST LIKE POTATOES!”

“Wasn’t that right?” I cried, in an agony of shame.

“Right!” but Felicity had already whisked the turnips out, and was slicing them, while all the others were laughing at me. I had added a tradition on my own account to the family archives.

Uncle Roger roared when he heard it; and he roared again at night over Peter’s account of Felix attempting to milk a cow. Felix had previously acquired the knack of extracting milk from the udder. But he had never before tried to “milk a whole cow.” He did not get on well; the cow tramped on his foot, and finally upset the bucket.

“What are you to do when a cow won’t stand straight?” spluttered Felix angrily.

“That’s the question,” said Uncle Roger, shaking his head gravely.

Uncle Roger’s laughter was hard to bear, but his gravity was harder.

Meanwhile, in the pantry the Story Girl, apron-enshrouded, was being initiated into the mysteries of bread-making. Under Felicity’s eyes she set the bread, and on the morrow she was to bake it.

“The first thing you must do in the morning is knead it well,” said Felicity, “and the earlier it’s done the better — because it’s such a warm night.”

With that we went to bed, and slept as soundly as if tragedies of blue chests and turnips and crooked cows had no place in the scheme of things at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD PROVERB WITH A NEW MEANING

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It was halfpast five when we boys got up the next morning. We were joined on the stairs by Felicity, yawning and rosy.

“Oh, dear me, I overslept myself. Uncle Roger wanted breakfast at six. Well, I suppose the fire is on anyhow, for the Story Girl is up. I guess she got up early to knead the bread. She couldn’t sleep all night for worrying over it.”

The fire was on, and a flushed and triumphant Story Girl was taking a loaf of bread from the oven.

“Just look,” she said proudly. “I have every bit of the bread baked. I got up at three, and it was lovely and light, so I just gave it a right good kneading and popped it into the oven. And it’s all done and out of the way. But the loaves don’t seem quite as big as they should be,” she added doubtfully.

“Sara Stanley!” Felicity flew across the kitchen. “Do you mean that you put the bread right into the oven after you kneaded it without leaving it to rise a second time?”

The Story Girl turned quite pale.

“Yes, I did,” she faltered. “Oh, Felicity, wasn’t it right?”

“You’ve ruined the bread,” said Felicity flatly. “It’s as heavy as a stone. I declare, Sara Stanley, I’d rather have a little common sense than be a great story teller.”

Bitter indeed was the poor Story Girl’s mortification.

“Don’t tell Uncle Roger,” she implored humbly.

“Oh, I won’t tell him,” promised Felicity amiably. “It’s lucky there’s enough old bread to do to-day. This will go to the hens. But it’s an awful waste of good flour.”

The Story Girl crept out with Felix and me to the morning orchard, while Dan and Peter went to do the barn work.

“It isn’t ANY use for me to try to learn to cook,” she said.

“Never mind,” I said consolingly. “You can tell splendid stories.”

“But what good would that do a hungry boy?” wailed the Story Girl.

“Boys ain’t ALWAYS hungry,” said Felix gravely. “There’s times when they ain’t.”

“I don’t believe it,” said the Story Girl drearily.

“Besides,” added Felix in the tone of one who says while there is life there is yet hope, “you may learn to cook yet if you keep on trying.”

“But Aunt Olivia won’t let me waste the stuff. My only hope was to learn this week. But I suppose Felicity is so disgusted with me now that she won’t give me any more lessons.”

“I don’t care,” said Felix. “I like you better than Felicity, even if you can’t cook. There’s lots of folks can make bread. But there isn’t many who can tell a story like you.”

“But it’s better to be useful than just interesting,” sighed the Story Girl bitterly.

And Felicity, who was useful, would, in her secret soul, have given anything to be interesting. Which is the way of human nature.

Company descended on us that afternoon. First came Aunt Janet's sister, Mrs. Patterson, with a daughter of sixteen years and a son of two. They were followed by a buggy-load of Markdale people; and finally, Mrs. Elder Frewen and her sister from Vancouver, with two small daughters of the latter, arrived.

"It never rains but it pours," said Uncle Roger, as he went out to take their horse. But Felicity's foot was on her native heath. She had been baking all the afternoon, and, with a pantry well stocked with biscuits, cookies, cakes, and pies, she cared not if all Carlisle came to tea. Cecily set the table, and the Story Girl waited on it and washed all the dishes afterwards. But all the blushing honours fell to Felicity, who received so many compliments that her airs were quite unbearable for the rest of the week. She presided at the head of the table with as much grace and dignity as if she had been five times twelve years old, and seemed to know by instinct just who took sugar and who took it not. She was flushed with excitement and pleasure, and was so pretty that I could hardly eat for looking at her — which is the highest compliment in a boy's power to pay.

The Story Girl, on the contrary, was under eclipse. She was pale and lustreless from her disturbed night and early rising; and no opportunity offered to tell a melting tale. Nobody took any notice of her. It was Felicity's day.

After tea Mrs. Frewen and her sister wished to visit their father's grave in the Carlisle churchyard. It appeared that everybody wanted to go with them; but it was evident that somebody must stay home with Jimmy Patterson, who had just fallen sound asleep on the kitchen sofa. Dan finally volunteered to look after him. He had a new Henty book which he wanted to finish, and that, he said, was better fun than a walk to the graveyard.

"I think we'll be back before he wakes," said Mrs. Patterson, "and anyhow he is very good and won't be any trouble. Don't let him go outside, though. He has a cold now."

We went away, leaving Dan sitting on the door-sill reading his book, and Jimmy P. snoozing blissfully on the sofa. When we returned — Felix and

the girls and I were ahead of the others — Dan was still sitting in precisely the same place and attitude; but there was no Jimmy in sight.

“Dan, where’s the baby?” cried Felicity.

Dan looked around. His jaw fell in blank amazement. I never saw any one look as foolish as Dan at that moment.

“Good gracious, I don’t know,” he said helplessly.

“You’ve been so deep in that wretched book that he’s got out, and dear knows where he is,” cried Felicity distractedly.

“I wasn’t,” cried Dan. “He **MUST** be in the house. I’ve been sitting right across the door ever since you left, and he couldn’t have got out unless he crawled right over me. He must be in the house.”

“He isn’t in the kitchen,” said Felicity rushing about wildly, “and he couldn’t get into the other part of the house, for I shut the hall door tight, and no baby could open it — and it’s shut tight yet. So are all the windows. He **MUST** have gone out of that door, Dan King, and it’s your fault.”

“He **DIDN’T** go out of this door,” reiterated Dan stubbornly. “I know that.”

“Well, where is he, then? He isn’t here. Did he melt into air?” demanded Felicity. “Oh, come and look for him, all of you. Don’t stand round like ninnies. We **MUST** find him before his mother gets here. Dan King, you’re an idiot!”

Dan was too frightened to resent this, at the time. However and wherever Jimmy had gone, he **WAS** gone, so much was certain. We tore about the house and yard like maniacs; we looked into every likely and unlikely place. But Jimmy we could not find, anymore than if he had indeed melted into air. Mrs. Patterson came, and we had not found him. Things were getting serious. Uncle Roger and Peter were summoned from the field. Mrs. Patterson became hysterical, and was taken into the spare room with such remedies as could be suggested. Everybody blamed poor Dan. Cecily asked him what he would feel like if Jimmy was never, never found. The

Story Girl had a gruesome recollection of some baby at Markdale who had wandered away like that —

“And they never found him till the next spring, and all they found was — HIS SKELETON, with the grass growing through it,” she whispered.

“This beats me,” said Uncle Roger, when a fruitless hour had elapsed. “I do hope that baby hasn’t wandered down to the swamp. It seems impossible he could walk so far; but I must go and see. Felicity, hand me my high boots out from under the sofa, there’s a girl.”

Felicity, pale and tearful, dropped on her knees and lifted the cretonne frill of the sofa. There, his head pillowed hardly on Uncle Roger’s boots, lay Jimmy Patterson, still sound asleep!

“Well, I’ll be — jiggered!” said Uncle Roger.

“I KNEW he never went out of the door,” cried Dan triumphantly.

When the last buggy had driven away, Felicity set a batch of bread, and the rest of us sat around the back porch steps in the cat’s light and ate cherries, shooting the stones at each other. Cecily was in quest of information.

“What does ‘it never rains but it pours’ mean?”

“Oh, it means if anything happens something else is sure to happen,” said the Story Girl. “I’ll illustrate. There’s Mrs. Murphy. She never had a proposal in her life till she was forty, and then she had three in the one week, and she was so flustered she took the wrong one and has been sorry ever since. Do you see what it means now?”

“Yes, I guess so,” said Cecily somewhat doubtfully. Later on we heard her imparting her newly acquired knowledge to Felicity in the pantry.

“‘It never rains but it pours’ means that nobody wants to marry you for ever so long, and then lots of people do.”

CHAPTER XIV.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

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We were all, with the exception of Uncle Roger, more or less grumpy in the household of King next day. Perhaps our nerves had been upset by the excitement attendant on Jimmy Patterson's disappearance. But it is more likely that our crankiness was the result of the supper we had eaten the previous night. Even children cannot devour mince pie, and cold fried pork ham, and fruit cake before going to bed with entire impunity. Aunt Janet had forgotten to warn Uncle Roger to keep an eye on our bedtime snacks, and we ate what seemed good unto us.

Some of us had frightful dreams, and all of us carried chips on our shoulders at breakfast. Felicity and Dan began a bickering which they kept up the entire day. Felicity had a natural aptitude for what we called "bossing," and in her mother's absence she deemed that she had a right to rule supreme. She knew better than to make any attempt to assert authority over the Story Girl, and Felix and I were allowed some length of tether; but Cecily, Dan, and Peter were expected to submit dutifully to her decrees. In the main they did; but on this particular morning Dan was plainly inclined to rebel. He had had time to grow sore over the things that Felicity had said to him when Jimmy Patterson was thought lost, and he began the day with a flatly expressed determination that he was not going to let Felicity rule the roost.

It was not a pleasant day, and to make matters worse it rained until late in the afternoon. The Story Girl had not recovered from the mortifications of the previous day; she would not talk, and she would not tell a single story; she sat on Rachel Ward's chest and ate her breakfast with the air of a martyr. After breakfast she washed the dishes and did the bedroom work in grim silence; then, with a book under one arm and Pat under the other, she betook herself to the window-seat in the upstairs hall, and would not be

lured from that retreat, charmed we never so wisely. She stroked the purring Paddy, and read steadily on, with maddening indifference to all our pleadings.

Even Cecily, the meek and mild, was snappish, and complained of headache. Peter had gone home to see his mother, and Uncle Roger had gone to Markdale on business. Sara Ray came up, but was so snubbed by Felicity that she went home, crying. Felicity got the dinner by herself, disdaining to ask or command assistance. She banged things about and rattled the stove covers until even Cecily protested from her sofa. Dan sat on the floor and whittled, his sole aim and object being to make a mess and annoy Felicity, in which noble ambition he succeeded perfectly.

“I wish Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec were home,” said Felix. “It’s not half so much fun having the grownups away as I thought it would be.”

“I wish I was back in Toronto,” I said sulkily. The mince pie was to blame for THAT wish.

“I wish you were, I’m sure,” said Felicity, riddling the fire noisily.

“Any one who lives with you, Felicity King, will always be wishing he was somewhere else,” said Dan.

“I wasn’t talking to you, Dan King,” retorted Felicity, “‘Speak when you’re spoken to, come when you’re called.’”

“Oh, oh, oh,” wailed Cecily on the sofa. “I WISH it would stop raining. I WISH my head would stop aching. I WISH ma had never gone away. I WISH you’d leave Felicity alone, Dan.”

“I wish girls had some sense,” said Dan — which brought the orgy of wishing to an end for the time. A wishing fairy might have had the time of her life in the King kitchen that morning — particularly if she were a cynically inclined fairy.

But even the effects of unholy snacks wear away at length. By teatime things had brightened up. The rain had ceased, and the old, low-raftered

room was full of sunshine which danced on the shining dishes of the dresser, made mosaics on the floor, and flickered over the table whereon a delicious meal was spread. Felicity had put on her blue muslin, and looked so beautiful in it that her good humour was quite restored. Cecily's headache was better, and the Story Girl, refreshed by an afternoon siesta, came down with smiles and sparkling eyes. Dan alone continued to nurse his grievances, and would not even laugh when the Story Girl told us a tale brought to mind by some of the "Rev. Mr. Scott's plums" which were on the table.

"The Rev. Mr. Scott was the man who thought the pulpit door must be made for speerits, you know," she said. "I heard Uncle Edward telling ever so many stories about him. He was called to this congregation, and he laboured here long and faithfully, and was much beloved, though he was very eccentric."

"What does that mean?" asked Peter.

"Hush! It just means queer," said Cecily, nudging him with her elbow. "A common man would be queer, but when it's a minister, it's eccentric."

"When he gets very old," continued the Story Girl, "the Presbytery thought it was time he was retired. HE didn't think so; but the Presbytery had their way, because there were so many of them to one of him. He was retired, and a young man was called to Carlisle. Mr. Scott went to live in town, but he came out to Carlisle very often, and visited all the people regularly, just the same as when he was their minister. The young minister was a very good young man, and tried to do his duty; but he was dreadfully afraid of meeting old Mr. Scott, because he had been told that the old minister was very angry at being set aside, and would likely give him a sound drubbing, if he ever met him. One day the young minister was visiting the Crawfords in Markdale, when they suddenly heard old Mr. Scott's voice in the kitchen. The young minister turned pale as the dead, and implored Mrs. Crawford to hid him. But she couldn't get him out of the room, and all she could do was to hide him in the china closet. The young minister slipped into the china closet, and old Mr. Scott came into the room. He talked very nicely, and read, and prayed. They made very long prayers in those days, you know; and at the end of his prayer he said, 'Oh Lord, bless the poor

young man hiding in the closet. Give him courage not to fear the face of man. Make him a burning and a shining light to this sadly abused congregation.’ Just imagine the feelings of the young minister in the china closet! But he came right out like a man, though his face was very red, as soon as Mr. Scott had done praying. And Mr. Scott was lovely to him, and shook hands, and never mentioned the china closet. And they were the best of friends ever afterwards.”

“How did old Mr. Scott find out the young minister was in the closet?” asked Felix.

“Nobody ever knew. They supposed he had seen him through the window before he came into the house, and guessed he must be in the closet — because there was no way for him to get out of the room.”

“Mr. Scott planted the yellow plum tree in Grandfather’s time,” said Cecily, peeling one of the plums, “and when he did it he said it was as Christian an act as he ever did. I wonder what he meant. I don’t see anything very Christian about planting a tree.”

“I do,” said the Story Girl sagely.

When next we assembled ourselves together, it was after milking, and the cares of the day were done with. We foregathered in the balsam-fragrant aisles of the fir wood, and ate early August apples to such an extent that the Story Girl said we made her think of the Irishman’s pig.

“An Irishman who lived at Markdale had a little pig,” she said, “and he gave it a pailful of mush. The pig ate the whole pailful, and then the Irishman put the pig IN the pail, and it didn’t fill more than half the pail. Now, how was that, when it held a whole pailful of mush?”

This seemed to be a rather unanswerable kind of conundrum. We discussed the problem as we roamed the wood, and Dan and Peter almost quarrelled over it, Dan maintaining that the thing was impossible, and Peter being of the opinion that the mush was somehow “made thicker” in the process of being eaten, and so took up less room. During the discussion we came out to the fence of the hill pasture where grew the “bad berry” bushes.

Just what these “bad berries” were I cannot tell. We never knew their real name. They were small, red-clustered berries of a glossy, seductive appearance, and we were forbidden to eat them, because it was thought they might be poisonous. Dan picked a cluster and held it up.

“Dan King, don’t you DARE eat those berries,” said Felicity in her “bossiest” tone. “They’re poison. Drop them right away.”

Now, Dan had not had the slightest intention of eating the berries. But at Felicity’s prohibition the rebellion which had smouldered in him all day broke into sudden flame. He would show her!

“I’ll eat them if I please, Felicity King,” he said in a fury:
“I don’t believe they’re poison. Look here!”

Dan crammed the whole bunch into his capacious mouth and chewed it up.

“They taste great,” he said, smacking; and he ate two more clusters, regardless of our horror-stricken protestations and Felicity’s pleadings.

We feared that Dan would drop dead on the spot. But nothing occurred immediately. When an hour had passed we concluded that the bad berries were not poison after all, and we looked upon Dan as quite a hero for daring to eat them.

“I knew they wouldn’t hurt me,” he said loftily. “Felicity’s so fond of making a fuss over everything.”

Nevertheless, when it grew dark and we returned to the house, I noticed that Dan was rather pale and quiet. He lay down on the kitchen sofa.

“Don’t you feel all right, Dan?” I whispered anxiously.

“Shut up,” he said.

I shut up.

Felicity and Cecily were setting out a lunch in the pantry when we were all startled by a loud groan from the sofa.

“Oh, I’m sick — I’m awful sick,” said Dan abjectly, all the defiance and bravado gone out of him.

We all went to pieces, except Cecily, who alone retained her presence of mind.

“Have you got a pain in your stomach?” she demanded.

“I’ve got an awful pain here, if that’s where my stomach is,” moaned Dan, putting his hand on a portion of his anatomy considerably below his stomach. “Oh — oh — oh!”

“Go for Uncle Roger,” commanded Cecily, pale but composed. “Felicity, put on the kettle. Dan, I’m going to give you mustard and warm water.”

The mustard and warm water produced its proper effect promptly, but gave Dan no relief. He continued to writhe and groan. Uncle Roger, who had been summoned from his own place, went at once for the doctor, telling Peter to go down the hill for Mrs. Ray. Peter went, but returned accompanied by Sara only. Mrs. Ray and Judy Pineau were both away. Sara might better have stayed home; she was of no use, and could only add to the general confusion, wandering aimlessly about, crying and asking if Dan was going to die.

Cecily took charge of things. Felicity might charm the palate, and the Story Girl bind captive the soul; but when pain and sickness wrung the brow it was Cecily who was the ministering angel. She made the writhing Dan go to bed. She made him swallow every available antidote which was recommended in “the doctor’s book;” and she applied hot cloths to him until her faithful little hands were half scalded off.

There was no doubt Dan was suffering intense pain. He moaned and writhed, and cried for his mother.

“Oh, isn’t it dreadful!” said Felicity, wringing her hands as she walked the kitchen floor. “Oh, why doesn’t the doctor come? I TOLD Dan the bad berries were poison. But surely they can’t kill people ALTOGETHER.”

“Pa’s cousin died of eating something forty years ago,” sobbed Sara Ray.

“Hold your tongue,” said Peter in a fierce whisper. “You oughter have more sense than to say such things to the girls. They don’t want to be any worse scared than they are.”

“But Pa’s cousin DID die,” reiterated Sara.

“My Aunt Jane used to rub whisky on for a pain,” suggested Peter.

“We haven’t any whisky,” said Felicity disapprovingly. “This is a temperance house.”

“But rubbing whisky on the OUTSIDE isn’t any harm,” argued Peter. “It’s only when you take it inside it is bad for you.”

“Well, we haven’t any, anyhow,” said Felicity. “I suppose blueberry wine wouldn’t do in its place?”

Peter did not think blueberry wine would be any good.

It was ten o’clock before Dan began to get better; but from that time he improved rapidly. When the doctor, who had been away from home when Uncle Roger reached Markdale, came at half past ten, he found his patient very weak and white, but free from pain.

Dr. Grier patted Cecily on the head, told her she was a little brick, and had done just the right thing, examined some of the fatal berries and gave it as his opinion that they were probably poisonous, administered some powders to Dan and advised him not to tamper with forbidden fruit in future, and went away.

Mrs. Ray now appeared, looking for Sara, and said she would stay all night with us.

“I’ll be much obliged to you if you will,” said Uncle Roger. “I feel a bit shook. I urged Janet and Alec to go to Halifax, and took the responsibility of the children while they were away, but I didn’t know what I was letting

myself in for. If anything had happened I could never have forgiven myself — though I believe it's beyond the power of mortal man to keep watch over the things children WILL eat. Now, you young fry, get straight off to your beds. Dan is out of danger, and you can't do any more good. Not that any of you have done much, except Cecily. She's got a head of her shoulders."

"It's been a horrid day all through," said Felicity drearily, as we climbed the stairs.

"I suppose we made it horrid ourselves," said the Story Girl candidly. "But it'll be a good story to tell sometime," she added.

"I'm awful tired and thankful," sighed Cecily.

We all felt that way.

CHAPTER XV.

A DISOBEDIENT BROTHER

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Dan was his own man again in the morning, though rather pale and weak; he wanted to get up, but Cecily ordered him to stay in bed. Fortunately Felicity forgot to repeat the command, so Dan did stay in bed. Cecily carried his meals to him, and read a Henty book to him all her spare time. The Story Girl went up and told him wondrous tales; and Sara Ray brought him a pudding she had made herself. Sara's intentions were good, but the pudding — well, Dan fed most of it to Paddy, who had curled himself up at the foot of the bed, giving the world assurance of a cat by his mellifluous purring.

“Ain't he just a great old fellow?” said Dan. “He knows I'm kind of sick, just as well as a human. He never pays no attention to me when I'm well.”

Felix and Peter and I were required to help Uncle Roger in some carpentering work that day, and Felicity indulged in one of the housecleaning orgies so dear to her soul; so that it was evening before we were all free to meet in the orchard and loll on the grasses of Uncle Stephen's Walk. In August it was a place of shady sweetness, fragrant with the odour of ripening apples, full of dear, delicate shadows. Through its openings we looked afar to the blue rims of the hills and over green, old, tranquil fields, lying the sunset glow. Overhead the lacing leaves made a green, murmurous roof. There was no such thing as hurry in the world, while we lingered there and talked of “cabbages and kings.” A tale of the Story Girl's, wherein princes were thicker than blackberries, and queens as common as buttercups, led to our discussion of kings. We wondered what it would be like to be a king. Peter thought it would be fine, only kind of inconvenient, wearing a crown all the time.

“Oh, but they don’t,” said the Story Girl. “Maybe they used to once, but now they wear hats. The crowns are just for special occasions. They look very much like other people, if you can go by their photographs.”

“I don’t believe it would be much fun as a steady thing,” said Cecily. “I’d like to SEE a queen though. That is one thing I have against the Island — you never have a chance to see things like that here.”

“The Prince of Wales was in Charlottetown once,” said Peter. “My Aunt Jane saw him quite close by.”

“That was before we were born, and such a thing won’t happen again until after we’re dead,” said Cecily, with very unusual pessimism.

“I think queens and kings were thicker long ago,” said the Story Girl. “They do seem dreadfully scarce now. There isn’t one in this country anywhere. Perhaps I’ll get a glimpse of some when I go to Europe.”

Well, the Story Girl was destined to stand before kings herself, and she was to be one whom they delighted to honour. But we did not know that, as we sat in the old orchard. We thought it quite sufficiently marvellous that she should expect to have the chance of just seeing them.

“Can a queen do exactly as she pleases?” Sara Ray wanted to know.

“Not nowadays,” explained the Story Girl.

“Then I don’t see any use in being one,” Sara decided.

“A king can’t do as he pleases now, either,” said Felix. “If he tries to, and if it isn’t what pleases other people, the Parliament or something squelches him.”

“Isn’t ‘squelch’ a lovely word?” said the Story Girl irrelevantly. “It’s so expressive. Squ-u-e-l-ch!”

Certainly it was a lovely word, as the Story Girl said it. Even a king would not have minded being squelched, if it were done to music like that.

“Uncle Roger says that Martin Forbes’ wife has squelched HIM,” said Felicity. “He says Martin can’t call his soul his own since he was married.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Cecily vindictively.

We all stared. This was so very unlike Cecily.

“Martin Forbes is the brother of a horrid man in Summerside who called me Johnny, that’s why,” she explained. “He was visiting here with his wife two years ago, and he called me Johnny every time he spoke to me. Just you fancy! I’ll NEVER forgive him.”

“That isn’t a Christian spirit,” said Felicity rebukingly.

“I don’t care. Would YOU forgive James Forbes if he had called YOU Johnny?” demanded Cecily.

“I know a story about Martin Forbes’ grandfather,” said the Story Girl. “Long ago they didn’t have any choir in the Carlisle church — just a precentor you know. But at last they got a choir, and Andrew McPherson was to sing bass in it. Old Mr. Forbes hadn’t gone to church for years, because he was so rheumatic, but he went the first Sunday the choir sang, because he had never heard any one sing bass, and wanted to hear what it was like. Grandfather King asked him what he thought of the choir. Mr. Forbes said it was ‘verra guid,’ but as for Andrew’s bass, ‘there was nae bass aboot it — it was just a bur-r-r-r the hale time.’”

If you could have heard the Story Girl’s “bur-r-r-r!” Not old Mr. Forbes himself could have invested it with more of Doric scorn. We rolled over in the cool grass and screamed with laughter.

“Poor Dan,” said Cecily compassionately. “He’s up there all alone in his room, missing all the fun. I suppose it’s mean of us to be having such a good time here, when he has to stay in bed.”

“If Dan hadn’t done wrong eating the bad berries when he was told not to, he wouldn’t be sick,” said Felicity. “You’re bound to catch it when you do

wrong. It was just a Providence he didn't die."

"That makes me think of another story about old Mr. Scott," said the Story Girl. "You know, I told you he was very angry because the Presbytery made him retire. There were two ministers in particular he blamed for being at the bottom of it. One time a friend of his was trying to console him, and said to him,

"'You should be resigned to the will of Providence.'

"'Providence had nothing to do with it,' said old Mr. Scott.

"'Twas the McCloskeys and the devil.'"

"You shouldn't speak of the — the — DEVIL," said Felicity, rather shocked.

"Well, that's just what Mr. Scott said."

"Oh, it's all right for a MINISTER to speak of him. But it isn't nice for little girls. If you HAVE to speak of — of — him — you might say the Old Scratch. That is what mother calls him."

"'Twas the McCloskeys and the Old Scratch,'" said the Story Girl reflectively, as if she were trying to see which version was the more effective. "It wouldn't do," she decided.

"I don't think it's any harm to mention the — the — that person, when you're telling a story," said Cecily. "It's only in plain talking it doesn't do. It sounds too much like swearing then."

"I know another story about Mr. Scott," said the Story Girl. "Not long after he was married his wife wasn't quite ready for church one morning when it was time to go. So, just to teach her a lesson, he drove off alone, and left her to walk all the way — it was nearly two miles — in the heat and dust. She took it very quietly. It's the best way, I guess, when you're married to a man like old Mr. Scott. But just a few Sundays after wasn't he late himself! I suppose Mrs. Scott thought that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, for she slipped out and drove off to church as he

had done. Old Mr. Scott finally arrived at the church, pretty hot and dusty, and in none too good a temper. He went into the pulpit, leaned over it and looked at his wife, sitting calmly in her pew at the side.

“‘It was cleverly done,’ he said, right out loud, ‘BUT DINNA TRY IT AGAIN!’”

In the midst of our laughter Pat came down the Walk, his stately tail waving over the grasses. He proved to be the precursor of Dan, clothed and in his right mind.

“Do you think you should have got up, Dan?” said Cecily anxiously.

“I had to,” said Dan. “The window was open, and it was more’n I could stand to hear you fellows laughing down here and me missing it all. ‘Sides, I’m all right again. I feel fine.”

“I guess this will be a lesson to you, Dan King,” said Felicity, in her most maddening tone. “I guess you won’t forget it in a hurry. You won’t go eating the bad berries another time when you’re told not to.”

Dan had picked out a soft spot in the grass for himself, and was in the act of sitting down, when Felicity’s tactful speech arrested him midway. He straightened up and turned a wrathful face on his provoking sister. Then, red with indignation, but without a word, he stalked up the walk.

“Now he’s gone off mad,” said Cecily reproachfully. “Oh, Felicity, why couldn’t you have held your tongue?”

“Why, what did I say to make him mad?” asked Felicity in honest perplexity.

“I think it’s awful for brothers and sisters to be always quarrelling,” sighed Cecily. “The Cowans fight all the time; and you and Dan will soon be as bad.”

“Oh, talk sense,” said Felicity. “Dan’s got so touchy it isn’t safe to speak to him. I should think he’d be sorry for all the trouble he made last night.

But you just back him up in everything, Cecily.”

“I don’t!”

“You do! And you’ve no business to, specially when mother’s away. She left ME in charge.”

“You didn’t take much charge last night when Dan got sick,” said Felix maliciously. Felicity had told him at tea that night he was getting fatter than ever. This was his tit-for-tat. “You were pretty glad to leave it all to Cecily then.”

“Who’s talking to you?” said Felicity.

“Now, look here,” said the Story Girl, “the first thing we know we’ll all be quarrelling, and then some of us will sulk all day tomorrow. It’s dreadful to spoil a whole day. Just let’s all sit still and count a hundred before we say another word.”

We sat still and counted the hundred. When Cecily finished she got up and went in search of Dan, resolved to soothe his wounded feelings. Felicity called after her to tell Dan there was a jam turnover she had put away in the pantry specially for him. Felix held out to Felicity a remarkably fine apple which he had been saving for his own consumption; and the Story Girl began a tale of an enchanted maiden in a castle by the sea; but we never heard the end of it. For, just as the evening star was looking whitely through the rosy window of the west, Cecily came flying through the orchard, wringing her hands.

“Oh, come, come quick,” she gasped. “Dan’s eating the bad berries again — he’s et a whole bunch of them — he says he’ll show Felicity. I can’t stop him. Come you and try.”

We rose in a body and rushed towards the house. In the yard we encountered Dan, emerging from the fir wood and champing the fatal berries with unrepentant relish.

“Dan King, do you want to commit suicide?” demanded the Story Girl.

“Look here, Dan,” I expostulated. “You shouldn’t do this. Think how sick you were last night and all the trouble you made for everybody. Don’t eat any more, there’s a good chap.”

“All right,” said Dan. “I’ve et all I want. They taste fine. I don’t believe it was them made me sick.”

But now that his anger was over he looked a little frightened. Felicity was not there. We found her in the kitchen, lighting up the fire.

“Bev, fill the kettle with water and put it on to heat,” she said in a resigned tone. “If Dan’s going to be sick again we’ve got to be ready for it. I wish mother was home, that’s all. I hope she’ll never go away again. Dan King, you just wait till I tell her of the way you’ve acted.”

“Fudge! I ain’t going to be sick,” said Dan. “And if YOU begin telling tales, Felicity King, I’LL tell some too. I know how many eggs mother said you could use while she was away — and I know how many you HAVE used. I counted. So you’d better mind your own business, Miss.”

“A nice way to talk to your sister when you may be dead in an hour’s time!” retorted Felicity, in tears between her anger and her real alarm about Dan.

But in an hour’s time Dan was still in good health, and announced his intention of going to bed. He went, and was soon sleeping as peacefully as if he had nothing on either conscience or stomach. But Felicity declared she meant to keep the water hot until all danger was past; and we sat up to keep her company. We were sitting there when Uncle Roger walked in at eleven o’clock.

“What on earth are you young fry doing up at this time of night?” he asked angrily. “You should have been in your beds two hours ago. And with a roaring fire on a night that’s hot enough to melt a brass monkey! Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“It’s because of Dan,” explained Felicity wearily. “He went and et more of the bad berries — a whole lot of them — and we were sure he’d be sick again. But he hasn’t been yet, and now he’s asleep.”

“Is that boy stark, staring mad?” said Uncle Roger.

“It was Felicity’s fault,” cried Cecily, who always took Dan’s part through evil report and good report. “She told him she guessed he’d learned a lesson and wouldn’t do what she’d told him not to again. So he went and et them because she vexed him so.”

“Felicity King, if you don’t watch out you’ll grow up into the sort of woman who drives her husband to drink,” said Uncle Roger gravely.

“How could I tell Dan would act so like a mule!” cried Felicity.

“Get off to bed, every one of you. It’s a thankful man I’ll be when your father and mother come home. The wretched bachelor who undertakes to look after a houseful of children like you is to be pitied. Nobody will ever catch me doing it again. Felicity, is there anything fit to eat in the pantry?”

That last question was the most unkindest cut of all. Felicity could have forgiven Uncle Roger anything but that. It really was unpardonable. She confided to me as we climbed the stairs that she hated Uncle Roger. Her red lips quivered and the tears of wounded pride brimmed over in her beautiful blue eyes. In the dim candlelight she looked unbelievably pretty and appealing. I put my arm about her and gave her a cousinly salute.

“Never you mind him, Felicity,” I said. “He’s only a grownup.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GHOSTLY BELL

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Friday was a comfortable day in the household of King. Everybody was in good humour. The Story Girl sparkled through several tales that ranged from the afrites and jinns of Eastern myth, through the piping days of chivalry, down to the homely anecdotes of Carlisle workaday folks. She was in turn an Oriental princess behind a silken veil, the bride who followed her bridegroom to the wars of Palestine disguised as a page, the gallant lady who ransomed her diamond necklace by dancing a coranto with a highwayman on a moonlit heath, and “Buskirk’s girl” who joined the Sons and Daughters of Temperance “just to see what was into it;” and in each impersonation she was so thoroughly the thing impersonated that it was a matter of surprise to us when she emerged from each our own familiar Story Girl again.

Cecily and Sara Ray found a “sweet” new knitted lace pattern in an old magazine and spent a happy afternoon learning it and “talking secrets.” Chancing — accidentally, I vow — to overhear certain of these secrets, I learned that Sara Ray had named an apple for Johnny Price—”and, Cecily, true’s you live, there was eight seeds in it, and you know eight means ‘they both love’ “ — while Cecily admitted that Willy Fraser had written on his slate and showed it to her,

”If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two” —

“but, Sara Ray, NEVER you breathe this to a living soul.”

Felix also averred that he heard Sara ask Cecily very seriously,

“Cecily, how old must we be before we can have a REAL beau?”

But Sara always denied it; so I am inclined to believe Felix simply made it up himself.

Paddy distinguished himself by catching a rat, and being intolerably conceited about it — until Sara Ray cured him by calling him a “dear, sweet cat,” and kissing him between the ears. Then Pat sneaked abjectly off, his tail drooping. He resented being called a sweet cat. He had a sense of humour, had Pat. Very few cats have; and most of them have such an inordinate appetite for flattery that they will swallow any amount of it and thrive thereon. Paddy had a finer taste. The Story Girl and I were the only ones who could pay him compliments to his liking. The Story Girl would box his ears with her fist and say, “Bless your gray heart, Paddy, you’re a good sort of old rascal,” and Pat would purr his satisfaction; I used to take a handful of the skin on his back, shake him gently and say, “Pat, you’ve forgotten more than any human being ever knew,” and I vow Paddy would lick his chops with delight. But to be called “a sweet cat!” Oh, Sara, Sara!

Felicity tried — and had the most gratifying luck with — a new and complicated cake recipe — a gorgeous compound of a plumminess to make your mouth water. The number of eggs she used in it would have shocked Aunt Janet’s thrifty soul, but that cake, like beauty, was its own excuse. Uncle Roger ate three slices of it at teatime and told Felicity she was an artist. The poor man meant it as a compliment; but Felicity, who knew Uncle Blair was an artist and had a poor opinion of such fry, looked indignant and retorted, indeed she wasn’t!

“Peter says there’s any amount of raspberries back in the maple clearing,” said Dan. “S’posen we all go after tea and pick some?”

“I’d like to,” sighed Felicity, “but we’d come home tired and with all the milking to do. You boys better go alone.”

“Peter and I will attend to the milking for one evening,” said Uncle Roger. “You can all go. I have an idea that a raspberry pie for tomorrow night, when the folks come home, would hit the right spot.”

Accordingly, after tea we all set off, armed with jugs and cups. Felicity, thoughtful creature, also took a small basketful of jelly cookies along with

her. We had to go back through the maple woods to the extreme end of Uncle Roger's farm — a pretty walk, through a world of green, whispering boughs and spice-sweet ferns, and shifting patches of sunlight. The raspberries were plentiful, and we were not long in filling our receptacles. Then we foregathered around a tiny wood spring, cold and pellucid under its young maples, and ate the jelly cookies; and the Story Girl told us a tale of a haunted spring in a mountain glen where a fair white lady dwelt, who pledged all comers in a golden cup with jewels bright.

“And if you drank of the cup with her,” said the Story Girl, her eyes glowing through the emerald dusk about us, “you were never seen in the world again; you were whisked straightway to fairyland, and lived there with a fairy bride. And you never WANTED to come back to earth, because when you drank of the magic cup you forgot all your past life, except for one day in every year when you were allowed to remember it.”

“I wish there was such a place as fairyland — and a way to get to it,” said Cecily.

“I think there IS such a place — in spite of Uncle Edward,” said the Story Girl dreamily, “and I think there is a way of getting there too, if we could only find it.”

Well, the Story Girl was right. There is such a place as fairyland — but only children can find the way to it. And they do not know that it is fairyland until they have grown so old that they forget the way. One bitter day, when they seek it and cannot find it, they realize what they have lost; and that is the tragedy of life. On that day the gates of Eden are shut behind them and the age of gold is over. Henceforth they must dwell in the common light of common day. Only a few, who remain children at heart, can ever find that fair, lost path again; and blessed are they above mortals. They, and only they, can bring us tidings from that dear country where we once sojourned and from which we must evermore be exiles. The world calls them its singers and poets and artists and storytellers; but they are just people who have never forgotten the way to fairyland.

As we sat there the Awkward Man passed by, with his gun over his shoulder and his dog at his side. He did not look like an awkward man,

there in the heart of the maple woods. He strode along right masterfully and lifted his head with the air of one who was monarch of all he surveyed.

The Story Girl kissed her fingertips to him with the delightful audacity which was a part of her; and the Awkward Man plucked off his hat and swept her a stately and graceful bow.

“I don’t understand why they call him the awkward man,” said Cecily, when he was out of earshot.

“You’d understand why if you ever saw him at a party or a picnic,” said Felicity, “trying to pass plates and dropping them whenever a woman looked at him. They say it’s pitiful to see him.”

“I must get well acquainted with that man next summer,” said the Story Girl. “If I put it off any longer it will be too late. I’m growing so fast, Aunt Olivia says I’ll have to wear ankle skirts next summer. If I begin to look grownup he’ll get frightened of me, and then I’ll never find out the Golden Milestone mystery.”

“Do you think he’ll ever tell you who Alice is?” I asked.

“I have a notion who Alice is already,” said the mysterious creature. But she would tell us nothing more.

When the jelly cookies were all eaten it was high time to be moving homeward, for when the dark comes down there are more comfortable places than a rustling maple wood and the precincts of a possibly enchanted spring. When we reached the foot of the orchard and entered it through a gap in the hedge it was the magical, mystical time of “between lights.” Off to the west was a daffodil glow hanging over the valley of lost sunsets, and Grandfather King’s huge willow rose up against it like a rounded mountain of foliage. In the east, above the maple woods, was a silvery sheen that hinted the moonrise. But the orchard was a place of shadows and mysterious sounds. Midway up the open space in its heart we met Peter; and if ever a boy was given over to sheer terror that boy was Peter. His face was as white as a sunburned face could be, and his eyes were brimmed with panic.

“Peter, what is the matter?” cried Cecily.

“There’s — SOMETHING — in the house, RINGING A BELL,” said Peter, in a shaking voice. Not the Story Girl herself could have invested that “something” with more of creepy horror. We all drew close together. I felt a crinkly feeling along my back which I had never known before. If Peter had not been so manifestly frightened we might have thought he was trying to “pass a joke” on us. But such abject terror as his could not be counterfeited.

“Nonsense!” said Felicity, but her voice shook. “There isn’t a bell in the house to ring. You must have imagined it, Peter. Or else Uncle Roger is trying to fool us.”

“Your Uncle Roger went to Markdale right after milking,” said Peter. “He locked up the house and gave me the key. There wasn’t a soul in it then, that I’m sure of. I druv the cows to the pasture, and I got back about fifteen minutes ago. I set down on the front door steps for a moment, and all at once I heard a bell ring in the house eight times. I tell you I was skeered. I made a bolt for the orchard — and you won’t catch me going near that house till your Uncle Roger comes home.”

You wouldn’t catch any of us doing it. We were almost as badly scared as Peter. There we stood in a huddled demoralized group. Oh, what an eerie place that orchard was! What shadows! What noises! What spooky swooping of bats! You COULDN’T look every way at once, and goodness only knew what might be behind you!

“There CAN’T be anybody in the house,” said Felicity.

“Well, here’s the key — go and see for yourself,” said Peter.

Felicity had no intention of going and seeing.

“I think you boys ought to go,” she said, retreating behind the defence of sex. “You ought to be braver than girls.”

“But we ain’t,” said Felix candidly. “I wouldn’t be much scared of anything REAL. But a haunted house is a different thing.”

“I always thought something had to be done in a place before it could be haunted,” said Cecily. “Somebody killed or something like that, you know. Nothing like that ever happened in our family. The Kings have always been respectable.”

“Perhaps it is Emily King’s ghost,” whispered Felix.

“She never appeared anywhere but in the orchard,” said the Story Girl. “Oh, oh, children, isn’t there something under Uncle Alec’s tree?”

We peered fearfully through the gloom. There WAS something — something that wavered and fluttered — advanced — retreated —

“That’s only my old apron,” said Felicity. “I hung it there to-day when I was looking for the white hen’s nest. Oh, what shall we do? Uncle Roger may not be back for hours. I CAN’T believe there’s anything in the house.”

“Maybe it’s only Peg Bowen,” suggested Dan.

There was not a great deal of comfort in this. We were almost as much afraid of Peg Bowen as we would be of any spectral visitant.

Peter scoffed at the idea.

“Peg Bowen wasn’t in the house before your Uncle Roger locked it up, and how could she get in afterwards?” he said. “No, it isn’t Peg Bowen. It’s SOMETHING that WALKS.”

“I know a story about a ghost,” said the Story Girl, the ruling passion strong even in extremity. “It is about a ghost with eyeholes but no eyes—”

“Don’t,” cried Cecily hysterically. “Don’t you go on! Don’t you say another word! I can’t bear it! Don’t you!”

The Story Girl didn't. But she had said enough. There was something in the quality of a ghost with eyeholes but no eyes that froze our young blood.

There never were in all the world six more badly scared children than those who huddled in the old King orchard that August night.

All at once — something — leaped from the bough of a tree and alighted before us. We split the air with a simultaneous shriek. We would have run, one and all, if there had been anywhere to run to. But there wasn't — all around us were only those shadowy arcades. Then we saw with shame that it was only our Paddy.

"Pat, Pat," I said, picking him up, feeling a certain comfort in his soft, solid body. "Stay with us, old fellow."

But Pat would none of us. He struggled out of my clasp and disappeared over the long grasses with soundless leaps. He was no longer our tame, domestic, well acquainted Paddy. He was a strange, furtive animal — a "questing beast."

Presently the moon rose; but this only made matters worse. The shadows had been still before; now they moved and danced, as the night wind tossed the boughs. The old house, with its dreadful secret, was white and clear against the dark background of spruces. We were woefully tired, but we could not sit down because the grass was reeking with dew.

"The Family Ghost only appears in daylight," said the Story Girl. "I wouldn't mind seeing a ghost in daylight. But after dark is another thing."

"There's no such thing as a ghost," I said contemptuously. Oh, how I wished I could believe it!

"Then what rung that bell?" said Peter. "Bells don't ring of themselves, I s'pose, specially when there ain't any in the house to ring."

"Oh, will Uncle Roger never come home!" sobbed Felicity. "I know he'll laugh at us awful, but it's better to be laughed at than scared like this."

Uncle Roger did not come until nearly ten. Never was there a more welcome sound than the rumble of his wheels in the lane. We ran to the orchard gate and swarmed across the yard, just as Uncle Roger alighted at the front door. He stared at us in the moonlight.

“Have you tormented any one into eating more bad berries, Felicity?” he demanded.

“Oh, Uncle Roger, don’t go in,” implored Felicity seriously. “There’s something dreadful in there — something that rings a bell. Peter heard it. Don’t go in.”

“There’s no use asking the meaning of this, I suppose,” said Uncle Roger with the calm of despair. “I’ve gave up trying to fathom you young ones. Peter, where’s the key? What yarn have you been telling?”

“I DID hear a bell ring,” said Peter stubbornly.

Uncle Roger unlocked and flung open the front door. As he did so, clear and sweet, rang out ten bell-like chimes.

“That’s what I heard,” cried Peter. “There’s the bell!”

We had to wait until Uncle Roger stopped laughing before we heard the explanation. We thought he never WOULD stop.

“That’s Grandfather King’s old clock striking,” he said, as soon as he was able to speak. “Sammy Prott came along after tea, when you were away to the forge, Peter, and I gave him permission to clean the old clock. He had it going merrily in no time. And now it has almost frightened you poor little monkeys to death.”

We heard Uncle Roger chuckling all the way to the barn.

“Uncle Roger can laugh,” said Cecily, with a quiver in her voice, “but it’s no laughing matter to be so scared. I just feel sick, I was so frightened.”

“I wouldn’t mind if he’d laugh once and have it done with it,” said Felicity bitterly. “But he’ll laugh at us for a year, and tell the story to every soul

that comes to the place.”

“You can’t blame him for that,” said the Story Girl. “I shall tell it, too. I don’t care if the joke is as much on myself as any one. A story is a story, no matter who it’s on. But it IS hateful to be laughed at — and grownups always do it. I never will when I’m grown up. I’ll remember better.”

“It’s all Peter’s fault,” said Felicity. “I do think he might have had more sense than to take a clock striking for a bell ringing.”

“I never heard that kind of a strike before,” protested Peter. “It don’t sound a bit like other clocks. And the door was shut and the sound kind o’ muffled. It’s all very fine to say you would have known what it was, but I don’t believe you would.”

“I wouldn’t have,” said the Story Girl honestly. “I thought it WAS a bell when I heard it, and the door open, too. Let us be fair, Felicity.”

“I’m dreadful tired,” sighed Cecily.

We were all “dreadful tired,” for this was the third night of late hours and nerve racking strain. But it was over two hours since we had eaten the cookies, and Felicity suggested that a saucerful apiece of raspberries and cream would not be hard to take. It was not, for any one but Cecily, who couldn’t swallow a mouthful.

“I’m glad father and mother will be back tomorrow night,” she said. “It’s too exciting when they’re away. That’s my opinion.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

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Felicity was cumbered with many cares the next morning. For one thing, the whole house must be put in apple pie order; and for another, an elaborate supper must be prepared for the expected return of the travellers that night. Felicity devoted her whole attention to this, and left the secondary preparation of the regular meals to Cecily and the Story Girl. It was agreed that the latter was to make a cornmeal pudding for dinner.

In spite of her disaster with the bread, the Story Girl had been taking cooking lessons from Felicity all the week, and getting on tolerably well, although, mindful of her former mistake, she never ventured on anything without Felicity's approval. But Felicity had no time to oversee her this morning.

"You must attend to the pudding yourself," she said. "The recipe's so plain and simple even you can't go astray, and if there's anything you don't understand you can ask me. But don't bother me if you can help it."

The Story Girl did not bother her once. The pudding was concocted and baked, as the Story Girl proudly informed us when we came to the dinnertable, all on her own hook. She was very proud of it; and certainly as far as appearance went it justified her triumph. The slices were smooth and golden; and, smothered in the luscious maple sugar sauce which Cecily had compounded, were very fair to view. Nevertheless, although none of us, not even Uncle Roger or Felicity, said a word at the time, for fear of hurting the Story Girl's feelings, the pudding did not taste exactly as it should. It was tough — decidedly tough — and lacked the richness of flavour which was customary in Aunt Janet's cornmeal puddings. If it had not been for the abundant supply of sauce it would have been very dry eating indeed. Eaten it was, however, to the last crumb. If it were not just

what a cornmeal pudding might be, the rest of the bill of fare had been extra good and our appetites matched it.

“I wish I was twins so’s I could eat more,” said Dan, when he simply had to stop.

“What good would being twins do you?” asked Peter. “People who squint can’t eat any more than people who don’t squint, can they?”

We could not see any connection between Peter’s two questions.

“What has squinting got to do with twins?” asked Dan.

“Why, twins are just people that squint, aren’t they?” said Peter.

We thought he was trying to be funny, until we found out that he was quite in earnest. Then we laughed until Peter got sulky.

“I don’t care,” he said. “How’s a fellow to know? Tommy and Adam Cowan, over at Markdale, are twins; and they’re both cross-eyed. So I s’posed that was what being twins meant. It’s all very fine for you fellows to laugh. I never went to school half as much as you did; and you was brought up in Toronto, too. If you’d worked out ever since you was seven, and just got to school in the winter, there’d be lots of things you wouldn’t know, either.”

“Never mind, Peter,” said Cecily. “You know lots of things they don’t.”

But Peter was not to be conciliated, and took himself off in high dudgeon. To be laughed at before Felicity — to be laughed at BY Felicity — was something he could not endure. Let Cecily and the Story Girl cackle all they wanted to, and let those stuck-up Toronto boys grin like chessy-cats; but when Felicity laughed at him the iron entered into Peter’s soul.

If the Story Girl laughed at Peter the mills of the gods ground out his revenge for him in mid-afternoon. Felicity, having used up all the available cooking materials in the house, had to stop perforce; and she

now determined to stuff two new pincushions she had been making for her room. We heard her rummaging in the pantry as we sat on the cool, spruce-shadowed cellar door outside, where Uncle Roger was showing us how to make elderberry popguns. Presently she came out, frowning.

“Cecily, do you know where mother put the sawdust she emptied out of that old beaded pincushion of Grandmother King’s, after she had sifted the needles out of it? I thought it was in the tin box.”

“So it is,” said Cecily.

“It isn’t. There isn’t a speck of sawdust in that box.”

The Story Girl’s face wore a quite indescribable expression, compound of horror and shame. She need not have confessed. If she had but held her tongue the mystery of the sawdust’s disappearance might have forever remained a mystery. She WOULD have held her tongue, as she afterwards confided to me, if it had not been for a horrible fear which flashed into her mind that possibly sawdust puddings were not healthy for people to eat — especially if there might be needles in them — and that if any mischief had been done in that direction it was her duty to undo it if possible at any cost of ridicule to herself.

“Oh, Felicity,” she said, her voice expressing a very anguish of humiliation, “I — I — thought that stuff in the box was cornmeal and used it to make the pudding.”

Felicity and Cecily stared blankly at the Story Girl. We boys began to laugh, but were checked midway by Uncle Roger. He was rocking himself back and forth, with his hand pressed against his stomach.

“Oh,” he groaned, “I’ve been wondering what these sharp pains I’ve been feeling ever since dinner meant. I know now. I must have swallowed a needle — several needles, perhaps. I’m done for!”

The poor Story Girl went very white.

“Oh, Uncle Roger, could it be possible? You COULDN’T have swallowed a needle without knowing it. It would have stuck in your tongue or teeth.”

“I didn’t chew the pudding,” groaned Uncle Roger. “It was too tough — I just swallowed the chunks whole.”

He groaned and twisted and doubled himself up. But he overdid it. He was not as good an actor as the Story Girl. Felicity looked scornfully at him.

“Uncle Roger, you are not one bit sick,” she said deliberately.
“You are just putting on.”

“Felicity, if I die from the effects of eating sawdust pudding, flavoured with needles, you’ll be sorry you ever said such a thing to your poor old uncle,” said Uncle Roger reproachfully. “Even if there were no needles in it, sixty-year-old sawdust can’t be good for my tummy. I daresay it wasn’t even clean.”

“Well, you know every one has to eat a peck of dirt in his life,” giggled Felicity.

“But nobody has to eat it all at once,” retorted Uncle Roger, with another groan. “Oh, Sara Stanley, it’s a thankful man I am that your Aunt Olivia is to be home tonight. You’d have me kilt entirely by another day. I believe you did it on purpose to have a story to tell.”

Uncle Roger hobbled off to the barn, still holding on to his stomach.

“Do you think he really feels sick?” asked the Story Girl anxiously.

“No, I don’t,” said Felicity. “You needn’t worry over him. There’s nothing the matter with him. I don’t believe there were any needles in that sawdust. Mother sifted it very carefully.”

“I know a story about a man whose son swallowed a mouse,” said the Story Girl, who would probably have known a story and tried to tell it if she were being led to the stake. “And he ran and wakened up a very tired doctor just as he had got to sleep.

“‘Oh, doctor, my son has swallowed a mouse,’ he cried. ‘What shall I do?’

“‘Tell him to swallow a cat,’ roared the poor doctor, and slammed his door.

“Now, if Uncle Roger has swallowed any needles, maybe it would make it all right if he swallowed a pincushion.”

We all laughed. But Felicity soon grew sober.

“It seems awful to think of eating a sawdust pudding. How on earth did you make such a mistake?”

“It looked just like cornmeal,” said the Story Girl, going from white to red in her shame. “Well, I’m going to give up trying to cook, and stick to things I can do. And if ever one of you mentions sawdust pudding to me I’ll never tell you another story as long as I live.”

The threat was effectual. Never did we mention that unholy pudding. But the Story Girl could not so impose silence on the grownups, especially Uncle Roger. He tormented her for the rest of the summer. Never a breakfast did he sit down to, without gravely inquiring if they were sure there was no sawdust in the porridge. Not a tweak of rheumatism did he feel but he vowed it was due to a needle, travelling about his body. And Aunt Olivia was warned to label all the pincushions in the house. “Contents, sawdust; not intended for puddings.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW KISSING WAS DISCOVERED

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An August evening, calm, golden, dewless, can be very lovely. At sunset, Felicity, Cecily, and Sara Ray, Dan, Felix, and I were in the orchard, sitting on the cool grasses at the base of the Pulpit Stone. In the west was a field of crocus sky over which pale cloud blossoms were scattered.

Uncle Roger had gone to the station to meet the travellers, and the dining-room table was spread with a feast of fat things.

"It's been a jolly week, take it all round," said Felix, "but I'm glad the grownups are coming back tonight, especially Uncle Alec."

"I wonder if they'll bring us anything," said Dan.

"I'm thinking long to hear all about the wedding," said Felicity, who was braiding timothy stalks into a collar for Pat.

"You girls are always thinking about weddings and getting married," said Dan contemptuously.

"We ain't," said Felicity indignantly. "I am NEVER going to get married. I think it is just horrid, so there!"

"I guess you think it would be a good deal horrid not to be," said Dan.

"It depends on who you're married to," said Cecily gravely, seeing that Felicity disdained reply. "If you got a man like father it would be all right. But S'POSEN you got one like Andrew Ward? He's so mean and cross to his wife that she tells him every day she wishes she'd never set eyes on him."

“Perhaps that’s WHY he’s mean and cross,” said Felix.

“I tell you it isn’t always the man’s fault,” said Dan darkly. “When I get married I’ll be good to my wife, but I mean to be boss. When I open my mouth my word will be law.”

“If your word is as big as your mouth I guess it will be,” said Felicity cruelly.

“I pity the man who gets you, Felicity King, that’s all” retorted Dan.

“Now, don’t fight,” implored Cecily.

“Who’s fighting?” demanded Dan. “Felicity thinks she can say anything she likes to me, but I’ll show her different.”

Probably, in spite of Cecily’s efforts, a bitter spat would have resulted between Dan and Felicity, had not a diversion been effected at that moment by the Story Girl, who came slowly down Uncle Stephen’s Walk.

“Just look how the Story Girl has got herself up!” said Felicity.
“Why, she’s no more than decent!”

The Story Girl was barefooted and barearmed, having rolled the sleeves of her pink gingham up to her shoulders. Around her waist was twisted a girdle of the blood-red roses that bloomed in Aunt Olivia’s garden; on her sleek curls she wore a chaplet of them; and her hands were full of them.

She paused under the outmost tree, in a golden-green gloom, and laughed at us over a big branch. Her wild, subtle, nameless charm clothed her as with a garment. We always remembered the picture she made there; and in later days when we read Tennyson’s poems at a college desk, we knew exactly how an oread, peering through the green leaves on some haunted knoll of many fountained Ida, must look.

“Felicity,” said the Story Girl reproachfully, “what have you been doing to Peter? He’s up there sulking in the granary, and he won’t come down, and

he says it's your fault. You must have hurt his feelings dreadfully."

"I don't know about his feelings," said Felicity, with an angry toss of her shining head, "but I guess I made his ears tingle all right. I boxed them both good and hard."

"Oh, Felicity! What for?"

"Well, he tried to kiss me, that's what for!" said Felicity, turning very red. "As if I would let a hired boy kiss me! I guess Master Peter won't try anything like that again in a hurry."

The Story Girl came out of her shadows and sat down beside us on the grass.

"Well, in that case," she said gravely, "I think you did right to slap his ears — not because he is a hired boy, but because it would be impertinent in ANY boy. But talking of kissing makes me think of a story I found in Aunt Olivia's scrapbook the other day. Wouldn't you like to hear it? It is called, 'How Kissing Was Discovered.'"

"Wasn't kissing always discovered?" asked Dan.

"Not according to this story. It was just discovered accidentally."

"Well, let's hear about it," said Felix, "although I think kissing's awful silly, and it wouldn't have mattered much if it hadn't ever been discovered."

The Story Girl scattered her roses around her on the grass, and clasped her slim hands over her knees. Gazing dreamily afar at the tinted sky between the apple trees, as if she were looking back to the merry days of the world's gay youth, she began, her voice giving to the words and fancies of the old tale the delicacy of hoar frost and the crystal sparkle of dew.

"It happened long, long ago in Greece — where so many other beautiful things happened. Before that, nobody had ever heard of kissing. And then

it was just discovered in the twinkling of an eye. And a man wrote it down and the account has been preserved ever since.

“There was a young shepherd named Glaucón — a very handsome young shepherd — who lived in a little village called Thebes. It became a very great and famous city afterwards, but at this time it was only a little village, very quiet and simple. Too quiet for Glaucón’s liking. He grew tired of it, and he thought he would like to go away from home and see something of the world. So he took his knapsack and his shepherd’s crook, and wandered away until he came to Thessaly. That is the land of the gods’ hill, you know. The name of the hill was Olympus. But it has nothing to do with this story. This happened on another mountain — Mount Pelion.

“Glaucón hired himself to a wealthy man who had a great many sheep. And every day Glaucón had to lead the sheep up to pasture on Mount Pelion, and watch them while they ate. There was nothing else to do, and he would have found the time very long, if he had not been able to play on a flute. So he played very often and very beautifully, as he sat under the trees and watched the wonderful blue sea afar off, and thought about Aglaia.

“Aglaia was his master’s daughter. She was so sweet and beautiful that Glaucón fell in love with her the very moment he first saw her; and when he was not playing his flute on the mountain he was thinking about Aglaia, and dreaming that some day he might have flocks of his own, and a dear little cottage down in the valley where he and Aglaia might live.

“Aglaia had fallen in love with Glaucón just as he had with her. But she never let him suspect it for ever so long. He did not know how often she would steal up the mountain and hide behind the rocks near where the sheep pastured, to listen to Glaucón’s beautiful music. It was very lovely music, because he was always thinking of Aglaia while he played, though he little dreamed how near him she often was.

“But after awhile Glaucón found out that Aglaia loved him, and everything was well. Nowadays I suppose a wealthy man like Aglaia’s father wouldn’t be willing to let his daughter marry a hired man; but this was in the Golden Age, you know, when nothing like that mattered at all.

“After that, almost every day Aglaia would go up the mountain and sit beside Glaucón, as he watched the flocks and played on his flute. But he did not play as much as he used to, because he liked better to talk with Aglaia. And in the evening they would lead the sheep home together.

“One day Aglaia went up the mountain by a new way, and she came to a little brook. Something was sparkling very brightly among its pebbles. Aglaia picked it up, and it was the most beautiful little stone that she had ever seen. It was only as large as a pea, but it glittered and flashed in the sunlight with every colour of the rainbow. Aglaia was so delighted with it that she resolved to take it as a present to Glaucón.

“But all at once she heard a stamping of hoofs behind her, and when she turned she almost died from fright. For there was the great god, Pan, and he was a very terrible object, looking quite as much like a goat as a man. The gods were not all beautiful, you know. And, beautiful or not, nobody ever wanted to meet them face to face.

“‘Give that stone to me,’ said Pan, holding out his hand.

“But Aglaia, though she was frightened, would not give him the stone.

“‘I want it for Glaucón,’ she said.

“‘I want it for one of my wood nymphs,’ said Pan, ‘and I must have it.’

“He advanced threateningly, but Aglaia ran as hard as she could up the mountain. If she could only reach Glaucón he would protect her. Pan followed her, clattering and bellowing terribly, but in a few minutes she rushed into Glaucón’s arms.

“The dreadful sight of Pan and the still more dreadful noise he made, so frightened the sheep that they fled in all directions. But Glaucón was not afraid at all, because Pan was the god of shepherds, and was bound to grant any prayer a good shepherd, who always did his duty, might make. If Glaucón had NOT been a good shepherd dear knows what would have happened to him and Aglaia. But he was; and when he begged Pan to go away and not frighten Aglaia any more, Pan had to go, grumbling a good

deal — and Pan's grumblings had a very ugly sound. But still he WENT, and that was the main thing.

“Now, dearest, what is all this trouble about?” asked Glaucon; and Aglaia told him the story.

“But where is the beautiful stone?” he asked, when she had finished. “Didst thou drop it in thy alarm?”

“No, indeed! Aglaia had done nothing of the sort. When she began to run, she had popped it into her mouth, and there it was still, quite safe. Now she poked it out between her red lips, where it glittered in the sunlight.

“Take it,” she whispered.

“The question was — how was he to take it? Both of Aglaia's arms were held fast to her sides by Glaucon's arms; and if he loosened his clasp ever so little he was afraid she would fall, so weak and trembling was she from her dreadful fright. Then Glaucon had a brilliant idea. He would take the beautiful stone from Aglaia's lips with his own lips.

“He bent over until his lips touched hers — and THEN, he forgot all about the beautiful pebble and so did Aglaia. Kissing was discovered!

“What a yarn!” said Dan, drawing a long breath, when we had come to ourselves and discovered that we were really sitting in a dewy Prince Edward Island orchard instead of watching two lovers on a mountain in Thessaly in the Golden Age. “I don't believe a word of it.”

“Of course, we know it wasn't really true,” said Felicity.

“Well, I don't know,” said the Story Girl thoughtfully. “I think there are two kinds of true things — true things that ARE, and true things that are NOT, but MIGHT be.”

“I don't believe there's any but the one kind of trueness,” said Felicity. “And anyway, this story couldn't be true. You know there was no such thing as a god Pan.”

“How do you know what there might have been in the Golden Age?” asked the Story Girl.

Which was, indeed, an unanswerable question for Felicity.

“I wonder what became of the beautiful stone?” said Cecily.

“Likely Aglaia swallowed it,” said Felix practically.

“Did Glaucon and Aglaia ever get married?” asked Sara Ray.

“The story doesn’t say. It stops just there,” said the Story Girl. “But of course they did. I will tell you what I think. I don’t think Aglaia swallowed the stone. I think it just fell to the ground; and after awhile they found it, and it turned out to be of such value that Glaucon could buy all the flocks and herds in the valley, and the sweetest cottage; and he and Aglaia were married right away.”

“But you only THINK that,” said Sara Ray. “I’d like to be really sure that was what happened.”

“Oh, bother, none of it happened,” said Dan. “I believed it while the Story Girl was telling it, but I don’t now. Isn’t that wheels?”

Wheels it was. Two wagons were driving up the lane. We rushed to the house — and there were Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia! The excitement was quite tremendous. Every body talked and laughed at once, and it was not until we were all seated around the supper table that conversation grew coherent. What laughter and questioning and telling of tales followed, what smiles and bright eyes and glad voices. And through it all, the blissful purrs of Paddy, who sat on the window sill behind the Story Girl, resounded through the din like Andrew McPherson’s bass — “just a bur-r-r-r the hale time.”

“Well, I’m thankful to be home again” said Aunt Janet, beaming on us.

“We had a real nice time, and Edward’s folks were as kind as could be. But give me home for a steady thing. How has everything gone? How did the children behave, Roger?”

“Like models,” said Uncle Roger. “They were as good as gold most of the days.”

There were times when one couldn’t help liking Uncle Roger.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DREAD PROPHECY

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“I’ve got to go and begin stumping out the elderberry pasture this afternoon,” said Peter dolefully. “I tell you it’s a tough job. Mr. Roger might wait for cool weather before he sets people to stumping out elderberries, and that’s a fact.”

“Why don’t you tell him so?” asked Dan.

“It ain’t my business to tell him things,” retorted Peter. “I’m hired to do what I’m told, and I do it. But I can have my own opinion all the same. It’s going to be a broiling hot day.”

We were all in the orchard, except Felix, who had gone to the postoffice. It was the forenoon of an August Saturday. Cecily and Sara Ray, who had come up to spend the day with us — her mother having gone to town — were eating timothy roots. Bertha Lawrence, a Charlottetown girl, who had visited Kitty Marr in June, and had gone to school one day with her, had eaten timothy roots, affecting to consider them great delicacies. The fad was at once taken up by the Carlisle schoolgirls. Timothy roots quite ousted “sours” and young raspberry sprouts, both of which had the real merit of being quite toothsome, while timothy roots were tough and tasteless. But timothy roots were fashionable, therefore timothy roots must be eaten. Pecks of them must have been devoured in Carlisle that summer.

Pat was there also, padding about from one to the other on his black paws, giving us friendly pokes and rubs. We all made much of him except Felicity, who would not take any notice of him because he was the Story Girl’s cat.

We boys were sprawling on the grass. Our morning chores were done and the day was before us. We should have been feeling very comfortable and happy, but, as a matter of fact, we were not particularly so.

The Story Girl was sitting on the mint beside the well-house, weaving herself a wreath of buttercups. Felicity was sipping from the cup of clouded blue with an overdone air of unconcern. Each was acutely and miserably conscious of the other's presence, and each was desirous of convincing the rest of us that the other was less than nothing to her. Felicity could not succeed. The Story Girl managed it better. If it had not been for the fact that in all our foregatherings she was careful to sit as far from Felicity as possible, we might have been deceived.

We had not passed a very pleasant week. Felicity and the Story Girl had not been "speaking" to each other, and consequently there had been something rotten in the state of Denmark. An air of restraint was over all our games and conversations.

On the preceding Monday Felicity and the Story Girl had quarrelled over something. What the cause of the quarrel was I cannot tell because I never knew. It remained a "dead secret" between the parties of the first and second part forever. But it was more bitter than the general run of their tiffs, and the consequences were apparent to all. They had not spoken to each other since.

This was not because the rancour of either lasted so long. On the contrary it passed speedily away, not even one low descending sun going down on their wrath. But dignity remained to be considered. Neither would "speak first," and each obstinately declared that she would not speak first, no, not in a hundred years. Neither argument, entreaty, nor expostulation had any effect on those two stubborn girls, nor yet the tears of sweet Cecily, who cried every night about it, and mingled in her pure little prayers fervent petitions that Felicity and the Story Girl might make up.

"I don't know where you expect to go when you die, Felicity," she said tearfully, "if you don't forgive people."

“I have forgiven her,” was Felicity’s answer, “but I am not going to speak first for all that.”

“It’s very wrong, and, more than that, it’s so uncomfortable,” complained Cecily. “It spoils everything.”

“Were they ever like this before?” I asked Cecily, as we talked the matter over privately in Uncle Stephen’s Walk.

“Never for so long,” said Cecily. “They had a spell like this last summer, and one the summer before, but they only lasted a couple of days.”

“And who spoke first?”

“Oh, the Story Girl. She got excited about something and spoke to Felicity before she thought, and then it was all right. But I’m afraid it isn’t going to be like that this time. Don’t you notice how careful the Story Girl is not to get excited? That is such a bad sign.”

“We’ve just got to think up something that will excite her, that’s all,” I said.

“I’m — I’m praying about it,” said Cecily in a low voice, her tear-wet lashes trembling against her pale, round cheeks. “Do you suppose it will do any good, Bev?”

“Very likely,” I assured her. “Remember Sara Ray and the money. That came from praying.”

“I’m glad you think so,” said Cecily tremulously. “Dan said it was no use for me to bother praying about it. He said if they COULDN’T speak God might do something, but when they just WOULDN’T it wasn’t likely He would interfere. Dan does say such queer things. I’m so afraid he’s going to grow up just like Uncle Robert Ward, who never goes to church, and doesn’t believe more than half the Bible is true.”

“Which half does he believe is true?” I inquired with unholy curiosity.

“Oh, just the nice parts. He says there’s a heaven all right, but no — no — HELL. I don’t want Dan to grow up like that. It isn’t respectable. And you wouldn’t want all kinds of people crowding heaven, now, would you?”

“Well, no, I suppose not,” I agreed, thinking of Billy Robinson.

“Of course, I can’t help feeling sorry for those who have to go to THE OTHER PLACE,” said Cecily compassionately. “But I suppose they wouldn’t be very comfortable in heaven either. They wouldn’t feel at home. Andrew Marr said a simply dreadful thing about THE OTHER PLACE one night last fall, when Felicity and I were down to see Kitty, and they were burning the potato stalks. He said he believed THE OTHER PLACE must be lots more interesting than heaven because fires were such jolly things. Now, did you ever hear the like?”

“I guess it depends a good deal on whether you’re inside or outside the fires,” I said.

“Oh, Andrew didn’t really mean it, of course. He just said it to sound smart and make us stare. The Marrs are all like that. But anyhow, I’m going to keep on praying that something will happen to excite the Story Girl. I don’t believe there is any use in praying that Felicity will speak first, because I am sure she won’t.”

“But don’t you suppose God could make her?” I said, feeling that it wasn’t quite fair that the Story Girl should always have to speak first. If she had spoken first the other times it was surely Felicity’s turn this time.

“Well, I believe it would puzzle Him,” said Cecily, out of the depths of her experience with Felicity.

Peter, as was to be expected, took Felicity’s part, and said the Story Girl ought to speak first because she was the oldest. That, he said, had always been his Aunt Jane’s rule.

Sara Ray thought Felicity should speak first, because the Story Girl was half an orphan.

Felix tried to make peace between them, and met the usual fate of all peacemakers. The Story Girl loftily told him that he was too young to understand, and Felicity said that fat boys should mind their own business. After that, Felix declared it would serve Felicity right if the Story Girl never spoke to her again.

Dan had no patience with either of the girls, especially Felicity.

“What they both want is a right good spanking,” he said.

If only a spanking would mend the matter it was not likely it would ever be mended. Both Felicity and the Story Girl were rather too old to be spanked, and, if they had not been, none of the grownups would have thought it worth while to administer so desperate a remedy for what they considered so insignificant a trouble. With the usual levity of grownups, they regarded the coldness between the girls as a subject of mirth and jest, and recked not that it was freezing the genial current of our youthful souls, and blighting hours that should have been fair pages in our book of days.

The Story Girl finished her wreath and put it on. The buttercups drooped over her high, white brow and played peep with her glowing eyes. A dreamy smile hovered around her poppy-red mouth — a significant smile which, to those of us skilled in its interpretation, betokened the sentence which soon came.

“I know a story about a man who always had his own opinion—”

The Story Girl got no further. We never heard the story of the man who always had his own opinion. Felix came tearing up the lane, with a newspaper in his hand. When a boy as fat as Felix runs at full speed on a broiling August forenoon, he has something to run for — as Felicity remarked.

“He must have got some bad news at the office,” said Sara Ray.

“Oh, I hope nothing has happened to father,” I exclaimed, springing anxiously to my feet, a sick, horrible feeling of fear running over me like a

cool, rippling wave.

“It’s just as likely to be good news he is running for as bad,” said the Story Girl, who was no believer in meeting trouble half way.

“He wouldn’t be running so fast for good news,” said Dan cynically.

We were not left long in doubt. The orchard gate flew open and Felix was among us. One glimpse of his face told us that he was no bearer of glad tidings. He had been running hard and should have been rubicund. Instead, he was “as pale as are the dead.” I could not have asked him what was the matter had my life depended on it. It was Felicity who demanded impatiently of my shaking, voiceless brother:

“Felix King, what has scared you?”

Felix held out the newspaper — it was the Charlottetown Daily Enterprise.

“It’s there,” he gasped. “Look — read — oh, do you — think it’s — true? The — end of — the world — is coming tomorrow — at two — o’clock — in the afternoon!”

Crash! Felicity had dropped the cup of clouded blue, which had passed unscathed through so many changing years, and now at last lay shattered on the stone of the well curb. At any other time we should all have been aghast over such a catastrophe, but it passed unnoticed now. What mattered it that all the cups in the world be broken to-day if the crack o’ doom must sound tomorrow?

“Oh, Sara Stanley, do you believe it? DO you?” gasped Felicity, clutching the Story Girl’s hand. Cecily’s prayer had been answered. Excitement had come with a vengeance, and under its stress Felicity had spoken first. But this, like the breaking of the cup, had no significance for us at the moment.

The Story Girl snatched the paper and read the announcement to a group on which sudden, tense silence had fallen. Under a sensational headline, “The Last Trump will sound at Two O’clock Tomorrow,” was a paragraph

to the effect that the leader of a certain noted sect in the United States had predicted that August twelfth would be the Judgment Day, and that all his numerous followers were preparing for the dread event by prayer, fasting, and the making of appropriate white garments for ascension robes.

I laugh at the remembrance now — until I recall the real horror of fear that enwrapped us in that sunny orchard that August morning of long ago; and then I laugh no more. We were only children, be it remembered, with a very firm and simple faith that grown people knew much more than we did, and a rooted conviction that whatever you read in a newspaper must be true. If the Daily Enterprise said that August twelfth was to be the Judgment Day how were you going to get around it?

“Do you believe it, Sara Stanley?” persisted Felicity. “DO you?”

“No — no, I don’t believe a word of it,” said the Story Girl.

But for once her voice failed to carry conviction — or, rather, it carried conviction of the very opposite kind. It was borne in upon our miserable minds that if the Story Girl did not altogether believe it was true she believed it might be true; and the possibility was almost as dreadful as the certainty.

“It CAN’T be true,” said Sara Ray, seeking refuge, as usual, in tears. “Why, everything looks just the same. Things COULDN’T look the same if the Judgment Day was going to be tomorrow.”

“But that’s just the way it’s to come,” I said uncomfortably. “It tells you in the Bible. It’s to come just like a thief in the night.”

“But it tells you another thing in the Bible, too,” said Cecily eagerly. “It says nobody knows when the Judgment Day is to come — not even the angels in heaven. Now, if the angels in heaven don’t know it, do you suppose the editor of the Enterprise can know it — and him a Grit, too?”

“I guess he knows as much about it as a Tory would,” retorted the Story Girl. Uncle Roger was a Liberal and Uncle Alec a Conservative, and the girls held fast to the political traditions of their respective households.

“But it isn’t really the Enterprise editor at all who is saying it — it’s a man in the States who claims to be a prophet. If he IS a prophet perhaps he has found out somehow.”

“And it’s in the paper, too, and that’s printed as well as the Bible,” said Dan.

“Well, I’m going to depend on the Bible,” said Cecily. “I don’t believe it’s the Judgment Day tomorrow — but I’m scared, for all that,” she added piteously.

That was exactly the position of us all. As in the case of the bell-ringing ghost, we did not believe but we trembled.

“Nobody might have known when the Bible was written,” said Dan, “but maybe somebody knows now. Why, the Bible was written thousands of years ago, and that paper was printed this very morning. There’s been time to find out ever so much more.”

“I want to do so many things,” said the Story Girl, plucking off her crown of buttercup gold with a tragic gesture, “but if it’s the Judgment Day tomorrow I won’t have time to do any of them.”

“It can’t be much worse than dying, I s’pose,” said Felix, grasping at any straw of comfort.

“I’m awful glad I’ve got into the habit of going to church and Sunday School this summer,” said Peter very soberly. “I wish I’d made up my mind before this whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. Do you s’pose it’s too late now?”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter,” said Cecily earnestly. “If — if you’re a Christian, Peter, that is all that’s necessary.”

“But it’s too late for that,” said Peter miserably. “I can’t turn into a Christian between this and two o’clock tomorrow. I’ll just have to be satisfied with making up my mind to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. I wanted to wait till I got old enough to make out what was the difference

between them, but I'll have to chance it now. I guess I'll be a Presbyterian, 'cause I want to be like the rest of you. Yes, I'll be a Presbyterian."

"I know a story about Judy Pineau and the word Presbyterian," said the Story Girl, "but I can't tell it now. If tomorrow isn't the Judgment Day I'll tell it Monday."

"If I had known that tomorrow might be the Judgment Day I wouldn't have quarrelled with you last Monday, Sara Stanley, or been so horrid and sulky all the week. Indeed I wouldn't," said Felicity, with very unusual humility.

Ah, Felicity! We were all, in the depths of our pitiful little souls, reviewing the innumerable things we would or would not have done "if we had known." What a black and endless list they made — those sins of omission and commission that rushed accusingly across our young memories! For us the leaves of the Book of Judgment were already opened; and we stood at the bar of our own consciences, than which for youth or eld, there can be no more dread tribunal. I thought of all the evil deeds of my short life — of pinching Felix to make him cry out at family prayers, of playing truant from Sunday School and going fishing one day, of a certain fib — no, no away from this awful hour with all such euphonious evasions — of a LIE I had once told, of many a selfish and unkind word and thought and action. And tomorrow might be the great and terrible day of the last accounting! Oh, if I had only been a better boy!

"The quarrel was as much my fault as yours, Felicity," said the Story Girl, putting her arm around Felicity. "We can't undo it now. But if tomorrow isn't the Judgment Day we must be careful never to quarrel again. Oh, I wish father was here."

"He will be," said Cecily. "If it's the Judgment Day for Prince Edward Island it will be for Europe, too."

"I wish we could just KNOW whether what the paper says is true or not," said Felix desperately. "It seems to me I could brace up if I just KNEW."

But to whom could we appeal? Uncle Alec was away and would not be back until late that night. Neither Aunt Janet nor Uncle Roger were people

to whom we cared to apply in such a crisis. We were afraid of the Judgment Day; but we were almost equally afraid of being laughed at. How about Aunt Olivia?

“No, Aunt Olivia has gone to bed with a sick headache and mustn’t be disturbed,” said the Story Girl. “She said I must get dinner ready, because there was plenty of cold meat, and nothing to do but boil the potatoes and peas, and set the table. I don’t know how I can put my thoughts into it when the Judgment Day may be tomorrow. Besides, what is the good of asking the grownups? They don’t know anything more about this than we do.”

“But if they’d just SAY they didn’t believe it, it would be a sort of comfort,” said Cecily.

“I suppose the minister would know, but he’s away on his vacation” said Felicity. “Anyhow, I’ll go and ask mother what she thinks of it.”

Felicity picked up the Enterprise and betook herself to the house. We awaited her return in dire suspense.

“Well, what does she say?” asked Cecily tremulously.

“She said, ‘Run away and don’t bother me. I haven’t any time for your nonsense.’” responded Felicity in an injured tone. “And I said, ‘But, ma, the paper SAYS tomorrow is the Judgment Day,’ and ma just said ‘Judgment Fiddlesticks!’”

“Well, that’s kind of comforting,” said Peter. “She can’t put any faith in it, or she’d be more worked up.”

“If it only wasn’t PRINTED!” said Dan gloomily.

“Let’s all go over and ask Uncle Roger,” said Felix desperately.

That we should make Uncle Roger a court of last resort indicated all too clearly the state of our minds. But we went. Uncle Roger was in his barnyard, hitching his black mare into the buggy. His copy of the

Enterprise was sticking out of his pocket. He looked, as we saw with sinking hearts, unusually grave and preoccupied. There was not a glimmer of a smile about his face.

“You ask him,” said Felicity, nudging the Story Girl.

“Uncle Roger,” said the Story Girl, the golden notes of her voice threaded with fear and appeal. “the Enterprise says that tomorrow is the Judgment Day? IS it? Do YOU think it is?”

“I’m afraid so,” said Uncle Roger gravely. “The Enterprise is always very careful to print only reliable news.”

“But mother doesn’t believe it,” cried Felicity.

Uncle Roger shook his head.

“That is just the trouble,” he said. “People won’t believe it till it’s too late. I’m going straight to Markdale to pay a man there some money I owe him, and after dinner I’m going to Summerside to buy me a new suit. My old one is too shabby for the Judgment Day.”

He got into his buggy and drove away, leaving eight distracted mortals behind him.

“Well, I suppose that settles it,” said Peter, in despairing tone.

“Is there anything we can do to PREPARE?” asked Cecily.

“I wish I had a white dress like you girls,” sobbed Sara Ray. “But I haven’t, and it’s too late to get one. Oh, I wish I had minded what ma said better. I wouldn’t have disobeyed her so often if I’d thought the Judgment Day was so near. When I go home I’m going to tell her about going to the magic lantern show.”

“I’m not sure that Uncle Roger meant what he said,” remarked the Story Girl. “I couldn’t get a look into his eyes. If he was trying to hoax us there would have been a twinkle in them. He can never help that. You know he

would think it a great joke to frighten us like this. It's really dreadful to have no grownups you can depend on."

"We could depend on father if he was here," said Dan stoutly.
"HE'D tell us the truth."

"He would tell us what he THOUGHT was true, Dan, but he couldn't KNOW. He's not such a well-educated man as the editor of the Enterprise. No, there's nothing to do but wait and see."

"Let us go into the house and read just what the Bible does say about it," suggested Cecily.

We crept in carefully, lest we disturb Aunt Olivia, and Cecily found and read the significant portion of Holy Writ. There was little comfort for us in that vivid and terrible picture.

"Well," said the Story Girl finally. "I must go and get the potatoes ready. I suppose they must be boiled even if it is the Judgment Day tomorrow. But I don't believe it is."

"And I've got to go and stump elderberries," said Peter. "I don't see how I can do it — go away back there alone. I'll feel scared to death the whole time."

"Tell Uncle Roger that, and say if tomorrow is the end of the world that there is no good in stumping any more fields," I suggested.

"Yes, and if he lets you off then we'll know he was in earnest," chimed in Cecily. "But if he still says you must go that'll be a sign he doesn't believe it."

Leaving the Story Girl and Peter to peel their potatoes, the rest of us went home, where Aunt Janet, who had gone to the well and found the fragments of the old blue cup, gave poor Felicity a bitter scolding about it. But Felicity bore it very patiently — nay, more, she seemed to delight in it.

“Ma can’t believe tomorrow is the last day, or she wouldn’t scold like that,” she told us; and this comforted us until after dinner, when the Story Girl and Peter came over and told us that Uncle Roger had really gone to Summerside. Then we plunged down into fear and wretchedness again.

“But he said I must go and stump elderberries just the same” said Peter. “He said it might NOT be the Judgment Day tomorrow, though he believed it was, and it would keep me out of mischief. But I just can’t stand it back there alone. Some of you fellows must come with me. I don’t want you to work, but just for company.”

It was finally decided that Dan and Felix should go. I wanted to go also, but the girls protested.

“YOU must stay and keep us cheered up,” implored Felicity. “I just don’t know how I’m ever going to put in the afternoon. I promised Kitty Marr that I’d go down and spend it with her, but I can’t now. And I can’t knit any at my lace. I’d just keep thinking, ‘What is the use? Perhaps it’ll all be burned up tomorrow.’”

So I stayed with the girls, and a miserable afternoon we had of it. The Story Girl again and again declared that she “didn’t believe it,” but when we asked her to tell a story, she evaded it with a flimsy excuse. Cecily pestered at Aunt Janet’s life out, asking repeatedly, “Ma, will you be washing Monday?” “Ma, will you be going to prayer meeting Tuesday night?” “Ma, will you be preserving raspberries next week?” and various similar questions. It was a huge comfort to her that Aunt Janet always said, “Yes,” or “Of course,” as if there could be no question about it.

Sara Ray cried until I wondered how one small head could contain all the tears she shed. But I do not believe she was half as much frightened as disappointed that she had no white dress. In mid-afternoon Cecily came downstairs with her forget-me-not jug in her hand — a dainty bit of china, wreathed with dark blue forget-me-nots, which Cecily prized highly, and in which she always kept her toothbrush.

“Sara, I am going to give you this jug,” she said solemnly.

Now, Sara had always coveted this particular jug. She stopped crying long enough to clutch it delightedly.

“Oh, Cecily, thank you. But are you sure you won’t want it back if tomorrow isn’t the Judgment Day?”

“No, it’s yours for good,” said Cecily, with the high, remote air of one to whom forget-me-not jugs and all such pomps and vanities of the world were as a tale that is told.

“Are you going to give any one your cherry vase?” asked Felicity, trying to speak indifferently. Felicity had never admired the forget-me-not jug, but she had always hankered after the cherry vase — an affair of white glass, with a cluster of red glass cherries and golden-green glass leaves on its side, which Aunt Olivia had given Cecily one Christmas.

“No, I’m not,” answered Cecily, with a change of tone.

“Oh, well, I don’t care,” said Felicity quickly. “Only, if tomorrow is the last day, the cherry vase won’t be much use to you.”

“I guess it will be as much use to me as to any one else,” said Cecily indignantly. She had sacrificed her dear forget-me-not jug to satisfy some pang of conscience, or propitiate some threatening fate, but surrender her precious cherry vase she could not and would not. Felicity needn’t be giving any hints!

With the gathering shades of night our plight became pitiful. In the daylight, surrounded by homely, familiar sights and sounds, it was not so difficult to fortify our souls with a cheering incredulity. But now, in this time of shadows, dread belief clutched us and wrung us with terror. If there had been one wise older friend to tell us, in serious fashion, that we need not be afraid, that the Enterprise paragraph was naught save the idle report of a deluded fanatic, it would have been well for us. But there was not. Our grownups, instead, considered our terror an exquisite jest. At that very moment, Aunt Olivia, who had recovered from her headache, and Aunt Janet were laughing in the kitchen over the state the children were in because they were afraid the end of the world was close at hand. Aunt

Janet's throaty gurgle and Aunt Olivia's trilling mirth floated out through the open window.

"Perhaps they'll laugh on the other side of their faces tomorrow," said Dan, with gloomy satisfaction.

We were sitting on the cellar hatch, watching what might be our last sunset o'er the dark hills of time. Peter was with us. It was his last Sunday to go home, but he had elected to remain.

"If tomorrow is the Judgment Day I want to be with you fellows," he said.

Sara Ray had also yearned to stay, but could not because her mother had told her she must be home before dark.

"Never mind, Sara," comforted Cecily. "It's not to be till two o'clock tomorrow, so you'll have plenty of time to get up here before anything happens."

"But there might be a mistake," sobbed Sara. "It might be two o'clock tonight instead of tomorrow."

It might, indeed. This was a new horror, which had not occurred to us.

"I'm sure I won't sleep a wink tonight," said Felix.

"The paper SAYS two o'clock tomorrow," said Dan. "You needn't worry, Sara."

But Sara departed, weeping. She did not, however, forget to carry the forget-me-not jug with her. All things considered, her departure was a relief. Such a constantly tearful damsel was not a pleasant companion. Cecily and Felicity and the Story Girl did not cry. They were made of finer, firmer stuff. Dry-eyed, with such courage as they might, they faced whatever might be in store for them.

"I wonder where we'll all be this time tomorrow night," said Felix mournfully, as we watched the sunset between the dark fir boughs. It was

an ominous sunset. The sun dropped down amid dark, livid clouds, that turned sullen shades of purple and fiery red behind him.

“I hope we’ll be all together, wherever we are,” said Cecily gently.
“Nothing can be so very bad then.”

“I’m going to read the Bible all tomorrow forenoon,” said Peter.

When Aunt Olivia came out to go home the Story Girl asked her permission to stay all night with Felicity and Cecily. Aunt Olivia assented lightly, swinging her hat on her arm and including us all in a friendly smile. She looked very pretty, with her big blue eyes and warm-hued golden hair. We loved Aunt Olivia; but just now we resented her having laughed at us with Aunt Janet, and we refused to smile back.

“What a sulky, sulky lot of little people,” said Aunt Olivia, going away across the yard, holding her pretty dress up from the dewy grass.

Peter resolved to stay all night with us, too, not troubling himself about anybody’s permission. When we went to bed it was settling down for a stormy night, and the rain was streaming wetly on the roof, as if the world, like Sara Ray, were weeping because its end was so near. Nobody forgot or hurried over his prayers that night. We would dearly have loved to leave the candle burning, but Aunt Janet’s decree regarding this was as inexorable as any of Mede and Persia. Out the candle must go; and we lay there, quaking, with the wild rain streaming down on the roof above us, and the voices of the storm wailing through the writhing spruce trees.

CHAPTER XX.

THE JUDGMENT SUNDAY

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Sunday morning broke, dull and gray. The rain had ceased, but the clouds hung dark and brooding above a world which, in its windless calm, following the spent storm-throe, seemed to us to be waiting “till judgment spoke the doom of fate.” We were all up early. None of us, it appeared, had slept well, and some of us not at all. The Story Girl had been among the latter, and she looked very pale and wan, with black shadows under her deep-set eyes. Peter, however, had slept soundly enough after twelve o’clock.

“When you’ve been stumping out elderberries all the afternoon it’ll take more than the Judgment Day to keep you awake all night,” he said. “But when I woke up this morning it was just awful. I’d forgot it for a moment, and then it all came back with a rush, and I was worse scared than before.”

Cecily was pale but brave. For the first time in years she had not put her hair up in curlers on Saturday night. It was brushed and braided with Puritan simplicity.

“If it’s the Judgment Day I don’t care whether my hair is curly or not,” she said.

“Well,” said Aunt Janet, when we all descended to the kitchen, “this is the first time you young ones have ever all got up without being called, and that’s a fact.”

At breakfast our appetites were poor. How could the grownups eat as they did? After breakfast and the necessary chores there was the forenoon to be lived through. Peter, true to his word, got out his Bible and began to read from the first chapter in Genesis.

“I won’t have time to read it all through, I s’pose,” he said, “but I’ll get along as far as I can.”

There was no preaching in Carlisle that day, and Sunday School was not till the evening. Cecily got out her Lesson Slip and studied the lesson conscientiously. The rest of us did not see how she could do it. We could not, that was very certain.

“If it isn’t the Judgment Day, I want to have the lesson learned,” she said, “and if it is I’ll feel I’ve done what was right. But I never found it so hard to remember the Golden Text before.”

The long dragging hours were hard to endure. We roamed restlessly about, and went to and fro — all save Peter, who still steadily read away at his Bible. He was through Genesis by eleven and beginning on Exodus.

“There’s a good deal of it I don’t understand,” he said, “but I read every word, and that’s the main thing. That story about Joseph and his brother was so int’esting I almost forgot about the Judgment Day.”

But the long drawn out dread was beginning to get on Dan’s nerves.

“If it is the Judgment Day,” he growled, as we went in to dinner, “I wish it’d hurry up and have it over.”

“Oh, Dan!” cried Felicity and Cecily together, in a chorus of horror. But the Story Girl looked as if she rather sympathized with Dan.

If we had eaten little at breakfast we could eat still less at dinner. After dinner the clouds rolled away, and the sun came joyously and gloriously out. This, we thought, was a good omen. Felicity opined that it wouldn’t have cleared up if it was the Judgment Day. Nevertheless, we dressed ourselves carefully, and the girls put on their white dresses.

Sara Ray came up, still crying, of course. She increased our uneasiness by saying that her mother believed the Enterprise paragraph, and was afraid that the end of the world was really at hand.

“That’s why she let me come up,” she sobbed. “If she hadn’t been afraid I don’t believe she would have let me come up. But I’d have died if I couldn’t have come. And she wasn’t a bit cross when I told her I had gone to the magic lantern show. That’s an awful bad sign. I hadn’t a white dress, but I put on my white muslin apron with the frills.”

“That seems kind of queer,” said Felicity doubtfully. “You wouldn’t put on an apron to go to church, and so it doesn’t seem as if it was proper to put it on for Judgment Day either.”

“Well, it’s the best I could do,” said Sara disconsolately. “I wanted to have something white on. It’s just like a dress only it hasn’t sleeves.”

“Let’s go into the orchard and wait,” said the Story Girl. “It’s one o’clock now, so in another hour we’ll know the worst. We’ll leave the front door open, and we’ll hear the big clock when it strikes two.”

No better plan being suggested, we betook ourselves to the orchard, and sat on the boughs of Uncle Alec’s tree because the grass was wet. The world was beautiful and peaceful and green. Overhead was a dazzling blue sky, spotted with heaps of white cloud.

“Pshaw, I don’t believe there’s any fear of it being the last day,” said Dan, beginning a whistle out of sheer bravado.

“Well, don’t whistle on Sunday anyhow,” said Felicity severely.

“I don’t see a thing about Methodists or Presbyterians, as far as I’ve gone, and I’m most through Exodus,” said Peter suddenly.
“When does it begin to tell about them?”

“There’s nothing about Methodists or Presbyterians in the Bible,” said Felicity scornfully.

Peter looked amazed.

“Well, how did they happen then?” he asked. “When did they begin to be?”

“I’ve often thought it such a strange thing that there isn’t a word about either of them in the Bible,” said Cecily. “Especially when it mentions Baptists — or at least one Baptist.”

“Well, anyhow,” said Peter, “even if it isn’t the Judgment Day I’m going to keep on reading the Bible until I’ve got clean through. I never thought it was such an int’esting book.”

“It sounds simply dreadful to hear you call the Bible an interesting book,” said Felicity, with a shudder at the sacrilege. “Why, you might be talking about ANY common book.”

“I didn’t mean any harm,” said Peter, crestfallen.

“The Bible IS an interesting book,” said the Story Girl, coming to Peter’s rescue. “And there are magnificent stories in it — yes, Felicity, MAGNIFICENT. If the world doesn’t come to an end I’ll tell you the story of Ruth next Sunday — or look here! I’ll tell it anyhow. That’s a promise. Wherever we are next Sunday I’ll tell you about Ruth.”

“Why, you wouldn’t tell stories in heaven,” said Cecily, in a very timid voice.

“Why not?” said the Story Girl, with a flash of her eyes. “Indeed I shall. I’ll tell stories as long as I’ve a tongue to talk with, or any one to listen.”

Ay, doubtless. That dauntless spirit would soar triumphantly above the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, taking with it all its own wild sweetness and daring. Even the young-eyed cherubim, choiring on meadows of asphodel, might cease their harping for a time to listen to a tale of the vanished earth, told by that golden tongue. Some vague thought of this was in our minds as we looked at her; and somehow it comforted us. Not even the Judgment was so greatly to be feared if after it we were the SAME, our own precious little identities unchanged.

“It must be getting handy two,” said Cecily. “It seems as if we’d been waiting here for ever so much longer than an hour.”

Conversation languished. We watched and waited nervously. The moments dragged by, each seeming an hour. Would two o'clock never come and end the suspense? We all became very tense. Even Peter had to stop reading. Any unaccustomed sound or sight in the world about us struck on our taut senses like the trump of doom. A cloud passed over the sun and as the sudden shadow swept across the orchard we turned pale and trembled. A wagon rumbling over a plank bridge in the hollow made Sara Ray start up with a shriek. The slamming of a barn door over at Uncle Roger's caused the cold perspiration to break out on our faces.

"I don't believe it's the Judgment Day," said Felix, "and I never have believed it. But oh, I wish that clock would strike two."

"Can't you tell us a story to pass the time?" I entreated the Story Girl.

She shook her head.

"No, it would be no use to try. But if this isn't the Judgment Day I'll have a great one to tell of us being so scared."

Pat presently came galloping up the orchard, carrying in his mouth a big field mouse, which, sitting down before us, he proceeded to devour, body and bones, afterwards licking his chops with great satisfaction.

"It can't be the Judgment Day," said Sara Ray, brightening up.
"Paddy would never be eating mice if it was."

"If that clock doesn't soon strike two I shall go out of my seven senses," declared Cecily with unusual vehemence.

"Time always seems long when you're waiting," said the Story Girl. "But it does seem as if we had been here more than an hour."

"Maybe the clock struck and we didn't hear it," suggested Dan.
"Somebody'd better go and see."

“I’ll go,” said Cecily. “I suppose, even if anything happens, I’ll have time to get back to you.”

We watched her white-clad figure pass through the gate and enter the front door. A few minutes passed — or a few years — we could not have told which. Then Cecily came running at full speed back to us. But when she reached us she trembled so much that at first she could not speak.

“What is it? Is it past two?” implored the Story Girl.

“It’s — it’s four,” said Cecily with a gasp. “The old clock isn’t going. Mother forgot to wind it up last night and it stopped. But it’s four by the kitchen clock — so it isn’t the Judgment Day — and tea is ready — and mother says to come in.”

We looked at each other, realizing what our dread had been, now that it was lifted. It was not the Judgment Day. The world and life were still before us, with all their potent lure of years unknown.

“I’ll never believe anything I read in the papers again,” said Dan, rushing to the opposite extreme.

“I told you the Bible was more to be depended on than the newspapers,” said Cecily triumphantly.

Sara Ray and Peter and the Story Girl went home, and we went in to tea with royal appetites. Afterwards, as we dressed for Sunday School upstairs, our spirits carried us away to such an extent that Aunt Janet had to come twice to the foot of the stairs and inquire severely, “Children, have you forgotten what day this is?”

“Isn’t it nice that we’re going to live a spell longer in this nice world?” said Felix, as we walked down the hill.

“Yes, and Felicity and the Story Girl are speaking again,” said Cecily happily.

“And Felicity DID speak first,” I said.

“Yes, but it took the Judgment Day to make her. I wish,” added Cecily with a sigh, “that I hadn’t been in quite such a hurry giving away my forget-me-not jug.”

“And I wish I hadn’t been in such a hurry deciding I’d be a Presbyterian,” said Peter.

“Well, it’s not too late for that,” said Dan. “You can change your mind now.”

“No, sir,” said Peter with a flash of spirit, “I ain’t one of the kind that says they’ll be something just because they’re scared, and when the scare is over go back on it. I said I’d be Presbyterian and I mean to stick to it.”

“You said you knew a story that had something to do with Presbyterians,” I said to the Story Girl. “Tell us it now.”

“Oh, no, it isn’t the right kind of story to tell on Sunday,” she replied. “But I’ll tell it tomorrow morning.”

Accordingly, we heard it the next morning in the orchard.

“Long ago, when Judy Pineau was young,” said the Story Girl, “she was hired with Mrs. Elder Frewen — the first Mrs. Elder Frewen. Mrs. Frewen had been a schoolteacher, and she was very particular as to how people talked, and the grammar they used. And she didn’t like anything but refined words. One very hot day she heard Judy Pineau say she was ‘all in a sweat.’ Mrs. Frewen was greatly shocked, and said, ‘Judy, you shouldn’t say that. It’s horses that sweat. You should say you are in a perspiration.’ Well, Judy promised she’d remember, because she liked Mrs. Frewen and was anxious to please her. Not long afterwards Judy was scrubbing the kitchen floor one morning, and when Mrs. Frewen came in Judy looked up and said, quite proud over using the right word, ‘Oh, Mees Frewen, ain’t it awful hot? I declare I’m all in a Presbyterian.’”

CHAPTER XXI.

DREAMERS OF DREAMS

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August went out and September came in. Harvest was ended; and though summer was not yet gone, her face was turned westering. The asters lettered her retreating footsteps in a purple script, and over the hills and valleys hung a faint blue smoke, as if Nature were worshipping at her woodland altar. The apples began to burn red on the bending boughs; crickets sang day and night; squirrels chattered secrets of Polichinelle in the spruces; the sunshine was as thick and yellow as molten gold; school opened, and we small denizens of the hill farms lived happy days of harmless work and necessary play, closing in nights of peaceful, undisturbed slumber under a roof watched over by autumnal stars.

At least, our slumbers were peaceful and undisturbed until our orgy of dreaming began.

“I would really like to know what especial kind of deviltry you young fry are up to this time,” said Uncle Roger one evening, as he passed through the orchard with his gun on his shoulder, bound for the swamp.

We were sitting in a circle before the Pulpit Stone, each writing diligently in an exercise book, and eating the Rev. Mr. Scott’s plums, which always reached their prime of juicy, golden-green flesh and bloomy blue skin in September. The Rev. Mr. Scott was dead and gone, but those plums certainly kept his memory green, as his forgotten sermons could never have done.

“Oh,” said Felicity in a shocked tone, when Uncle Roger had passed by, “Uncle Roger SWORE.”

“Oh, no, he didn’t,” said the Story Girl quickly. “‘Deviltry’ isn’t swearing at all. It only means extra bad mischief.”

“Well, it’s not a very nice word, anyhow,” said Felicity.

“No, it isn’t,” agreed the Story Girl with a regretful sigh. “It’s very expressive, but it isn’t nice. That is the way with so many words. They’re expressive, but they’re not nice, and so a girl can’t use them”

The Story Girl sighed again. She loved expressive words, and treasured them as some girls might have treasured jewels. To her, they were as lustrous pearls, threaded on the crimson cord of a vivid fancy. When she met with a new one she uttered it over and over to herself in solitude, weighing it, caressing it, infusing it with the radiance of her voice, making it her own in all its possibilities for ever.

“Well, anyhow, it isn’t a suitable word in this case,” insisted Felicity. “We are not up to any dev — any extra bad mischief. Writing down one’s dreams isn’t mischief at all.”

Certainly it wasn’t. Surely not even the straitest sect of the grownups could call it so. If writing down your dreams, with agonizing care as to composition and spelling — for who knew that the eyes of generations unborn might not read the record? — were not a harmless amusement, could anything be called so? I trow not.

We had been at it for a fortnight, and during that time we only lived to have dreams and write them down. The Story Girl had originated the idea one evening in the rustling, rain-wet ways of the spruce wood, where we were picking gum after a day of showers. When we had picked enough, we sat down on the moss-grown stones at the end of a long arcade, where it opened out on the harvest-golden valley below us, our jaws exercising themselves vigorously on the spoil of our climbings. We were never allowed to chew gum in school or in company, but in wood and field, orchard and hayloft, such rules were in abeyance.

“My Aunt Jane used to say it wasn’t polite to chew gum anywhere,” said Peter rather ruefully.

“I don’t suppose your Aunt Jane knew all the rules of etiquette,” said Felicity, designing to crush Peter with a big word, borrowed from the Family Guide. But Peter was not to be so crushed. He had in him a certain toughness of fibre, that would have been proof against a whole dictionary.

“She did, too,” he retorted. “My Aunt Jane was a real lady, even if she was only a Craig. She knew all those rules and she kept them when there was nobody round to see her, just the same as when any one was. And she was smart. If father had had half her git-up-and-git I wouldn’t be a hired boy to-day.”

“Have you any idea where your father is?” asked Dan.

“No,” said Peter indifferently. “The last we heard of him he was in the Maine lumber woods. But that was three years ago. I don’t know where he is now, and,” added Peter deliberately, taking his gum from his mouth to make his statement more impressive, “I don’t care.”

“Oh, Peter, that sounds dreadful,” said Cecily. “Your own father!”

“Well,” said Peter defiantly, “if your own father had run away when you was a baby, and left your mother to earn her living by washing and working out, I guess you wouldn’t care much about him either.”

“Perhaps your father may come home some of these days with a huge fortune,” suggested the Story Girl.

“Perhaps pigs may whistle, but they’ve poor mouths for it,” was all the answer Peter deigned to this charming suggestion.

“There goes Mr. Campbell down the road,” said Dan. “That’s his new mare. Isn’t she a dandy? She’s got a skin like black satin. He calls her Betty Sherman.”

“I don’t think it’s very nice to call a horse after your own grandmother,” said Felicity.

“Betty Sherman would have thought it a compliment,” said the Story Girl.

“Maybe she would. She couldn’t have been very nice herself, or she would never have gone and asked a man to marry her,” said Felicity.

“Why not?”

“Goodness me, it was dreadful! Would YOU do such a thing yourself?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said the Story Girl, her eyes gleaming with impish laughter. “If I wanted him DREADFULLY, and HE wouldn’t do the asking, perhaps I would.”

“I’d rather die an old maid forty times over,” exclaimed Felicity.

“Nobody as pretty as you will ever be an old maid, Felicity,” said Peter, who never put too fine an edge on his compliments.

Felicity tossed her golden tressed head and tried to look angry, but made a dismal failure of it.

“It wouldn’t be ladylike to ask any one to marry you, you know,” argued Cecily.

“I don’t suppose the Family Guide would think so,” agreed the Story Girl lazily, with some sarcasm in her voice. The Story Girl never held the Family Guide in such reverence as did Felicity and Cecily. They pored over the “etiquette column” every week, and could have told you on demand, just exactly what kind of gloves should be worn at a wedding, what you should say when introducing or being introduced, and how you ought to look when your best young man came to see you.

“They say Mrs. Richard Cook asked HER husband to marry her,” said Dan.

“Uncle Roger says she didn’t exactly ask him, but she helped the lame dog over the stile so slick that Richard was engaged to her before he knew

what had happened to him,” said the Story Girl. “I know a story about Mrs. Richard Cook’s grandmother. She was one of those women who are always saying ‘I told you so—’”

“Take notice, Felicity,” said Dan aside.

“ — And she was very stubborn. Soon after she was married she and her husband quarrelled about an apple tree they had planted in their orchard. The label was lost. He said it was a Fameuse and she declared it was a Yellow Transparent. They fought over it till the neighbours came out to listen. Finally he got so angry that he told her to shut up. They didn’t have any Family Guide in those days, so he didn’t know it wasn’t polite to say shut up to your wife. I suppose she thought she would teach him manners, for would you believe it? That woman did shut up, and never spoke one single word to her husband for five years. And then, in five years’ time, the tree bore apples, and they WERE Yellow Transparents. And then she spoke at last. She said, ‘I told you so.’”

“And did she talk to him after that as usual?” asked Sara Ray.

“Oh, yes, she was just the same as she used to be,” said the Story Girl wearily. “But that doesn’t belong to the story. It stops when she spoke at last. You’re never satisfied to leave a story where it should stop, Sara Ray.”

“Well, I always like to know what happens afterwards,” said Sara Ray.

“Uncle Roger says he wouldn’t want a wife he could never quarrel with,” remarked Dan. “He says it would be too tame a life for him.”

“I wonder if Uncle Roger will always stay a bachelor,” said Cecily.

“He seems real happy,” observed Peter.

“Ma says that it’s all right as long as he is a bachelor because he won’t take any one,” said Felicity, “but if he wakes up some day and finds he is

an old bachelor because he can't get any one it'll have a very different flavour."

"If your Aunt Olivia was to up and get married what would your Uncle Roger do for a housekeeper?" asked Peter.

"Oh, but Aunt Olivia will never be married now," said Felicity.
"Why, she'll be twenty-nine next January."

"Well, o' course, that's pretty old," admitted Peter, "but she might find some one who wouldn't mind that, seeing she's so pretty."

"It would be awful splendid and exciting to have a wedding in the family, wouldn't it?" said Cecily. "I've never seen any one married, and I'd just love to. I've been to four funerals, but not to one single wedding."

"I've never even got to a funeral," said Sara Ray gloomily.

"There's the wedding veil of the proud princess," said Cecily, pointing to a long drift of filmy vapour in the southwestern sky.

"And look at that sweet pink cloud below it," added Felicity.

"Maybe that little pink cloud is a dream, getting all ready to float down into somebody's sleep," suggested the Story Girl.

"I had a perfectly awful dream last night," said Cecily, with a shudder of remembrance. "I dreamed I was on a desert island inhabited by tigers and natives with two heads."

"Oh!" the Story Girl looked at Cecily half reproachfully. "Why couldn't you tell it better than that? If I had such a dream I could tell it so that everybody else would feel as if they had dreamed it, too."

"Well, I'm not you," countered Cecily, "and I wouldn't want to frighten any one as I was frightened. It was an awful dream — but it was kind of interesting, too."

“I’ve had some real int’resting dreams,” said Peter, “but I can’t remember them long. I wish I could.”

“Why don’t you write them down?” suggested the Story Girl. “Oh—” she turned upon us a face illuminated with a sudden inspiration. “I’ve an idea. Let us each get an exercise book and write down all our dreams, just as we dream them. We’ll see who’ll have the most interesting collection. And we’ll have them to read and laugh over when we’re old and gray.”

Instantly we all saw ourselves and each other by inner vision, old and gray — all but the Story Girl. We could not picture her as old. Always, as long as she lived, so it seemed to us, must she have sleek brown curls, a voice like the sound of a harpstring in the wind, and eyes that were stars of eternal youth.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DREAM BOOKS

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The next day the Story Girl coaxed Uncle Roger to take her to Markdale, and there she bought our dream books. They were ten cents apiece, with ruled pages and mottled green covers. My own lies open beside me as I write, its yellowed pages inscribed with the visions that haunted my childish slumbers on those nights of long ago.

On the cover is pasted a lady's visiting card, on which is written, "The Dream Book of Beverley King." Cecily had a packet of visiting cards which she was hoarding against the day when she would be grown up and could put the calling etiquette of the Family Guide into practice; but she generously gave us all one apiece for the covers of our dream books.

As I turn the pages and glance over the naïve records, each one beginning, "Last night I dreamed," the past comes very vividly back to me. I see that bowery orchard, shining in memory with a soft glow of beauty—"the light that never was on land or sea," — where we sat on those September evenings and wrote down our dreams, when the cares of the day were over and there was nothing to interfere with the pleasing throes of composition. Peter — Dan — Felix — Cecily — Felicity — Sara Ray — the Story Girl — they are all around me once more, in the sweet-scented, fading grasses, each with open dream books and pencil in hand, now writing busily, now staring fixedly into space in search of some elusive word or phrase which might best describe the indescribable. I hear their laughing voices, I see their bright, unclouded eyes. In this little, old book, filled with cramped, boyish writing, there is a spell of white magic that sets the years at naught. Beverley King is a boy once more, writing down his dreams in the old King orchard on the homestead hill, blown over by musky winds.

Opposite to him sits the Story Girl, with her scarlet rosetted head, her beautiful bare feet crossed before her, one slender hand propping her high, white brow, on either side of which fall her glossy curls.

There, to the right, is sweet Cecily of the dear, brown eyes, with a little bloated dictionary beside her — for you dream of so many things you can't spell, or be expected to spell, when you are only eleven. Next to her sits Felicity, beautiful, and conscious that she is beautiful, with hair of spun sunshine, and sea-blue eyes, and all the roses of that vanished summer abloom in her cheeks.

Peter is beside her, of course, sprawled flat on his stomach among the grasses, one hand clutching his black curls, with his dream book on a small, round stone before him — for only so can Peter compose at all, and even then he finds it hard work. He can handle a hoe more deftly than a pencil, and his spelling, even with all his frequent appeals to Cecily, is a fearful and wonderful thing. As for punctuation, he never attempts it, beyond an occasion period, jotted down whenever he happens to think of it, whether in the right place or not. The Story Girl goes over his dreams after he has written them out, and puts in the commas and semicolons, and straightens out the sentences.

Felix sits on the right of the Story Girl, fat and stodgy, grimly in earnest even over dreams. He writes with his knees stuck up to form a writing-desk, and he always frowns fiercely the whole time.

Dan, like Peter, writes lying down flat, but with his back towards us; and he has a dismal habit of groaning aloud, writhing his whole body, and digging his toes into the grass, when he cannot turn a sentence to suit him.

Sara Ray is at his left. There is seldom anything to be said of Sara except to tell where she is. Like Tennyson's Maud, in one respect at least, Sara is splendidly null.

Well, there we sit and write in our dream books, and Uncle Roger passes by and accuses us of being up to dev — to very bad mischief.

Each of us was very anxious to possess the most exciting record; but we were an honourable little crew, and I do not think anything was ever written down in those dream books which had not really been dreamed. We had expected that the Story Girl would eclipse us all in the matter of dreams; but, at least in the beginning, her dreams were no more remarkable than those of the rest of us. In dreamland we were all equal. Cecily, indeed, seemed to have the most decided talent for dramatic dreams. That meekest and mildest of girls was in the habit of dreaming truly terrible things. Almost every night battle, murder, or sudden death played some part in her visions. On the other hand, Dan, who was a somewhat truculent fellow, addicted to the perusal of lurid dime novels which he borrowed from the other boys in school, dreamed dreams of such a peaceful and pastoral character that he was quite disgusted with the resulting tame pages of his dream book.

But if the Story Girl could not dream anything more wonderful than the rest of us, she scored when it came to the telling. To hear her tell a dream was as good — or as bad — as dreaming it yourself.

As far as writing them down was concerned, I believe that I, Beverley King, carried off the palm. I was considered to possess a pretty knack of composition. But the Story Girl went me one better even there, because, having inherited something of her father's talent for drawing, she illustrated her dreams with sketches that certainly caught the spirit of them, whatever might be said of their technical excellence. She had an especial knack for drawing monstrosities; and I vividly recall the picture of an enormous and hideous lizard, looking like a reptile of the pterodactyl period, which she had dreamed of seeing crawl across the roof of the house. On another occasion she had a frightful dream — at least, it seemed frightful while she told us and described the dreadful feeling it had given her — of being chased around the parlour by the ottoman, which made faces at her. She drew a picture of the grimacing ottoman on the margin of her dream book which so scared Sara Ray when she beheld it that she cried all the way home, and insisted on sleeping that night with Judy Pineau lest the furniture take to pursuing her also.

Sara Ray's own dreams never amounted to much. She was always in trouble of some sort — couldn't get her hair braided, or her shoes on the right feet. Consequently, her dream book was very monotonous. The only thing worth mentioning in the way of dreams that Sara Ray ever achieved was when she dreamed that she went up in a balloon and fell out.

"I expected to come down with an awful thud," she said shuddering, "but I lit as light as a feather and woke right up."

"If you hadn't woke up you'd have died," said Peter with a dark significance. "If you dream of falling and DON'T wake you DO land with a thud and it kills you. That's what happens to people who die in their sleep."

"How do you know?" asked Dan skeptically. "Nobody who died in his sleep could ever tell it."

"My Aunt Jane told me so," said Peter.

"I suppose that settles it," said Felicity disagreeably.

"You always say something nasty when I mention my Aunt Jane," said Peter reproachfully.

"What did I say that was nasty?" cried Felicity. "I didn't say a single thing."

"Well, it sounded nasty," said Peter, who knew that it is the tone that makes the music.

"What did your Aunt Jane look like?" asked Cecily sympathetically. "Was she pretty?"

"No," conceded Peter reluctantly, "she wasn't pretty — but she looked like the woman in that picture the Story Girl's father sent her last week — the one with the shiny ring round her head and the baby in her lap. I've seen Aunt Jane look at me just like that woman looks at her baby. Ma never

looks so. Poor ma is too busy washing. I wish I could dream of my Aunt Jane. I never do.”

““Dream of the dead, you’ll hear of the living,”” quoted Felix oracularly.

“I dreamed last night that I threw a lighted match into that keg of gunpowder in Mr. Cook’s store at Markdale,” said Peter. “It blew up — and everything blew up — and they fished me out of the mess — but I woke up before I’d time to find out if I was killed or not.”

“One is so apt to wake up just as things get interesting,” remarked the Story Girl discontentedly.

“I dreamed last night that I had really truly curly hair,” said Cecily mournfully. “And oh, I was so happy! It was dreadful to wake up and find it as straight as ever.”

Felix, that sober, solid fellow, dreamed constantly of flying through the air. His descriptions of his aerial flights over the treetops of dreamland always filled us with envy. None of the rest of us could ever compass such a dream, not even the Story Girl, who might have been expected to dream of flying if anybody did. Felix had a knack of dreaming anyhow, and his dream book, while suffering somewhat in comparison of literary style, was about the best of the lot when it came to subject matter. Cecily’s might be more dramatic, but Felix’s was more amusing. The dream which we all counted his masterpiece was the one in which a menagerie had camped in the orchard and the rhinoceros chased Aunt Janet around and around the Pulpit Stone, but turned into an inoffensive pig when it was on the point of catching her.

Felix had a sick spell soon after we began our dream books, and Aunt Janet essayed to cure him by administering a dose of liver pills which Elder Frewen had assured her were a cure-all for every disease the flesh is heir to. But Felix flatly refused to take liver pills; Mexican Tea he would drink, but liver pills he would not take, in spite of his own suffering and Aunt Janet’s commands and entreaties. I could not understand his antipathy to the insignificant little white pellets, which were so easy to

swallow; but he explained the matter to us in the orchard when he had recovered his usual health and spirits.

“I was afraid to take the liver pills for fear they’d prevent me from dreaming,” he said. “Don’t you remember old Miss Baxter in Toronto, Bev? And how she told Mrs. McLaren that she was subject to terrible dreams, and finally she took two liver pills and never had any more dreams after that. I’d rather have died than risk it,” concluded Felix solemnly.

“I’d an exciting dream last night for once,” said Dan triumphantly. “I dreamt old Peg Bowen chased me. I thought I was up to her house and she took after me. You bet I scooted. And she caught me — yes, sir! I felt her skinny hand reach out and clutch my shoulder. I let out a screech — and woke up.”

“I should think you did screech,” said Felicity. “We heard you clean over into our room.”

“I hate to dream of being chased because I can never run,” said Sara Ray with a shiver. “I just stand rooted to the ground — and see it coming — and can’t stir. It don’t sound much written out, but it’s awful to go through. I’m sure I hope I’ll never dream Peg Bowen chases me. I’ll die if I do.”

“I wonder what Peg Bowen would really do to a fellow if she caught him,” speculated Dan.

“Peg Bowen doesn’t need to catch you to do things to you,” said Peter ominously. “She can put ill-luck on you just by looking at you — and she will if you offend her.”

“I don’t believe that,” said the Story Girl airily.

“Don’t you? All right, then! Last summer she called at Lem Hill’s in Markdale, and he told her to clear out or he’d set the dog on her. Peg cleared out, and she went across his pasture, muttering to herself and throwing her arms round. And next day his very best cow took sick and died. How do you account for that?”

“It might have happened anyhow,” said the Story Girl — somewhat less assuredly, though.

“It might. But I’d just as soon Peg Bowen didn’t look at MY cows,” said Peter.

“As if you had any cows!” giggled Felicity.

“I’m going to have cows some day,” said Peter, flushing. “I don’t mean to be a hired boy all my life. I’ll have a farm of my own and cows and everything. You’ll see if I won’t.”

“I dreamed last night that we opened the blue chest,” said the Story Girl, “and all the things were there — the blue china candlestick — only it was brass in the dream — and the fruit basket with the apple on it, and the wedding dress, and the embroidered petticoat. And we were laughing, and trying the things on, and having such fun. And Rachel Ward herself came and looked at us — so sad and reproachful — and we all felt ashamed, and I began to cry, and woke up crying.”

“I dreamed last night that Felix was thin,” said Peter, laughing. “He did look so queer. His clothes just hung loose, and he was going round trying to hold them on.”

Everybody thought this was funny, except Felix. He would not speak to Peter for two days because of it. Felicity also got into trouble because of her dreams. One night she woke up, having just had a very exciting dream; but she went to sleep again, and in the morning she could not remember the dream at all. Felicity determined she would never let another dream get away from her in such a fashion; and the next time she wakened in the night — having dreamed that she was dead and buried — she promptly arose, lighted a candle, and proceeded to write the dream down then and there. While so employed she contrived to upset the candle and set fire to her nightgown — a brand-new one, trimmed with any quantity of crocheted lace. A huge hole was burned in it, and when Aunt Janet discovered it she lifted up her voice with no uncertain sound. Felicity had never received a sharper scolding. But she took it very philosophically.

She was used to her mother's bitter tongue, and she was not unduly sensitive.

"Anyhow, I saved my dream," she said placidly.

And that, of course, was all that really mattered. Grown people were so strangely oblivious to the truly important things of life. Material for new garments, of night or day, could be bought in any shop for a trifling sum and made up out of hand. But if a dream escape you, in what marketplace the wide world over can you hope to regain it? What coin of earthly minting will ever buy back for you that lost and lovely vision?

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON

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Peter took Dan and me aside one evening, as we were on our way to the orchard with our dream books, saying significantly that he wanted our advice. Accordingly, we went round to the spruce wood, where the girls would not see us to the rousing of their curiosity, and then Peter told us of his dilemma.

“Last night I dreamed I was in church,” he said. “I thought it was full of people, and I walked up the aisle to your pew and set down, as unconcerned as a pig on ice. And then I found that I hadn’t a stitch of clothes on — NOT ONE BLESSED STITCH. Now” — Peter dropped his voice—”what is bothering me is this — would it be proper to tell a dream like that before the girls?”

I was of the opinion that it would be rather questionable; but Dan vowed he didn’t see why. HE’D tell it quick as any other dream. There was nothing bad in it.

“But they’re your own relations,” said Peter. “They’re no relation to me, and that makes a difference. Besides, they’re all such ladylike girls. I guess I’d better not risk it. I’m pretty sure Aunt Jane wouldn’t think it was proper to tell such a dream. And I don’t want to offend Fel — any of them.”

So Peter never told that dream, nor did he write it down.

Instead, I remember seeing in his dream book, under the date of September fifteenth, an entry to this effect: —

“Last nite i dremed a drem. it wasent a polit drem so i won’t rite it down.”

The girls saw this entry but, to their credit be it told, they never tried to find out what the “drem” was. As Peter said, they were “ladies” in the best and truest sense of that much abused appellation. Full of fun and frolic and mischief they were, with all the defects of their qualities and all the wayward faults of youth. But no indelicate thought or vulgar word could have been shaped or uttered in their presence. Had any of us boys ever been guilty of such, Cecily’s pale face would have coloured with the blush of outraged purity, Felicity’s golden head would have lifted itself in the haughty indignation of insulted womanhood, and the Story Girl’s splendid eyes would have flashed with such anger and scorn as would have shrivelled the very soul of the wretched culprit.

Dan was once guilty of swearing. Uncle Alec whipped him for it — the only time he ever so punished any of his children. But it was because Cecily cried all night that Dan was filled with saving remorse and repentance. He vowed next day to Cecily that he would never swear again, and he kept his word.

All at once the Story Girl and Peter began to forge ahead in the matter of dreaming. Their dreams suddenly became so lurid and dreadful and picturesque that it was hard for the rest of us to believe that they were not painting the lily rather freely in their accounts of them. But the Story Girl was the soul of honour; and Peter, early in life, had had his feet set in the path of truthfulness by his Aunt Jane and had never been known to stray from it. When they assured us solemnly that their dreams all happened exactly as they described them we were compelled to believe them. But there was something up, we felt sure of that. Peter and the Story Girl certainly had a secret between them, which they kept for a whole fortnight. There was no finding it out from the Story Girl. She had a knack of keeping secrets, anyhow; and, moreover, all that fortnight she was strangely cranky and petulant, and we found it was not wise to tease her. She was not well, so Aunt Olivia told Aunt Janet.

“I don’t know what is the matter with the child,” said the former anxiously. “She hasn’t seemed like herself the past two weeks. She complains of headache, and she has no appetite, and she is a dreadful colour. I’ll have to see a doctor about her if she doesn’t get better soon.”

“Give her a good dose of Mexican Tea and try that first,” said Aunt Janet. “I’ve saved many a doctor’s bill in my family by using Mexican Tea.”

The Mexican Tea was duly administered, but produced no improvement in the condition of the Story Girl, who, however, went on dreaming after a fashion which soon made her dream book a veritable curiosity of literature.

“If we can’t soon find out what makes Peter and the Story Girl dream like that, the rest of us might as well give up trying to write dream books,” said Felix discontentedly.

Finally, we did find out. Felicity wormed the secret out of Peter by the employment of Delilah wiles, such as have been the undoing of many a miserable male creature since Samson’s day. She first threatened that she would never speak to him again if he didn’t tell her; and then she promised him that, if he did, she would let him walk beside her to and from Sunday School all the rest of the summer, and carry her books for her. Peter was not proof against this double attack. He yielded and told the secret.

I expected the Story Girl would overwhelm him with scorn and indignation. But she took it very coolly.

“I knew Felicity would get it out of him sometime,” she said. “I think he has done well to hold out this long.”

Peter and the Story Girl, so it appeared, had wooed wild dreams to their pillows by the simple device of eating rich, indigestible things before they went to bed. Aunt Olivia knew nothing about it, of course. She permitted them only a plain, wholesome lunch at bedtime. But during the day the Story Girl would smuggle upstairs various tidbits from the pantry, putting half in Peter’s room and half in her own; and the result was these visions which had been our despair.

“Last night I ate a piece of mince pie,” she said, “and a lot of pickles, and two grape jelly tarts. But I guess I overdid it, because I got real sick and couldn’t sleep at all, so of course I didn’t have any dreams. I should have stopped with the pie and pickles and left the tarts alone. Peter did, and he

had an elegant dream that Peg Bowen caught him and put him on to boil alive in that big black pot that hangs outside her door. He woke up before the water got hot, though. Well, Miss Felicity, you're pretty smart. But how will you like to walk to Sunday School with a boy who wears patched trousers?"

"I won't have to," said Felicity triumphantly. "Peter is having a new suit made. It's to be ready by Saturday. I knew that before I promised."

Having discovered how to produce exciting dreams, we all promptly followed the example of Peter and the Story Girl.

"There is no chance for me to have any horrid dreams," lamented Sara Ray, "because ma won't let me having anything at all to eat before I go to bed. I don't think it's fair."

"Can't you hide something away through the day as we do?" asked Felicity.

"No." Sara shook her fawn-coloured head mournfully. "Ma always keeps the pantry locked, for fear Judy Pineau will treat her friends."

For a week we ate unlawful lunches and dreamed dreams after our own hearts — and, I regret to say, bickered and squabbled incessantly throughout the daytime, for our digestions went out of order and our tempers followed suit. Even the Story Girl and I had a fight — something that had never happened before. Peter was the only one who kept his normal poise. Nothing could upset that boy's stomach.

One night Cecily came into the pantry with a large cucumber, and proceeded to devour the greater part of it. The grownups were away that evening, attending a lecture at Markdale, so we ate our snacks openly, without any recourse to ways that were dark. I remember I supped that night off a solid hunk of fat pork, topped off with a slab of cold plum pudding.

"I thought you didn't like cucumber, Cecily," Dan remarked.

“Neither I do,” said Cecily with a grimace. “But Peter says they’re splendid for dreaming. He et one that night he had the dream about being caught by cannibals. I’d eat three cucumbers if I could have a dream like that.”

Cecily finished her cucumber, and then drank a glass of milk, just as we heard the wheels of Uncle Alec’s buggy rambling over the bridge in the hollow. Felicity quickly restored pork and pudding to their own places, and by the time Aunt Janet came in we were all in our respective beds. Soon the house was dark and silent. I was just dropping into an uneasy slumber when I heard a commotion in the girls’ room across the hall.

Their door opened and through our own open door I saw Felicity’s white-clad figure flit down the stairs to Aunt Janet’s room. From the room she had left came moans and cries.

“Cecily’s sick,” said Dan, springing out of bed. “That cucumber must have disagreed with her.”

In a few minutes the whole house was astir. Cecily was sick — very, very sick, there was no doubt of that. She was even worse than Dan had been when he had eaten the bad berries. Uncle Alec, tired as he was from his hard day’s work and evening outing, was despatched for the doctor. Aunt Janet and Felicity administered all the homely remedies they could think of, but to no effect. Felicity told Aunt Janet of the cucumber, but Aunt Janet did not think the cucumber alone could be responsible for Cecily’s alarming condition.

“Cucumbers are indigestible, but I never knew of them making any one as sick as this,” she said anxiously. “What made the child eat a cucumber before going to bed? I didn’t think she liked them.”

“It was that wretched Peter,” sobbed Felicity indignantly. “He told her it would make her dream something extra.”

“What on earth did she want to dream for?” demanded Aunt Janet in bewilderment.

“Oh, to have something worth while to write in her dream book, ma. We all have dream books, you know, and every one wants their own to be the most exciting — and we’ve been eating rich things to make us dream — and it does — but if Cecily — oh, I’ll never forgive myself,” said Felicity, incoherently, letting all kinds of cats out of the bag in her excitement and alarm.

“Well, I wonder what on earth you young ones will do next,” said Aunt Janet in the helpless tone of a woman who gives it up.

Cecily was no better when the doctor came. Like Aunt Janet, he declared that cucumbers alone would not have made her so ill; but when he found out that she had drunk a glass of milk also the mystery was solved.

“Why, milk and cucumbers together make a rank poison,” he said. “No wonder the child is sick. There — there now—” seeing the alarmed faces around him, “don’t be frightened. As old Mrs. Fraser says, ‘It’s no deidly.’ It won’t kill her, but she’ll probably be a pretty miserable girl for two or three days.”

She was. And we were all miserable in company. Aunt Janet investigated the whole affair and the matter of our dream books was aired in family conclave. I do not know which hurt our feelings most — the scolding we got from Aunt Janet, or the ridicule which the other grownups, especially Uncle Roger, showered on us. Peter received an extra “setting down,” which he considered rank injustice.

“I didn’t tell Cecily to drink the milk, and the cucumber alone wouldn’t have hurt her,” he grumbled. Cecily was able to be out with us again that day, so Peter felt that he might venture on a grumble. “‘Sides, she coaxed me to tell her what would be good for dreams. I just told her as a favour. And now your Aunt Janet blames me for the whole trouble.”

“And Aunt Janet says we are never to have anything to eat before we go to bed after this except plain bread and milk,” said Felix sadly.

“They’d like to stop us from dreaming altogether if they could,” said the Story Girl wrathfully.

“Well, anyway, they can’t prevent us from growing up,” consoled Dan.

“We needn’t worry about the bread and milk rule,” added Felicity. “Ma made a rule like that once before, and kept it for a week, and then we just slipped back to the old way. That will be what will happen this time, too. But of course we won’t be able to get any more rich things for supper, and our dreams will be pretty flat after this.”

“Well, let’s go down to the Pulpit Stone and I’ll tell you a story I know,” said the Story Girl.

We went — and straightway drank of the waters of forgetfulness. In a brief space we were laughing right merrily, no longer remembering our wrongs at the hands of those cruel grownups. Our laughter echoed back from the barns and the spruce grove, as if elfin denizens of upper air were sharing in our mirth.

Presently, also, the laughter of the grownups mingled with ours. Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger, Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec, came strolling through the orchard and joined our circle, as they sometimes did when the toil of the day was over, and the magic time ‘twixt light and dark brought truce of care and labour. ‘Twas then we liked our grownups best, for then they seemed half children again. Uncle Roger and Uncle Alec lolled in the grass like boys; Aunt Olivia, looking more like a pansy than ever in the prettiest dress of pale purple print, with a knot of yellow ribbon at her throat, sat with her arm about Cecily and smiled on us all; and Aunt Janet’s motherly face lost its everyday look of anxious care.

The Story Girl was in great fettle that night. Never had her tales sparkled with such wit and archness.

“Sara Stanley,” said Aunt Olivia, shaking her finger at her after a sidesplitting yarn, “if you don’t watch out you’ll be famous some day.”

“These funny stories are all right,” said Uncle Roger, “but for real enjoyment give me something with a creep in it. Sara, tell us that story of the Serpent Woman I heard you tell one day last summer.”

The Story Girl began it glibly. But before she had gone far with it, I, who was sitting beside her, felt an unaccountable repulsion creeping over me. For the first time since I had known her I wanted to draw away from the Story Girl. Looking around on the faces of the group, I saw that they all shared my feeling. Cecily had put her hands over her eyes. Peter was staring at the Story Girl with a fascinated, horror-stricken gaze. Aunt Olivia was pale and troubled. All looked as if they were held prisoners in the bonds of a fearsome spell which they would gladly break but could not.

It was not our Story Girl who sat there, telling that weird tale in a sibilant, curdling voice. She had put on a new personality like a garment, and that personality was a venomous, evil, loathly thing. I would rather have died than have touched the slim, brown wrist on which she supported herself. The light in her narrowed orbs was the cold, merciless gleam of the serpent's eye. I felt frightened of this unholy creature who had suddenly come in our dear Story Girl's place.

When the tale ended there was a brief silence. Then Aunt Janet said severely, but with a sigh of relief,

“Little girls shouldn't tell such horrible stories.”

This truly Aunt Janetian remark broke the spell. The grownups laughed, rather shakily, and the Story Girl — our own dear Story Girl once more, and no Serpent Woman — said protestingly,

“Well, Uncle Roger asked me to tell it. I don't like telling such stories either. They make me feel dreadful. Do you know, for just a little while, I felt exactly like a snake.”

“You looked like one,” said Uncle Roger. “How on earth do you do it?”

“I can't explain how I do it,” said the Story Girl perplexedly.

“It just does itself.”

Genius can never explain how it does it. It would not be genius if it could. And the Story Girl had genius.

As we left the orchard I walked along behind Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia.

“That was an uncanny exhibition for a girl of fourteen, you know, Roger,” said Aunt Olivia musingly. “What is in store for that child?”

“Fame,” said Uncle Roger. “If she ever has a chance, that is, and I suppose her father will see to that. At least, I hope he will. You and I, Olivia, never had our chance. I hope Sara will have hers.”

This was my first inkling of what I was to understand more fully in later years. Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia had both cherished certain dreams and ambitions in youth, but circumstances had denied them their “chance” and those dreams had never been fulfilled.

“Some day, Olivia,” went on Uncle Roger, “you and I may find ourselves the aunt and uncle of the foremost actress of her day. If a girl of fourteen can make a couple of practical farmers and a pair of matter-of-fact housewives half believe for ten minutes that she really is a snake, what won’t she be able to do when she is thirty? Here, you,” added Uncle Roger, perceiving me, “cut along and get off to your bed. And mind you don’t eat cucumbers and milk before you go.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BEWITCHMENT OF PAT

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We were all in the doleful dumps — at least, all we “young fry” were, and even the grownups were sorry and condescended to take an interest in our troubles. Pat, our own, dear, frolicsome Paddy, was sick again — very, very sick.

On Friday he moped and refused his saucer of new milk at milking time. The next morning he stretched himself down on the platform by Uncle Roger’s back door, laid his head on his black paws, and refused to take any notice of anything or anybody. In vain we stroked and entreated and brought him tidbits. Only when the Story Girl caressed him did he give one plaintive little mew, as if to ask piteously why she could not do something for him. At that Cecily and Felicity and Sara Ray all began crying, and we boys felt choky. Indeed, I caught Peter behind Aunt Olivia’s dairy later in the day, and if ever a boy had been crying I vow that boy was Peter. Nor did he deny it when I taxed him with it, but he would not give in that he was crying about Paddy. Nonsense!

“What were you crying for, then?” I said.

“I’m crying because — because my Aunt Jane is dead,” said Peter defiantly.

“But your Aunt Jane died two years ago,” I said skeptically.

“Well, ain’t that all the more reason for crying?” retorted Peter. “I’ve had to do without her for two years, and that’s worse than if it had just been a few days.”

“I believe you were crying because Pat is so sick,” I said firmly.

“As if I’d cry about a cat!” scoffed Peter. And he marched off whistling.

Of course we had tried the lard and powder treatment again, smearing Pat’s paws and sides liberally. But to our dismay, Pat made no effort to lick it off.

“I tell you he’s a mighty sick cat,” said Peter darkly. “When a cat don’t care what he looks like he’s pretty far gone.”

“If we only knew what was the matter with him we might do something,” sobbed the Story Girl, stroking her poor pet’s unresponsive head.

“I could tell you what’s the matter with him, but you’d only laugh at me,” said Peter.

We all looked at him.

“Peter Craig, what do you mean?” asked Felicity.

“Zackly what I say.”

“Then, if you know what is the matter with Paddy, tell us,” commanded the Story Girl, standing up. She said it quietly; but Peter obeyed. I think he would have obeyed if she, in that tone and with those eyes, had ordered him to cast himself into the depths of the sea. I know I should.

“He’s BEWITCHED — that’s what’s the matter with him,” said Peter, half defiantly, half shamefacedly.

“Bewitched? Nonsense!”

“There now, what did I tell you?” complained Peter.

The Story Girl looked at Peter, at the rest of us, and then at poor Pat.

“How could he be bewitched?” she asked irresolutely, “and who could bewitch him?”

“I don’t know HOW he was bewitched,” said Peter. “I’d have to be a witch myself to know that. But Peg Bowen bewitched him.”

“Nonsense!” said the Story Girl again.

“All right,” said Peter. “You don’t have to believe me.”

“If Peg Bowen could bewitch anything — and I don’t believe she could — why should she bewitch Pat?” asked the Story Girl. “Everybody here and at Uncle Alec’s is always kind to her.”

“I’ll tell you why,” said Peter. “Thursday afternoon, when you fellows were all in school, Peg Bowen came here. Your Aunt Olivia gave her a lunch — a good one. You may laugh at the notion of Peg being a witch, but I notice your folks are always awful good to her when she comes, and awful careful never to offend her.”

“Aunt Olivia would be good to any poor creature, and so would mother,” said Felicity. “And of course nobody wants to offend Peg, because she is spiteful, and she once set fire to a man’s barn in Markdale when he offended her. But she isn’t a witch — that’s ridiculous.”

“All right. But wait till I tell you. When Peg Bowen was leaving Pat stretched out on the steps. She tramped on his tail. You know Pat doesn’t like to have his tail meddled with. He slewed himself round and clawed her bare foot. If you’d just seen the look she gave him you’d know whether she was a witch or not. And she went off down the lane, muttering and throwing her hands round, just like she did in Lem Hill’s cow pasture. She put a spell on Pat, that’s what she did. He was sick the next morning.”

We looked at each other in miserable, perplexed silence. We were only children — and we believed that there had been such things as witches once upon a time — and Peg Bowen WAS an eerie creature.

“If that’s so — though I can’t believe it — we can’t do anything,” said the Story Girl drearily. “Pat must die.”

Cecily began to weep afresh.

“I’d do anything to save Pat’s life,” she said. “I’d BELIEVE anything.”

“There’s nothing we can do,” said Felicity impatiently.

“I suppose,” sobbed Cecily, “we might go to Peg Bowen and ask her to forgive Pat and take the spell off him. She might, if we apologized real humble.”

At first we were appalled by the suggestion. We didn’t believe that Peg Bowen was a witch. But to go to her — to seek her out in that mysterious woodland retreat of hers which was invested with all the terrors of the unknown! And that this suggestion should come from timid Cecily, of all people! But then, there was poor Pat!

“Would it do any good?” said the Story Girl desperately. “Even if she did make Pat sick I suppose it would only make her crosser if we went and accused her of bewitching him. Besides, she didn’t do anything of the sort.”

But there was some uncertainty in the Story Girl’s voice.

“It wouldn’t do any harm to try,” said Cecily. “If she didn’t make him sick it won’t matter if she is cross.”

“It won’t matter to Pat, but it might to the one who goes to her,” said Felicity. “She isn’t a witch, but she’s a spiteful old woman, and goodness knows what she’d do to us if she caught us. I’m scared of Peg Bowen, and I don’t care who knows it. Ever since I can mind ma’s been saying, ‘If you’re not good Peg Bowen will catch you.’”

“If I thought she really made Pat sick and could make him better, I’d try to pacify her somehow,” said the Story Girl decidedly.

“I’m frightened of her, too — but just look at poor, darling Paddy.”

We looked at Paddy who continued to stare fixedly before him with unwinking eyes. Uncle Roger came out and looked at him also, with what seemed to us positively brutal unconcern.

“I’m afraid it’s all up with Pat,” he said.

“Uncle Roger,” said Cecily imploringly, “Peter says Peg Bowen has bewitched Pat for scratching her. Do you think it can be so?”

“Did Pat scratch Peg?” asked Uncle Roger, with a horror-stricken face.
“Dear me! Dear me! That mystery is solved. Poor Pat!”

Uncle Roger nodded his head, as if resigning himself and Pat to the worst.

“Do you really think Peg Bowen is a witch, Uncle Roger?” demanded the Story Girl incredulously.

“Do I think Peg Bowen is a witch? My dear Sara, what do YOU think of a woman who can turn herself into a black cat whenever she likes? Is she a witch? Or is she not? I leave it to you.”

“Can Peg Bowen turn herself into a black cat?” asked Felix, staring.

“It’s my belief that that is the least of Peg Bowen’s accomplishments,” answered Uncle Roger. “It’s the easiest thing in the world for a witch to turn herself into any animal you choose to mention. Yes, Pat is bewitched — no doubt of that — not the least in the world.”

“What are you telling those children such stuff for?” asked Aunt Olivia, passing on her way to the well.

“It’s an irresistible temptation,” answered Uncle Roger, strolling over to carry her pail.

“You can see your Uncle Roger believes Peg is a witch,” said Peter.

“And you can see Aunt Olivia doesn’t,” I said, “and I don’t either.”

“See here,” said the Story Girl resolutely, “I don’t believe it, but there MAY be something in it. Suppose there is. The question is, what can we do?”

“I’ll tell you what I’d do,” said Peter. “I’d take a present for Peg, and ask her to make Pat well. I wouldn’t let on I thought she’d made him sick. Then she couldn’t be offended — and maybe she’d take the spell off.”

“I think we’d better all give her something,” said Felicity. “I’m willing to do that. But who’s going to take the presents to her?”

“We must all go together,” said the Story Girl.

“I won’t,” cried Sara Ray in terror. “I wouldn’t go near Peg Bowen’s house for the world, no matter who was with me.”

“I’ve thought of a plan,” said the Story Girl. “Let’s all give her something, as Felicity says. And let us all go up to her place this evening, and if we see her outside we’ll just go quietly and set the things down before her with the letter, and say nothing but come respectfully away.”

“If she’ll let us,” said Dan significantly.

“Can Peg read a letter?” I asked.

“Oh, yes. Aunt Olivia says she is a good scholar. She went to school and was a smart girl until she became crazy. We’ll write it very plain.”

“What if we don’t see her?” asked Felicity.

“We’ll put the things on her doorstep then and leave them.”

“She may be miles away over the country by this time,” sighed Cecily, “and never find them until it’s too late for Pat. But it’s the only thing to do. What can we give her?”

“We mustn’t offer her any money,” said the Story Girl. “She’s very indignant when any one does that. She says she isn’t a beggar. But she’ll take anything else. I shall give her my string of blue beads. She’s fond of finery.”

“I’ll give her that sponge cake I made this morning,” said Felicity. “I guess she doesn’t get sponge cake very often.”

“I’ve nothing but the rheumatism ring I got as a premium for selling needles last winter,” said Peter. “I’ll give her that. Even if she hasn’t got rheumatism it’s a real handsome ring. It looks like solid gold.”

“I’ll give her a roll of peppermint candy,” said Felix.

“I’ll give one of those little jars of cherry preserve I made,” said Cecily.

“I won’t go near her,” quavered Sara Ray, “but I want to do something for Pat, and I’ll send that piece of apple leaf lace I knit last week.”

I decided to give the redoubtable Peg some apples from my birthday tree, and Dan declared he would give her a plug of tobacco.

“Oh, won’t she be insulted?” exclaimed Felix, rather horrified.

“Naw,” grinned Dan. “Peg chews tobacco like a man. She’d rather have it than your rubbishy peppermints, I can tell you. I’ll run down to old Mrs. Sampson’s and get a plug.”

“Now, we must write the letter and take it and the presents to her right away, before it gets dark,” said the Story Girl.

We adjourned to the granary to indite the important document, which the Story Girl was to compose.

“How shall I begin it?” she asked in perplexity. “It would never do to say, ‘Dear Peg,’ and ‘Dear Miss Bowen’ sounds too ridiculous.”

“Besides, nobody knows whether she is Miss Bowen or not,” said Felicity. “She went to Boston when she grew up, and some say she was married there and her husband deserted her, and that’s why she went crazy. If she’s married, she won’t like being called Miss.”

“Well, how am I to address her?” asked the Story Girl in despair.

Peter again came to the rescue with a practical suggestion.

“Begin it, ‘Respected Madam,’” he said. “Ma has a letter a school trustee once writ to my Aunt Jane and that’s how it begins.”

“Respected Madam,” wrote the Story Girl. “We want to ask a very great favour of you and we hope you will kindly grant it if you can. Our favourite cat, Paddy, is very sick, and we are afraid he is going to die. Do you think you could cure him? And will you please try? We are all so fond of him, and he is such a good cat, and has no bad habits. Of course, if any of us tramps on his tail he will scratch us, but you know a cat can’t bear to have his tail tramped on. It’s a very tender part of him, and it’s his only way of preventing it, and he doesn’t mean any harm. If you can cure Paddy for us we will always be very, very grateful to you. The accompanying small offerings are a testimonial of our respect and gratitude, and we entreat you to honour us by accepting them.

”Very respectfully yours,
”SARA STANLEY.”

“I tell you that last sentence has a fine sound,” said Peter admiringly.

“I didn’t make that up,” admitted the Story Girl honestly. “I read it somewhere and remembered it.”

“I think it’s TOO fine,” criticized Felicity. “Peg Bowen won’t know the meaning of such big words.”

But it was decided to leave them in and we all signed the letter.

Then we got our “testimonials,” and started on our reluctant journey to the domains of the witch. Sara Ray would not go, of course, but she volunteered to stay with Pat while we were away. We did not think it necessary to inform the grownups of our errand, or its nature. Grownups had such peculiar views. They might forbid our going at all — and they would certainly laugh at us.

Peg Bowen’s house was nearly a mile away, even by the short cut past the swamp and up the wooded hill. We went down through the brook field and over the little plank bridge in the hollow, half lost in its surrounding sea of

farewell summers. When we reached the green gloom of the woods beyond we began to feel frightened, but nobody would admit it. We walked very closely together, and we did not talk. When you are near the retreat of witches and folk of that ilk the less you say the better, for their feelings are so notoriously touchy. Of course, Peg wasn't a witch, but it was best to be on the safe side.

Finally we came to the lane which led directly to her abode. We were all very pale now, and our hearts were beating. The red September sun hung low between the tall spruces to the west. It did not look to me just right for a sun. In fact, everything looked uncanny. I wished our errand were well over.

A sudden bend in the lane brought us out to the little clearing where Peg's house was before we were half ready to see it. In spite of my fear I looked at it with some curiosity. It was a small, shaky building with a sagging roof, set amid a perfect jungle of weeds. To our eyes, the odd thing about it was that there was no entrance on the ground floor, as there should be in any respectable house. The only door was in the upper story, and was reached by a flight of rickety steps. There was no sign of life about the place except — sight of ill omen — a large black cat, sitting on the topmost step. We thought of Uncle Roger's gruesome hints. Could that black cat be Peg? Nonsense! But still — it didn't look like an ordinary cat. It was so large — and had such green, malicious eyes! Plainly, there was something out of the common about the beastie!

In a tense, breathless silence the Story Girl placed our parcels on the lowest step, and laid her letter on the top of the pile. Her brown fingers trembled and her face was very pale.

Suddenly the door above us opened, and Peg Bowen herself appeared on the threshold. She was a tall, sinewy old woman, wearing a short, ragged, drugget skirt which reached scantily below her knees, a scarlet print blouse, and a man's hat. Her feet, arms, and neck were bare, and she had a battered old clay pipe in her mouth. Her brown face was seamed with a hundred wrinkles, and her tangled, grizzled hair fell unkemptly over her shoulders. She was scowling, and her flashing black eyes held no friendly light.

We had borne up bravely enough hitherto, in spite of our inward, unconfessed quakings. But now our strained nerves gave way, and sheer panic seized us. Peter gave a little yelp of pure terror. We turned and fled across the clearing and into the woods. Down the long hill we tore, like mad, hunted creatures, firmly convinced that Peg Bowen was after us. Wild was that scamper, as nightmare-like as any recorded in our dream books. The Story Girl was in front of me, and I can recall the tremendous leaps she made over fallen logs and little spruce bushes, with her long brown curls streaming out behind her from their scarlet fillet. Cecily, behind me, kept gasping out the contradictory sentences, “Oh, Bev, wait for me,” and “Oh, Bev, hurry, hurry!” More by blind instinct than anything else we kept together and found our way out of the woods. Presently we were in the field beyond the brook. Over us was a dainty sky of shell pink, placid cows were pasturing around us; the farewell summers nodded to us in the friendly breezes. We halted, with a glad realization that we were back in our own haunts and that Peg Bowen had not caught us.

“Oh, wasn’t that an awful experience?” gasped Cecily, shuddering.

“I wouldn’t go through it again — I couldn’t, not even for Pat.”

“It come on a fellow so sudden,” said Peter shamefacedly. “I think I could a-stood my ground if I’d known she was going to come out. But when she popped out like that I thought I was done for.”

“We shouldn’t have run,” said Felicity gloomily. “It showed we were afraid of her, and that always makes her awful cross. She won’t do a thing for Pat now.”

“I don’t believe she could do anything, anyway,” said the Story Girl. “I think we’ve just been a lot of geese.”

We were all, except Peter, more or less inclined to agree with her. And the conviction of our folly deepened when we reached the granary and found that Pat, watched over by the faithful Sara Ray, was no better. The Story Girl announced that she would take him into the kitchen and sit up all night with him.

“He sha’n’t die alone, anyway,” she said miserably, gathering his limp body up in her arms.

We did not think Aunt Olivia would give her permission to stay up; but Aunt Olivia did. Aunt Olivia really was a duck. We wanted to stay with her also, but Aunt Janet wouldn’t hear of such a thing. She ordered us off to bed, saying that it was positively sinful in us to be so worked up over a cat. Five heartbroken children, who knew that there are many worse friends than dumb, furry folk, climbed Uncle Alec’s stairs to bed that night.

“There’s nothing we can do now, except pray God to make Pat better,” said Cecily.

I must candidly say that her tone savoured strongly of a last resort; but this was owing more to early training than to any lack of faith on Cecily’s part. She knew and we knew, that prayer was a solemn rite, not to be lightly held, nor degraded to common uses. Felicity voiced this conviction when she said,

“I don’t believe it would be right to pray about a cat.”

“I’d like to know why not,” retorted Cecily, “God made Paddy just as much as He made you, Felicity King, though perhaps He didn’t go to so much trouble. And I’m sure He’s abler to help him than Peg Bowen. Anyhow, I’m going to pray for Pat with all my might and main, and I’d like to see you try to stop me. Of course I won’t mix it up with more important things. I’ll just tack it on after I’ve finished asking the blessings, but before I say amen.”

More petitions than Cecily’s were offered up that night on behalf of Paddy. I distinctly heard Felix — who always said his prayers in a loud whisper,

owing to some lasting conviction of early life that God could not hear him if he did not pray audibly — mutter pleadingly, after the “important” part of his devotions was over, “Oh, God, please make Pat better by the morning. PLEASE do.”

And I, even in these late years of irreverence for the dreams of youth, am not in the least ashamed to confess that when I knelt down to say my boyish prayer, I thought of our little furry comrade in his extremity, and prayed as reverently as I knew how for his healing. Then I went to sleep, comforted by the simple hope that the Great Father would, after “important things” were all attended to, remember poor Pat.

As soon as we were up the next morning we rushed off to Uncle Roger’s. But we met Peter and the Story Girl in the lane, and their faces were as the faces of those who bring glad tidings upon the mountains.

“Pat’s better,” cried the Story Girl, blithe, triumphant. “Last night, just at twelve, he began to lick his paws. Then he licked himself all over and went to sleep, too, on the sofa. When I woke Pat was washing his face, and he has taken a whole saucerful of milk. Oh, isn’t it splendid?”

“You see Peg Bowen did put a spell on him,” said Peter, “and then she took it off.”

“I guess Cecily’s prayer had more to do with Pat’s getting better than Peg Bowen,” said Felicity. “She prayed for Pat over and over again. That is why he’s better.”

“Oh, all right,” said Peter, “but I’d advise Pat not to scratch Peg Bowen again, that’s all.”

“I wish I knew whether it was the praying or Peg Bowen that cured Pat,” said Felix in perplexity.

“I don’t believe it was either of them,” said Dan. “Pat just got sick and got better again of his own accord.”

“I’m going to believe that it was the praying,” said Cecily decidedly. “It’s so much nicer to believe that God cured Pat than that Peg Bowen did.”

“But you oughtn’t to believe a thing just ‘cause it would be more comfortable,” objected Peter. “Mind you, I ain’t saying God couldn’t cure Pat. But nothing and nobody can’t ever make me believe that Peg Bowen wasn’t at the bottom of it all.”

Thus faith, superstition, and incredulity strove together amongst us, as in all history.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CUP OF FAILURE

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One warm Sunday evening in the moon of goldenrod, we all, grownups and children, were sitting in the orchard by the Pulpit Stone singing sweet old gospel hymns. We could all sing more or less, except poor Sara Ray, who had once despairingly confided to me that she didn't know what she'd ever do when she went to heaven, because she couldn't sing a note.

That whole scene comes out clearly for me in memory — the arc of primrose sky over the trees behind the old house, the fruit-laden boughs of the orchard, the bank of goldenrod, like a wave of sunshine, behind the Pulpit Stone, the nameless colour seen on a fir wood in a ruddy sunset. I can see Uncle Alec's tired, brilliant, blue eyes, Aunt Janet's wholesome, matronly face, Uncle Roger's sweeping blond beard and red cheeks, and Aunt Olivia's full-blown beauty. Two voices ring out for me above all others in the music that echoes through the halls of recollection. Cecily's sweet and silvery, and Uncle Alec's fine tenor. "If you're a King, you sing," was a Carlisle proverb in those days. Aunt Julia had been the flower of the flock in that respect and had become a noted concert singer. The world had never heard of the rest. Their music echoed only along the hidden ways of life, and served but to lighten the cares of the trivial round and common task.

That evening, after they tired of singing, our grownups began talking of their youthful days and doings.

This was always a keen delight to us small fry. We listened avidly to the tales of our uncles and aunts in the days when they, too — hard fact to realize — had been children. Good and proper as they were now, once, so it seemed, they had gotten into mischief and even had their quarrels and disagreements. On this particular evening Uncle Roger told many stories

of Uncle Edward, and one in which the said Edward had preached sermons at the mature age of ten from the Pulpit Stone fired, as the sequel will show, the Story Girl's imagination.

"Can't I just see him at it now," said Uncle Roger, "leaning over that old boulder, his cheeks red and his eyes burning with excitement, banging the top of it as he had seen the ministers do in church. It wasn't cushioned, however, and he always bruised his hands in his self-forgetful earnestness. We thought him a regular wonder. We loved to hear him preach, but we didn't like to hear him pray, because he always insisted on praying for each of us by name, and it made us feel wretchedly uncomfortable, somehow. Alec, do you remember how furious Julia was because Edward prayed one day that she might be preserved from vanity and conceit over her singing?"

"I should think I do," laughed Uncle Alec. "She was sitting right there where Cecily is now, and she got up at once and marched right out of the orchard, but at the gate she turned to call back indignantly, 'I guess you'd better wait till you've prayed the conceit out of yourself before you begin on me, Ned King. I never heard such stuck-up sermons as you preach.' Ned went on praying and never let on he heard her, but at the end of his prayer he wound up with 'Oh, God, I pray you to keep an eye on us all, but I pray you to pay particular attention to my sister Julia, for I think she needs it even more than the rest of us, world without end, Amen.'"

Our uncles roared with laughter over the recollection. We all laughed, indeed, especially over another tale in which Uncle Edward, leaning too far over the "pulpit" in his earnestness, lost his balance altogether and tumbled ingloriously into the grass below.

"He lit on a big Scotch thistle," said Uncle Roger, chuckling, "and besides that, he skinned his forehead on a stone. But he was determined to finish his sermon, and finish it he did. He climbed back into the pulpit, with the tears rolling over his cheeks, and preached for ten minutes longer, with sobs in his voice and drops of blood on his forehead. He was a plucky little beggar. No wonder he succeeded in life."

“And his sermons and prayers were always just about as outspoken as those Julia objected to,” said Uncle Alec. “Well, we’re all getting on in life and Edward is gray; but when I think of him I always see him a little, rosy, curly-headed chap, laying down the law to us from the Pulpit Stone. It seems like the other day that we were all here together, just as these children are, and now we are scattered everywhere. Julia in California, Edward in Halifax, Alan in South America, Felix and Felicity and Stephen gone to the land that is very far off.”

There was a little space of silence; and then Uncle Alec began, in a low, impressive voice, to repeat the wonderful verses of the ninetieth Psalm — verses which were thenceforth bound up for us with the beauty of that night and the memories of our kindred. Very reverently we all listened to the majestic words.

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.... For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.... For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years yet is their strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.... So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.... Oh, satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.... And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

The dusk crept into the orchard like a dim, bewitching personality. You could see her — feel her — hear her. She tiptoed softly from tree to tree, ever drawing nearer. Presently her filmy wings hovered over us and through them gleamed the early stars of the autumn night.

The grownups rose reluctantly and strolled away; but we children lingered for a moment to talk over an idea the Story Girl broached — a good idea, we thought enthusiastically, and one that promised to add considerable spice to life.

We were on the lookout for some new amusement. Dream books had begun to pall. We no longer wrote in them very regularly, and our dreams were not what they used to be before the mischance of the cucumber. So the Story Girl's suggestion came pat to the psychological moment.

'I've thought of a splendid plan,' she said. 'It just flashed into my mind when the uncles were talking about Uncle Edward. And the beauty of it is we can play it on Sundays, and you know there are so few things it is proper to play on Sundays. But this is a Christian game, so it will be all right.'

"It isn't like the religious fruit basket game, is it?" asked Cecily anxiously.

We had good reason to hope that it wasn't. One desperate Sunday afternoon, when we had nothing to read and the time seemed endless, Felix had suggested that we have a game of fruit-basket; only instead of taking the names of fruits, we were to take the names of Bible characters. This, he argued, would make it quite lawful and proper to play on Sunday. We, too desirous of being convinced, also thought so; and for a merry hour Lazarus and Martha and Moses and Aaron and sundry other worthies of Holy Writ had a lively time of it in the King orchard. Peter having a Scriptural name of his own, did not want to take another; but we would not allow this, because it would give him an unfair advantage over the rest of us. It would be so much easier to call out your own name than fit your tongue to an unfamiliar one. So Peter retaliated by choosing Nebuchadnezzar, which no one could ever utter three times before Peter shrieked it out once.

In the midst of our hilarity, however, Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet came down upon us. It is best to draw a veil over what followed. Suffice it to say that the recollection gave point to Cecily's question.

"No, it isn't that sort of game at all," said the Story Girl. "It is this; each of you boys must preach a sermon, as Uncle Edward used to do. One of you next Sunday, and another the next, and so on. And whoever preaches the best sermon is to get a prize."

Dan promptly declared he wouldn't try to preach a sermon; but Peter, Felix and I thought the suggestion a very good one. Secretly, I believed I could cut quite a fine figure preaching a sermon.

"Who'll give the prize?" asked Felix.

"I will," said the Story Girl. "I'll give that picture father sent me last week."

As the said picture was an excellent copy of one of Landseer's stags, Felix and I were well pleased; but Peter averred that he would rather have the Madonna that looked like his Aunt Jane, and the Story Girl agreed that if his sermon was the best she would give him that.

"But who's to be the judge?" I said, "and what kind of a sermon would you call the best?"

"The one that makes the most impression," answered the Story Girl promptly. "And we girls must be the judges, because there's nobody else. Now, who is to preach next Sunday?"

It was decided that I should lead off, and I lay awake for an extra hour that night thinking what text I should take for the following Sunday. The next day I bought two sheets of foolscap from the schoolmaster, and after tea I betook myself to the granary, barred the door, and fell to writing my sermon. I did not find it as easy a task as I had anticipated; but I pegged grimly away at it, and by dint of severe labour for two evenings I eventually got my four pages of foolscap filled, although I had to pad the subject-matter not a little with verses of quotable hymns. I had decided to preach on missions, as being a topic more within my grasp than abstruse theological doctrines or evangelical discourses; and, mindful of the need of making an impression, I drew a harrowing picture of the miserable plight of the heathen who in their darkness bowed down to wood and stone. Then I urged our responsibility concerning them, and meant to wind up by reciting, in a very solemn and earnest voice, the verse beginning, "Can we whose souls are lighted." When I had completed my sermon I went over it very carefully again and wrote with red ink — Cecily made it

for me out of an aniline dye — the word “thump” wherever I deemed it advisable to chastise the pulpit.

I have that sermon still, all its red thumps unfaded, lying beside my dream book; but I am not going to inflict it on my readers. I am not so proud of it as I once was. I was really puffed up with earthly vanity over it at that time. Felix, I thought, would be hard put to it to beat it. As for Peter, I did not consider him a rival to be feared. It was unsupposable that a hired boy, with little education and less experience of churchgoing, should be able to preach better than could I, in whose family there was a real minister.

The sermon written, the next thing was to learn it off by heart and then practise it, thumps included, until I was letter and gesture perfect. I preached it over several times in the granary with only Paddy, sitting immovably on a puncheon, for audience. Paddy stood the test fairly well. At least, he made an adorable listener, save at such times as imaginary rats distracted his attention.

Mr. Marwood had at least three absorbed listeners the next Sunday morning. Felix, Peter and I were all among the chieles who were taking mental notes on the art of preaching a sermon. Not a motion, or glance, or intonation escaped us. To be sure, none of us could remember the text when we got home; but we knew just how you should throw back your head and clutch the edge of the pulpit with both hands when you announced it.

In the afternoon we all repaired to the orchard, Bibles and hymn books in hand. We did not think it necessary to inform the grownups of what was in the wind. You could never tell what kink a grownup would take. They might not think it proper to play any sort of a game on Sunday, not even a Christian game. Least said was soonest mended where grownups were concerned.

I mounted the pulpit steps, feeling rather nervous, and my audience sat gravely down on the grass before me. Our opening exercises consisted solely of singing and reading. We had agreed to omit prayer. Neither Felix, Peter nor I felt equal to praying in public. But we took up a collection. The proceeds were to go to missions. Dan passed the plate — Felicity's

rosebud plate — looking as preternaturally solemn as Elder Frewen himself. Every one put a cent on it.

Well, I preached my sermon. And it fell horribly flat. I realized that, before I was half way through it. I think I preached it very well; and never a thump did I forget or misplace. But my audience was plainly bored. When I stepped down from the pulpit, after demanding passionately if we whose souls were lighted and so forth, I felt with secret humiliation that my sermon was a failure. It had made no impression at all. Felix would be sure to get the prize.

“That was a very good sermon for a first attempt,” said the Story Girl graciously. “It sounded just like real sermons I have heard.”

For a moment the charm of her voice made me feel that I had not done so badly after all; but the other girls, thinking it their duty to pay me some sort of a compliment also, quickly dispelled that pleasing delusion.

“Every word of it was true,” said Cecily, her tone unconsciously implying that this was its sole merit.

“I often feel,” said Felicity primly, “that we don’t think enough about the heathens. We ought to think a great deal more.”

Sara Ray put the finishing touch to my mortification.

“It was so nice and short,” she said.

“What was the matter with my sermon?” I asked Dan that night. Since he was neither judge nor competitor I could discuss the matter with him.

“It was too much like a reg’lar sermon to be interesting,” said Dan frankly.

“I should think the more like a regular sermon it was, the better,” I said.

“Not if you want to make an impression,” said Dan seriously.

“You must have something sort of different for that. Peter, now, HE’LL have something different.”

“Oh, Peter! I don’t believe he can preach a sermon,” I said.

“Maybe not, but you’ll see he’ll make an impression,” said Dan.

Dan was neither the prophet nor the son of a prophet, but he had the second sight for once; Peter DID make an impression.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PETER MAKES AN IMPRESSION

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Peter's turn came next. He did not write his sermon out. That, he averred, was too hard work. Nor did he mean to take a text.

"Why, who ever heard of a sermon without a text?" asked Felix blankly.

"I am going to take a SUBJECT instead of a text," said Peter loftily. "I ain't going to tie myself down to a text. And I'm going to have heads in it — three heads. You hadn't a single head in yours," he added to me.

"Uncle Alec says that Uncle Edward says that heads are beginning to go out of fashion," I said defiantly — all the more defiantly that I felt I should have had heads in my sermon. It would doubtless have made a much deeper impression. But the truth was I had forgotten all about such things.

"Well, I'm going to have them, and I don't care if they are unfashionable," said Peter. "They're good things. Aunt Jane used to say if a man didn't have heads and stick to them he'd go wandering all over the Bible and never get anywhere in particular."

"What are you going to preach on?" asked Felix.

"You'll find out next Sunday," said Peter significantly.

The next Sunday was in October, and a lovely day it was, warm and bland as June. There was something in the fine, elusive air, that recalled beautiful, forgotten things and suggested delicate future hopes. The woods had wrapped fine-woven gossamers about them and the westering hill was crimson and gold.

We sat around the Pulpit Stone and waited for Peter and Sara Ray. It was the former's Sunday off and he had gone home the night before, but he assured us he would be back in time to preach his sermon. Presently he arrived and mounted the granite boulder as if to the manor born. He was dressed in his new suit and I, perceiving this, felt that he had the advantage of me. When I preached I had to wear my second best suit, for it was one of Aunt Janet's laws that we should take our good suits off when we came home from church. There were, I saw, compensations for being a hired boy.

Peter made quite a handsome little minister, in his navy blue coat, white collar, and neatly bowed tie. His black eyes shone, and his black curls were brushed up in quite a ministerial pompadour, but threatened to tumble over at the top in graceless ringlets.

It was decided that there was no use in waiting for Sara Ray, who might or might not come, according to the humour in which her mother was. Therefore Peter proceeded with the service.

He read the chapter and gave out the hymn with as much SANG FROID as if he had been doing it all his life. Mr. Marwood himself could not have bettered the way in which Peter said,

“We will sing the whole hymn, omitting the fourth stanza.”

That was a fine touch which I had not thought of. I began to think that, after all, Peter might be a foeman worthy of my steel.

When Peter was ready to begin he thrust his hands into his pockets — a totally unorthodox thing. Then he plunged in without further ado, speaking in his ordinary conversational tone — another unorthodox thing. There was no shorthand reporter present to take that sermon down; but, if necessary, I could preach it over verbatim, and so, I doubt not, could everyone that heard it. It was not a forgettable kind of sermon.

“Dearly beloved,” said Peter, “my sermon is about the bad place — in short, about hell.”

An electric shock seemed to run through the audience. Everybody looked suddenly alert. Peter had, in one sentence, done what my whole sermon had failed to do. He had made an impression.

“I shall divide my sermon into three heads,” pursued Peter. “The first head is, what you must not do if you don’t want to go to the bad place. The second head is, what the bad place is like” — sensation in the audience — “and the third head is, how to escape going there.

“Now, there’s a great many things you must not do, and it’s very important to know what they are. You ought not to lose no time in finding out. In the first place you mustn’t ever forget to mind what grownup people tell you — that is, GOOD grownup people.”

“But how are you going to tell who are the good grownup people?” asked Felix suddenly, forgetting that he was in church.

“Oh, that is easy,” said Peter. “You can always just FEEL who is good and who isn’t. And you mustn’t tell lies and you mustn’t murder any one. You must be specially careful not to murder any one. You might be forgiven for telling lies, if you was real sorry for them, but if you murdered any one it would be pretty hard to get forgiven, so you’d better be on the safe side. And you mustn’t commit suicide, because if you did that you wouldn’t have any chance of repenting it; and you mustn’t forget to say your prayers and you mustn’t quarrel with your sister.”

At this point Felicity gave Dan a significant poke with her elbow, and Dan was up in arms at once.

“Don’t you be preaching at me, Peter Craig,” he cried out. “I won’t stand it. I don’t quarrel with my sister any oftener than she quarrels with me. You can just leave me alone.”

“Who’s touching you?” demanded Peter. “I didn’t mention no names. A minister can say anything he likes in the pulpit, as long as he doesn’t mention any names, and nobody can answer back.”

“All right, but just you wait till tomorrow,” growled Dan, subsiding reluctantly into silence under the reproachful looks of the girls.

“You must not play any games on Sunday,” went on Peter, “that is, any weekday games — or whisper in church, or laugh in church — I did that once but I was awful sorry — and you mustn’t take any notice of Paddy — I mean of the family cat at family prayers, not even if he climbs up on your back. And you mustn’t call names or make faces.”

“Amen,” cried Felix, who had suffered many things because Felicity so often made faces at him.

Peter stopped and glared at him over the edge of the Pulpit Stone.

“You haven’t any business to call out a thing like that right in the middle of a sermon,” he said.

“They do it in the Methodist church at Markdale,” protested Felix, somewhat abashed. “I heard them.”

“I know they do. That’s the Methodist way and it is all right for them. I haven’t a word to say against Methodists. My Aunt Jane was one, and I might have been one myself if I hadn’t been so scared of the Judgment Day. But you ain’t a Methodist. You’re a Presbyterian, ain’t you?”

“Yes, of course. I was born that way.”

“Very well then, you’ve got to do things the Presbyterian way. Don’t let me hear any more of your amens or I’ll amen you.”

“Oh, don’t anybody interrupt again,” implored the Story Girl. “It isn’t fair. How can any one preach a good sermon if he is always being interrupted? Nobody interrupted Beverley.”

“Bev didn’t get up there and pitch into us like that,” muttered Dan.

“You mustn’t fight,” resumed Peter undauntedly. “That is, you mustn’t fight for the fun of fighting, nor out of bad temper. You must not say bad words or swear. You mustn’t get drunk — although of course you wouldn’t be likely to do that before you grow up, and the girls never. There’s prob’ly a good many other things you mustn’t do, but these I’ve named are the most important. Of course, I’m not saying you’ll go to the bad place for sure if you do them. I only say you’re running a risk. The devil is looking out for the people who do these things and he’ll be more likely to get after them than to waste time over the people who don’t do them. And that’s all about the first head of my sermon.”

At this point Sara Ray arrived, somewhat out of breath. Peter looked at her reproachfully.

“You’ve missed my whole first head, Sara,” he said. “that isn’t fair, when you’re to be one of the judges. I think I ought to preach it over again for you.”

“That was really done once. I know a story about it,” said the Story Girl.

“Who’s interrupting now?” aid Dan slyly.

“Never mind, tell us the story,” said the preacher himself, eagerly leaning over the pulpit.

“It was Mr. Scott who did it,” said the Story Girl. “He was preaching somewhere in Nova Scotia, and when he was more than half way through his sermon — and you know sermons were VERY long in those days — a man walked in. Mr. Scott stopped until he had taken his seat. Then he said, ‘My friend, you are very late for this service. I hope you won’t be late for heaven. The congregation will excuse me if I recapitulate the sermon for our friend’s benefit.’ And then he just preached the sermon over again from the beginning. It is said that that particular man was never known to be late for church again.”

“It served him right,” said Dan, “but it was pretty hard lines on the rest of the congregation.”

“Now, let’s be quiet so Peter can go on with his sermon,” said Cecily.

Peter squared his shoulders and took hold of the edge of the pulpit. Never a thump had he thumped, but I realized that his way of leaning forward and fixing this one or that one of his hearers with his eye was much more effective.

“I’ve come now to the second head of my sermon — what the bad place is like.”

He proceeded to describe the bad place. Later on we discovered that he had found his material in an illustrated translation of Dante’s *Inferno* which had once been given to his Aunt Jane as a school prize. But at the time we supposed he must be drawing from Biblical sources. Peter had been reading the Bible steadily ever since what we always referred to as “the Judgment Sunday,” and he was by now almost through it. None of the rest of us had ever read the Bible completely through, and we thought Peter must have found his description of the world of the lost in some portion with which we were not acquainted. Therefore, his utterances carried all the weight of inspiration, and we sat appalled before his lurid phrases. He used his own words to clothe the ideas he had found, and the result was a force and simplicity that struck home to our imaginations.

Suddenly Sara Ray sprang to her feet with a scream — a scream that changed into strange laughter. We all, preacher included, looked at her aghast. Cecily and Felicity sprang up and caught hold of her. Sara Ray was really in a bad fit of hysterics, but we knew nothing of such a thing in our experience, and we thought she had gone mad. She shrieked, cried, laughed, and flung herself about.

“She’s gone clean crazy,” said Peter, coming down out of his pulpit with a very pale face.

“You’ve frightened her crazy with your dreadful sermon,” said Felicity indignantly.

She and Cecily each took Sara by an arm and, half leading, half carrying, got her out of the orchard and up to the house. The rest of us looked at each other in terrified questioning.

“You’ve made rather too much of an impression, Peter,” said the Story Girl miserably.

“She needn’t have got so scared. If she’d only waited for the third head I’d have showed her how easy it was to get clear of going to the bad place and go to heaven instead. But you girls are always in such a hurry,” said Peter bitterly.

“Do you s’pose they’ll have to take her to the asylum?” said Dan in a whisper.

“Hush, here’s your father,” said Felix.

Uncle Alec came striding down the orchard. We had never before seen Uncle Alec angry. But there was no doubt that he was very angry. His blue eyes fairly blazed at us as he said,

“What have you been doing to frighten Sara Ray into such a condition?”

“We — we were just having a sermon contest,” explained the Story Girl tremulously. “And Peter preached about the bad place, and it frightened Sara. That is all, Uncle Alec.”

“All! I don’t know what the result will be to that nervous delicate child. She is shrieking in there and nothing will quiet her. What do you mean by playing such a game on Sunday, and making a jest of sacred things? No, not a word—” for the Story Girl had attempted to speak. “You and Peter march off home. And the next time I find you up to such doings on Sunday or any other day I’ll give you cause to remember it to your latest hour.”

The Story Girl and Peter went humbly home and we went with them.

“I CAN’T understand grownup people,” said Felix despairingly. “When Uncle Edward preached sermons it was all right, but when we do it it is

‘making a jest of sacred things.’ And I heard Uncle Alec tell a story once about being nearly frightened to death when he was a little boy, by a minister preaching on the end of the world; and he said, ‘That was something like a sermon. You don’t hear such sermons nowadays.’ But when Peter preaches just such a sermon, it’s a very different story.”

“It’s no wonder we can’t understand the grownups,” said the Story Girl indignantly, “because we’ve never been grownup ourselves. But THEY have been children, and I don’t see why they can’t understand us. Of course, perhaps we shouldn’t have had the contest on Sundays. But all the same I think it’s mean of Uncle Alec to be so cross. Oh, I do hope poor Sara won’t have to be taken to the asylum.”

Poor Sara did not have to be. She was eventually quieted down, and was as well as usual the next day; and she humbly begged Peter’s pardon for spoiling his sermon. Peter granted it rather grumpily, and I fear that he never really quite forgave Sara for her untimely outburst. Felix, too, felt resentment against her, because he had lost the chance of preaching his sermon.

“Of course I know I wouldn’t have got the prize, for I couldn’t have made such an impression as Peter,” he said to us mournfully, “but I’d like to have had a chance to show what I could do. That’s what comes of having those crybaby girls mixed up in things. Cecily was just as scared as Sara Ray, but she’d more sense than to show it like that.”

“Well, Sara couldn’t help it,” said the Story Girl charitably, “but it does seem as if we’d had dreadful luck in everything we’ve tried lately. I thought of a new game this morning, but I’m almost afraid to mention it, for I suppose something dreadful will come of it, too.”

“Oh, tell us, what is it?” everybody entreated.

“Well, it’s a trial by ordeal, and we’re to see which of us can pass it. The ordeal is to eat one of the bitter apples in big mouthfuls without making a single face.”

Dan made a face to begin with.

“I don’t believe any of us can do that,” he said.

“YOU can’t, if you take bites big enough to fill your mouth,” giggled Felicity, with cruelty and without provocation.

“Well, maybe you could,” retorted Dan sarcastically. “You’d be so afraid of spoiling your looks that you’d rather die than make a face, I s’pose, no matter what you et.”

“Felicity makes enough faces when there’s nothing to make faces at,” said Felix, who had been grimaced at over the breakfast table that morning and hadn’t liked it.

“I think the bitter apples would be real good for Felix,” said Felicity. “They say sour things make people thin.”

“Let’s go and get the bitter apples,” said Cecily hastily, seeing that Felix, Felicity and Dan were on the verge of a quarrel more bitter than the apples.

We went to the seedling tree and got an apple apiece. The game was that every one must take a bite in turn, chew it up, and swallow it, without making a face. Peter again distinguished himself. He, and he alone, passed the ordeal, munching those dreadful mouthfuls without so much as a change of expression on his countenance, while the facial contortions the rest of us went through baffled description. In every subsequent trial it was the same. Peter never made a face, and no one else could help making them. It sent him up fifty per cent in Felicity’s estimation.

“Peter is a real smart boy,” she said to me. “It’s such a pity he is a hired boy.”

But, if we could not pass the ordeal, we got any amount of fun out of it, at least. Evening after evening the orchard reechoed to our peals of laughter.

“Bless the children,” said Uncle Alec, as he carried the milk pails across the yard. “Nothing can quench their spirits for long.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ORDEAL OF BITTER APPLES

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I could never understand why Felix took Peter's success in the Ordeal of Bitter Apples so much to heart. He had not felt very keenly over the matter of the sermons, and certainly the mere fact that Peter could eat sour apples without making faces did not cast any reflection on the honour or ability of the other competitors. But to Felix everything suddenly became flat, stale, and unprofitable, because Peter continued to hold the championship of bitter apples. It haunted his waking hours and obsessed his nights. I heard him talking in his sleep about it. If anything could have made him thin the way he worried over this matter would have done it.

For myself, I cared not a groat. I had wished to be successful in the sermon contest, and felt sore whenever I thought of my failure. But I had no burning desire to eat sour apples without grimacing, and I did not sympathize over and above with my brother. When, however, he took to praying about it, I realized how deeply he felt on the subject, and hoped he would be successful.

Felix prayed earnestly that he might be enabled to eat a bitter apple without making a face. And when he had prayed three nights after this manner, he contrived to eat a bitter apple without a grimace until he came to the last bite, which proved too much for him. But Felix was vastly encouraged.

"Another prayer or two, and I'll be able to eat a whole one," he said jubilantly.

But this devoutly desired consummation did not come to pass. In spite of prayers and heroic attempts, Felix could never get beyond that last bite. Not even faith and works in combination could avail. For a time he could

not understand this. But he thought the mystery was solved when Cecily came to him one day and told him that Peter was praying against him.

“He’s praying that you’ll never be able to eat a bitter apple without making a face,” she said. “He told Felicity and Felicity told me. She said she thought it was real cute of him. I think that is a dreadful way to talk about praying and I told her so. She wanted me to promise not to tell you, but I wouldn’t promise, because I think it’s fair for you to know what is going on.”

Felix was very indignant — and aggrieved as well.

“I don’t see why God should answer Peter’s prayers instead of mine,” he said bitterly. “I’ve gone to church and Sunday School all my life, and Peter never went till this summer. It isn’t fair.”

“Oh, Felix, don’t talk like that,” said Cecily, shocked. “God **MUST** be fair. I’ll tell you what I believe is the reason. Peter prays three times a day regular — in the morning and at dinner time and at night — and besides that, any time through the day when he happens to think of it, he just prays, standing up. Did you ever hear of such goings-on?”

“Well, he’s got to stop praying against me, anyhow,” said Felix resolutely. “I won’t put up with it, and I’ll go and tell him so right off.”

Felix marched over to Uncle Roger’s, and we trailed after, scenting a scene. We found Peter shelling beans in the granary, and whistling cheerily, as with a conscience void of offence towards all men.

“Look here, Peter,” said Felix ominously, “they tell me that you’ve been praying right along that I couldn’t eat a bitter apple. Now, I tell you—”

“I never did!” exclaimed Peter indignantly. “I never mentioned your name. I never prayed that you couldn’t eat a bitter apple. I just prayed that I’d be the only one that could.”

“Well, that’s the same thing,” cried Felix. “You’ve just been praying for the opposite to me out of spite. And you’ve got to stop it, Peter Craig.”

“Well, I just guess I won’t,” said Peter angrily. “I’ve just as good a right to pray for what I want as you, Felix King, even if you was brought up in Toronto. I s’pose you think a hired boy hasn’t any business to pray for particular things, but I’ll show you. I’ll just pray for what I please, and I’d like to see you try and stop me.”

“You’ll have to fight me, if you keep on praying against me,” said Felix.

The girls gasped; but Dan and I were jubilant, snuffing battle afar off.

“All right. I can fight as well as pray.”

“Oh, don’t fight,” implored Cecily. “I think it would be dreadful. Surely you can arrange it some other way. Let’s all give up the Ordeal, anyway. There isn’t much fun in it. And then neither of you need pray about it.”

“I don’t want to give up the Ordeal,” said Felix, “and I won’t.”

“Oh, well, surely you can settle it some way without fighting,” persisted Cecily.

“I’m not wanting to fight,” said Peter. “It’s Felix. If he don’t interfere with my prayers there’s no need of fighting. But if he does there’s no other way to settle it.”

“But how will that settle it?” asked Cecily.

“Oh, whoever’s licked will have to give in about the praying,” said Peter. “That’s fair enough. If I’m licked I won’t pray for that particular thing any more.”

“It’s dreadful to fight about anything so religious as praying,” sighed poor Cecily.

“Why, they were always fighting about religion in old times,” said Felix. “The more religious anything was the more fighting there was about it.”

“A fellow’s got a right to pray as he pleases,” said Peter, “and if anybody tries to stop him he’s bound to fight. That’s my way of looking at it.”

“What would Miss Marwood say if she knew you were going to fight?” asked Felicity.

Miss Marwood was Felix’ Sunday School teacher and he was very fond of her. But by this time Felix was quite reckless.

“I don’t care what she would say,” he retorted.

Felicity tried another tack.

“You’ll be sure to get whipped if you fight with Peter,” she said. “You’re too fat to fight.”

After that, no moral force on earth could have prevented Felix from fighting. He would have faced an army with banners.

“You might settle it by drawing lots,” said Cecily desperately.

“Drawing lots is wickeder than fighting,” said Dan. “It’s a kind of gambling.”

“What would Aunt Jane say if she knew you were going to fight?” Cecily demanded of Peter.

“Don’t you drag my Aunt Jane into this affair,” said Peter darkly.

“You said you were going to be a Presbyterian,” persisted Cecily.
“Good Presbyterians don’t fight.”

“Oh, don’t they! I heard your Uncle Roger say that Presbyterians were the best for fighting in the world — or the worst, I forget which he said, but it means the same thing.”

Cecily had but one more shot in her locker.

“I thought you said in your sermon, Master Peter, that people shouldn’t fight.”

“I said they oughtn’t to fight for fun, or for bad temper,” retorted Peter. “This is different. I know what I’m fighting for but I can’t think of the word.”

“I guess you mean principle,” I suggested.

“Yes, that’s it,” agreed Peter. “It’s all right to fight for principle. It’s kind of praying with your fists.”

“Oh, can’t you do something to prevent them from fighting, Sara?” pleaded Cecily, turning to the Story Girl, who was sitting on a bin, swinging her shapely bare feet to and fro.

“It doesn’t do to meddle in an affair of this kind between boys,” said the Story Girl sagely.

I may be mistaken, but I do not believe the Story Girl wanted that fight stopped. And I am far from being sure that Felicity did either.

It was ultimately arranged that the combat should take place in the fir wood behind Uncle Roger’s granary. It was a nice, remote, bosky place where no prowling grownup would be likely to intrude. And thither we all resorted at sunset.

“I hope Felix will beat,” said the Story Girl to me, “not only for the family honour, but because that was a mean, mean prayer of Peter’s. Do you think he will?”

“I don’t know,” I confessed dubiously. “Felix is too fat. He’ll get out of breath in no time. And Peter is such a cool customer, and he’s a year older than Felix. But then Felix has had some practice. He has fought boys in Toronto. And this is Peter’s first fight.”

“Did you ever fight?” asked the Story Girl.

“Once,” I said briefly, dreading the next question, which promptly came.

“Who beat?”

It is sometimes a bitter thing to tell the truth, especially to a young lady for whom you have a great admiration. I had a struggle with temptation in which I frankly confess I might have been worsted had it not been for a saving and timely remembrance of a certain resolution made on the day preceding Judgment Sunday.

“The other fellow,” I said with reluctant honesty.

“Well,” said the Story Girl, “I think it doesn’t matter whether you get whipped or not so long as you fight a good, square fight.”

Her potent voice made me feel that I was quite a hero after all, and the sting went out of my recollection of that old fight.

When we arrived behind the granary the others were all there. Cecily was very pale, and Felix and Peter were taking off their coats. There was a pure yellow sunset that evening, and the aisles of the fir wood were flooded with its radiance. A cool, autumnal wind was whistling among the dark boughs and scattering blood red leaves from the maple at the end of the granary.

“Now,” said Dan, “I’ll count, and when I say three you pitch in, and hammer each other until one of you has had enough. Cecily, keep quiet. Now, one — two — three!”

Peter and Felix “pitched in,” with more zeal than discretion on both sides. As a result, Peter got what later developed into a black eye, and Felix’s nose began to bleed. Cecily gave a shriek and ran out of the wood. We thought she had fled because she could not endure the sight of blood, and we were not sorry, for her manifest disapproval and anxiety were damping the excitement of the occasion.

Felix and Peter drew apart after that first onset, and circled about one another warily. Then, just as they had come to grips again, Uncle Alec walked around the corner of the granary, with Cecily behind him.

He was not angry. There was a quizzical look in his eyes. But he took the combatants by their shirt collars and dragged them apart.

“This stops right here, boys,” he said. “You know I don’t allow fighting.”

“Oh, but Uncle Alec, it was this way,” began Felix eagerly.

“Peter—”

“No, I don’t want to hear about it,” said Uncle Alec sternly. “I don’t care what you were fighting about, but you must settle your quarrels in a different fashion. Remember my commands, Felix. Peter, Roger is looking for you to wash his buggy. Be off.”

Peter went off rather sullenly, and Felix, also sullenly, sat down and began to nurse his nose. He turned his back on Cecily.

Cecily “caught it” after Uncle Alec had gone. Dan called her a telltale and a baby, and sneered at her until Cecily began to cry.

“I couldn’t stand by and watch Felix and Peter pound each other all to pieces,” she sobbed. “They’ve been such friends, and it was dreadful to see them fighting.”

“Uncle Roger would have let them fight it out,” said the Story Girl discontentedly. “Uncle Roger believes in boys fighting. He says it’s as harmless a way as any of working off their original sin. Peter and Felix wouldn’t have been any worse friends after it. They’d have been better friends because the praying question would have been settled. And now it can’t be — unless Felicity can coax Peter to give up praying against Felix.”

For once in her life the Story Girl was not as tactful as her wont. Or — is it possible that she said it out of malice prepense? At all events, Felicity resented the imputation that she had more influence with Peter than any one else.

“I don’t meddle with hired boys’ prayers,” she said haughtily.

“It was all nonsense fighting about such prayers, anyhow,” said Dan, who probably thought that since all chance of a fight was over, he might as well

avow his real sentiments as to its folly. “Just as much nonsense as praying about the bitter apples in the first place.”

“Oh, Dan, don’t you believe there is some good in praying?” said Cecily reproachfully.

“Yes, I believe there’s some good in some kinds of praying, but not in that kind,” said Dan sturdily. “I don’t believe God cares whether anybody can eat an apple without making a face or not.”

“I don’t believe it’s right to talk of God as if you were well acquainted with Him,” said Felicity, who felt that it was a good chance to snub Dan.

“There’s something wrong somewhere,” said Cecily perplexedly. “We ought to pray for what we want, of that I’m sure — and Peter wanted to be the only one who could pass the Ordeal. It seems as if he must be right — and yet it doesn’t seem so. I wish I could understand it.”

“Peter’s prayer was wrong because it was a selfish prayer, I guess,” said the Story Girl thoughtfully. “Felix’s prayer was all right, because it wouldn’t have hurt any one else; but it was selfish of Peter to want to be the only one. We mustn’t pray selfish prayers.”

“Oh, I see through it now,” said Cecily joyfully.

“Yes, but,” said Dan triumphantly, “if you believe God answers prayers about particular things, it was Peter’s prayer He answered. What do you make of that?”

“Oh!” the Story Girl shook her head impatiently. “There’s no use trying to make such things out. We only get more mixed up all the time. Let’s leave it alone and I’ll tell you a story. Aunt Olivia had a letter today from a friend in Nova Scotia, who lives in Shubenacadie. When I said I thought it a funny name, she told me to go and look in her scrap book, and I would find a story about the origin of the name. And I did. Don’t you want to hear it?”

Of course we did. We all sat down at the roots of the firs. Felix, having finally squared matters with his nose, turned around and listened also. He would not look at Cecily, but every one else had forgiven her.

The Story Girl leaned that brown head of hers against the fir trunk behind her, and looked up at the apple-green sky through the dark boughs above us. She wore, I remember, a dress of warm crimson, and she had wound around her head a string of waxberries, that looked like a fillet of pearls. Her cheeks were still flushed with the excitement of the evening. In the dim light she was beautiful, with a wild, mystic loveliness, a compelling charm that would not be denied.

“Many, many moons ago, an Indian tribe lived on the banks of a river in Nova Scotia. One of the young braves was named Accadee. He was the tallest and bravest and handsomest young man in the tribe—”

“Why is it they’re always so handsome in stories?” asked Dan.

“Why are there never no stories about ugly people?”

“Perhaps ugly people never have stories happen to them,” suggested Felicity.

“I think they’re just as interesting as the handsome people,” retorted Dan.

“Well, maybe they are in real life,” said Cecily, “but in stories it’s just as easy to make them handsome as not. I like them best that way. I just love to read a story where the heroine is beautiful as a dream.”

“Pretty people are always conceited,” said Felix, who was getting tired of holding his tongue.

“The heroes in stories are always nice,” said Felicity, with apparent irrelevance. “They’re always so tall and slender. Wouldn’t it be awful funny if any one wrote a story about a fat hero — or about one with too big a mouth?”

“It doesn’t matter what a man LOOKS like,” I said, feeling that Felix and Dan were catching it rather too hotly. “He must be a good sort of chap and

DO heaps of things. That's all that's necessary."

"Do any of you happen to want to hear the rest of my story?" asked the Story Girl in an ominously polite voice that recalled us to a sense of our bad manners. We apologized and promised to behave better; she went on, appeased:

"Accadee was all these things that I have mentioned, and he was the best hunter in the tribe besides. Never an arrow of his that did not go straight to the mark. Many and many a snow white moose he shot, and gave the beautiful skin to his sweetheart. Her name was Shuben and she was as lovely as the moon when it rises from the sea, and as pleasant as a summer twilight. Her eyes were dark and soft, her foot was as light as a breeze, and her voice sounded like a brook in the woods, or the wind that comes over the hills at night. She and Accadee were very much in love with each other, and often they hunted together, for Shuben was almost as skilful with her bow and arrow as Accadee himself. They had loved each other ever since they were small papposes, and they had vowed to love each other as long as the river ran.

"One twilight, when Accadee was out hunting in the woods, he shot a snow white moose; and he took off its skin and wrapped it around him. Then he went on through the woods in the starlight; and he felt so happy and light of heart that he sometimes frisked and capered about just as a real moose would do. And he was doing this when Shuben, who was also out hunting, saw him from afar and thought he was a real moose. She stole cautiously through the woods until she came to the brink of a little valley. Below her stood the snow white moose. She drew her arrow to her eye — alas, she knew the art only too well! — and took careful aim. The next moment Accadee fell dead with her arrow in his heart."

The Story Girl paused — a dramatic pause. It was quite dark in the fir wood. We could see her face and eyes but dimly through the gloom. A silvery moon was looking down on us over the granary. The stars twinkled through the softly waving boughs. Beyond the wood we caught a glimpse of a moonlit world lying in the sharp frost of the October evening. The sky above it was chill and ethereal and mystical.

But all about us were shadows; and the weird little tale, told in a voice fraught with mystery and pathos, had peopled them for us with furtive folk in belt and wampum, and dark-tressed Indian maidens.

“What did Shuben do when she found out she had killed Accadee?” asked Felicity.

“She died of a broken heart before the spring, and she and Accadee were buried side by side on the bank of the river which has ever since borne their names — the river Shubenacadie,” said the Story Girl.

The sharp wind blew around the granary and Cecily shivered. We heard Aunt Janet’s voice calling “Children, children.” Shaking off the spell of firs and moonlight and romantic tale, we scrambled to our feet and went homeward.

“I kind of wish I’d been born an Injun,” said Dan. “It must have been a jolly life — nothing to do but hunt and fight.”

“It wouldn’t be so nice if they caught you and tortured you at the stake,” said Felicity.

“No,” said Dan reluctantly. “I suppose there’d be some drawback to everything, even being an Injun.”

“Isn’t it cold?” said Cecily, shivering again. “It will soon be winter. I wish summer could last forever. Felicity likes the winter, and so does the Story Girl, but I don’t. It always seems so long till spring.”

“Never mind, we’ve had a splendid summer,” I said, slipping my arm about her to comfort some childish sorrow that breathed in her plaintive voice.

Truly, we had had a delectable summer; and, having had it, it was ours forever. “The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.” They may rob us of our future and embitter our present, but our past they may not touch. With all its laughter and delight and glamour it is our eternal possession.

Nevertheless, we all felt a little of the sadness of the waning year. There was a distinct weight on our spirits until Felicity took us into the pantry and stayed us with apple tarts and comforted us with cream. Then we brightened up. It was really a very decent world after all.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TALE OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE

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Felix, so far as my remembrance goes, never attained to success in the Ordeal of Bitter Apples. He gave up trying after awhile; and he also gave up praying about it, saying in bitterness of spirit that there was no use in praying when other fellows prayed against you out of spite. He and Peter remained on bad terms for some time, however.

We were all of us too tired those nights to do any special praying. Sometimes I fear our “regular” prayers were slurred over, or mumbled in anything but reverent haste. October was a busy month on the hill farms. The apples had to be picked, and this work fell mainly to us children. We stayed home from school to do it. It was pleasant work and there was a great deal of fun in it; but it was hard, too, and our arms and backs ached roundly at night. In the mornings it was very delightful; in the afternoons tolerable; but in the evenings we lagged, and the laughter and zest of fresher hours were lacking.

Some of the apples had to be picked very carefully. But with others it did not matter; we boys would climb the trees and shake the apples down until the girls shrieked for mercy. The days were crisp and mellow, with warm sunshine and a tang of frost in the air, mingled with the woodsy odours of the withering grasses. The hens and turkeys prowled about, pecking at windfalls, and Pat made mad rushes at them amid the fallen leaves. The world beyond the orchard was in a royal magnificence of colouring, under the vivid blue autumn sky. The big willow by the gate was a splendid golden dome, and the maples that were scattered through the spruce grove waved blood-red banners over the sombre conebearers. The Story Girl generally had her head garlanded with their leaves. They became her vastly. Neither Felicity nor Cecily could have worn them. Those two girls were of a domestic type that assorted ill with the wildfire in Nature’s

veins. But when the Story Girl wreathed her nut brown tresses with crimson leaves it seemed, as Peter said, that they grew on her — as if the gold and flame of her spirit had broken out in a coronal, as much a part of her as the pale halo seems a part of the Madonna it encircles.

What tales she told us on those faraway autumn days, peopling the russet arcades with folk of an elder world. Many a princess rode by us on her palfrey, many a swaggering gallant ruffled it bravely in velvet and plume adown Uncle Stephen's Walk, many a stately lady, silken clad, walked in that opulent orchard!

When we had filled our baskets they had to be carried to the granary loft, and the contents stored in bins or spread on the floor to ripen further. We ate a good many, of course, feeling that the labourer was worthy of his hire. The apples from our own birthday trees were stored in separate barrels inscribed with our names. We might dispose of them as we willed. Felicity sold hers to Uncle Alec's hired man — and was badly cheated to boot, for he levanted shortly afterwards, taking the apples with him, having paid her only half her rightful due. Felicity has not gotten over that to this day.

Cecily, dear heart, sent most of hers to the hospital in town, and no doubt gathered in therefrom dividends of gratitude and satisfaction of soul, such as can never be purchased by any mere process of bargain and sale. The rest of us ate our apples, or carried them to school where we bartered them for such treasures as our schoolmates possessed and we coveted.

There was a dusky, little, pear-shaped apple — from one of Uncle Stephen's trees — which was our favourite; and next to it a delicious, juicy yellow apple from Aunt Louisa's tree. We were also fond of the big sweet apples; we used to throw them up in the air and let them fall on the ground until they were bruised and battered to the bursting point. Then we sucked on the juice; sweeter was it than the nectar drunk by blissful gods on the Thessalian hill.

Sometimes we worked until the cold yellow sunsets faded out over the darkening distances, and the hunter's moon looked down on us through the sparkling air. The constellations of autumn scintillated above us. Peter and

the Story Girl knew all about them, and imparted their knowledge to us generously. I recall Peter standing on the Pulpit Stone, one night ere moonrise, and pointing them out to us, occasionally having a difference of opinion with the Story Girl over the name of some particular star. Job's Coffin and the Northern Cross were to the west of us; south of us flamed Fomalhaut. The Great Square of Pegasus was over our heads. Cassiopeia sat enthroned in her beautiful chair in the northeast; and north of us the Dippers swung untiringly around the Pole Star. Cecily and Felix were the only ones who could distinguish the double star in the handle of the Big Dipper, and greatly did they plume themselves thereon. The Story Girl told us the myths and legends woven around these immemorial clusters, her very voice taking on a clear, remote, starry sound as she talked of them. When she ceased, we came back to earth, feeling as if we had been millions of miles away in the blue ether, and that all our old familiar surroundings were momentarily forgotten and strange.

That night when he pointed out the stars to us from the Pulpit Stone was the last time for several weeks that Peter shared our toil and pastime. The next day he complained of headache and sore throat, and seemed to prefer lying on Aunt Olivia's kitchen sofa to doing any work. As it was not in Peter to be a malingerer he was left in peace, while we picked apples. Felix alone, must unjustly and spitefully, declared that Peter was simply shirking.

"He's just lazy, that's what's the matter with him," he said.

"Why don't you talk sense, if you must talk?" said Felicity. "There's no sense in calling Peter lazy. You might as well say I had black hair. Of course, Peter, being a Craig, has his faults, but he's a smart boy. His father was lazy but his mother hasn't a lazy bone in her body, and Peter takes after her."

"Uncle Roger says Peter's father wasn't exactly lazy," said the Story Girl. "The trouble was, there were so many other things he liked better than work."

"I wonder if he'll ever come back to his family," said Cecily. "Just think how dreadful it would be if OUR father had left us like that!"

“Our father is a King,” said Felicity loftily, “and Peter’s father was only a Craig. A member of our family COULDN’T behave like that.”

“They say there must be a black sheep in every family,” said the Story Girl.

“There isn’t any in ours,” said Cecily loyally.

“Why do white sheep eat more than black?” asked Felix.

“Is that a conundrum?” asked Cecily cautiously. “If it is I won’t try to guess the reason. I never can guess conundrums.”

“It isn’t a conundrum,” said Felix. “It’s a fact. They do — and there’s a good reason for it.”

We stopped picking apples, sat down on the grass, and tried to reason it out — with the exception of Dan, who declared that he knew there was a catch somewhere and he wasn’t going to be caught. The rest of us could not see where any catch could exist, since Felix solemnly vowed, ‘cross his heart, white sheep did eat more than black. We argued over it seriously, but finally had to give it up.

“Well, what is the reason?” asked Felicity.

“Because there’s more of them,” said Felix, grinning.

I forget what we did to Felix.

A shower came up in the evening and we had to stop picking. After the shower there was a magnificent double rainbow. We watched it from the granary window, and the Story Girl told us an old legend, culled from one of Aunt Olivia’s many scrapbooks.

“Long, long ago, in the Golden Age, when the gods used to visit the earth so often that it was nothing uncommon to see them, Odin made a pilgrimage over the world. Odin was the great god of the northland, you know. And wherever he went among men he taught them love and brotherhood, and skilful arts; and great cities sprang up where he had

trodden, and every land through which he passed was blessed because one of the gods had come down to men. But many men and women followed Odin himself, giving up all their worldly possessions and ambitions; and to these he promised the gift of eternal life. All these people were good and noble and unselfish and kind; but the best and noblest of them all was a youth named Ving; and this youth was beloved by Odin above all others, for his beauty and strength and goodness. Always he walked on Odin's right hand, and always the first light of Odin's smile fell on him. Tall and straight was he as a young pine, and his long hair was the colour of ripe wheat in the sun; and his blue eyes were like the northland heavens on a starry night.

"In Odin's band was a beautiful maiden named Alin. She was as fair and delicate as a young birch tree in spring among the dark old pines and firs, and Ving loved her with all his heart. His soul thrilled with rapture at the thought that he and she together should drink from the fountain of immortality, as Odin had promised, and be one thereafter in eternal youth.

"At last they came to the very place where the rainbow touched the earth. And the rainbow was a great bridge, built of living colours, so dazzling and wonderful that beyond it the eye could see nothing, only far away a great, blinding, sparkling glory, where the fountain of life sprang up in a shower of diamond fire. But under the Rainbow Bridge rolled a terrible flood, deep and wide and violent, full of rocks and rapids and whirlpools.

"There was a Warder of the bridge, a god, dark and stern and sorrowful. And to him Odin gave command that he should open the gate and allow his followers to cross the Rainbow Bridge, that they might drink of the fountain of life beyond. And the Warder set open the gate.

"'Pass on and drink of the fountain,' he said. 'To all who taste of it shall immortality be given. But only to that one who shall drink of it first shall be permitted to walk at Odin's right hand forever.'

"Then the company passed through in great haste, all fired with a desire to be the first to drink of the fountain and win so marvellous a boon. Last of all came Ving. He had lingered behind to pluck a thorn from the foot of a beggar child he had met on the highway, and he had not heard the Warder's

words. But when, eager, joyous, radiant, he set his foot on the rainbow, the stern, sorrowful Warder took him by the arm and drew him back.

“‘Ving, strong, noble, and valiant,’ he said, ‘Rainbow Bridge is not for thee.’

“Very dark grew Ving’s face. Hot rebellion rose in his heart and rushed over his pale lips.

“‘Why dost thou keep back the draught of immortality from me?’ he demanded passionately.

“The Warder pointed to the dark flood that rolled under the bridge.

“‘The path of the rainbow is not for thee,’ he said, ‘but yonder way is open. Ford that flood. On the furthest bank is the fountain of life.’

“‘Thou mockest me,’ muttered Ving sullenly. ‘No mortal could cross that flood. Oh, Master,’ he prayed, turning beseechingly to Odin, ‘thou didst promise to me eternal life as to the others. Wilt thou not keep that promise? Command the Warder to let me pass. He must obey thee.’

“But Odin stood silent, with his face turned from his beloved, and Ving’s heart was filled with unspeakable bitterness and despair.

“‘Thou mayest return to earth if thou fearest to essay the flood,’ said the Warder.

“‘Nay,’ said Ving wildly, ‘earthly life without Alin is more dreadful than the death which awaits me in yon dark river.’

“And he plunged fiercely in. He swam, and struggled, he buffeted the turmoil. The waves went over his head again and again, the whirlpools caught him and flung him on the cruel rocks. The wild, cold spray beat on his eyes and blinded him, so that he could see nothing, and the roar of the river deafened him so that he could hear nothing; but he felt keenly the wounds and bruises of the cruel rocks, and many a time he would have given up the struggle had not the thought of sweet Alin’s loving eyes

brought him the strength and desire to struggle as long as it was possible. Long, long, long, to him seemed that bitter and perilous passage; but at last he won through to the furthest side. Breathless and reeling, his vesture torn, his great wounds bleeding, he found himself on the shore where the fountain of immortality sprang up. He staggered to its brink and drank of its clear stream. Then all pain and weariness fell away from him, and he rose up, a god, beautiful with immortality. And as he did there came rushing over the Rainbow Bridge a great company — the band of fellow travellers. But all were too late to win the double boon. Ving had won to it through the danger and suffering of the dark river.”

The rainbow had faded out, and the darkness of the October dusk was falling.

“I wonder,” said Dan meditatively, as we went away from that redolent spot, “what it would be like to live for ever in this world.”

“I expect we’d get tired of it after awhile,” said the Story Girl. “But,” she added, “I think it would be a goodly while before I would.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SHADOW FEARED OF MAN

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We were all up early the next morning, dressing by candlelight. But early as it was we found the Story Girl in the kitchen when we went down, sitting on Rachel Ward's blue chest and looking important.

"What do you think?" she exclaimed. "Peter has the measles! He was dreadfully sick all night, and Uncle Roger had to go for the doctor. He was quite light-headed, and didn't know any one. Of course he's far too sick to be taken home, so his mother has come up to wait on him, and I'm to live over here until he is better."

This was mingled bitter and sweet. We were sorry to hear that Peter had the measles; but it would be jolly to have the Story Girl living with us all the time. What orgies of story telling we should have!

"I suppose we'll all have the measles now," grumbled Felicity. "And October is such an inconvenient time for measles — there's so much to do."

"I don't believe any time is very convenient to have the measles," Cecily said.

"Oh, perhaps we won't have them," said the Story Girl cheerfully. "Peter caught them at Markdale, the last time he was home, his mother says."

"I don't want to catch the measles from Peter," said Felicity decidedly. "Fancy catching them from a hired boy!"

“Oh, Felicity, don’t call Peter a hired boy when he’s sick,” protested Cecily.

During the next two days we were very busy — too busy to tell tales or listen to them. Only in the frosty dusk did we have time to wander afar in realms of gold with the Story Girl. She had recently been digging into a couple of old volumes of classic myths and northland folklore which she had found in Aunt Olivia’s attic; and for us, god and goddess, laughing nymph and mocking satyr, norn and valkyrie, elf and troll, and “green folk” generally, were real creatures once again, inhabiting the orchards and woods and meadows around us, until it seemed as if the Golden Age had returned to earth.

Then, on the third day, the Story Girl came to us with a very white face. She had been over to Uncle Roger’s yard to hear the latest bulletin from the sick room. Hitherto they had been of a noncommittal nature; but now it was only too evident that she had bad news.

“Peter is very, very sick,” she said miserably. “He has caught cold someway — and the measles have struck in — and — and—” the Story Girl wrung her brown hands together—”the doctor is afraid he — he — won’t get better.”

We all stood around, stricken, incredulous.

“Do you mean,” said Felix, finding voice at length, “that Peter is going to die?”

The Story Girl nodded miserably.

“They’re afraid so.”

Cecily sat down by her half filled basket and began to cry.

Felicity said violently that she didn’t believe it.

“I can’t pick another apple to-day and I ain’t going to try,” said Dan.

None of us could. We went to the grownups and told them so; and the grownups, with unaccustomed understanding and sympathy, told us that we need not. Then we roamed about in our wretchedness and tried to comfort one another. We avoided the orchard; it was for us too full of happy memories to accord with our bitterness of soul. Instead, we resorted to the spruce wood, where the hush and the sombre shadows and the soft, melancholy sighing of the wind in the branches over us did not jar harshly on our new sorrow.

We could not really believe that Peter was going to die — to DIE. Old people died. Grownup people died. Even children of whom we had heard died. But that one of US — of our merry little band — should die was unbelievable. We could not believe it. And yet the possibility struck us in the face like a blow. We sat on the mossy stones under the dark old evergreens and gave ourselves up to wretchedness. We all, even Dan, cried, except the Story Girl.

“I don’t see how you can be so unfeeling, Sara Stanley,” said Felicity reproachfully. “You’ve always been such friends with Peter — and made out you thought so much of him — and now you ain’t shedding a tear for him.”

I looked at the Story Girl’s dry, piteous eyes, and suddenly remembered that I had never seen her cry. When she told us sad tales, in a voice laden with all the tears that had ever been shed, she had never shed one of her own.

“I can’t cry,” she said drearily. “I wish I could. I’ve a dreadful feeling here —” she touched her slender throat—”and if I could cry I think it would make it better. But I can’t.”

“Maybe Peter will get better after all,” said Dan, swallowing a sob. “I’ve heard of lots of people who went and got better after the doctor said they were going to die.”

“While there’s life there’s hope, you know,” said Felix. “We shouldn’t cross bridges till we come to them.”

“Those are only proverbs,” said the Story Girl bitterly. “Proverbs are all very fine when there’s nothing to worry you, but when you’re in real trouble they’re not a bit of help.”

“Oh, I wish I’d never said Peter wasn’t fit to associate with,” moaned Felicity. “If he ever gets better I’ll never say such a thing again — I’ll never THINK it. He’s just a lovely boy and twice as smart as lots that aren’t hired out.”

“He was always so polite and goodnatured and obliging,” sighed Cecily.

“He was just a real gentleman,” said the Story Girl.

“There ain’t many fellows as fair and square as Peter,” said Dan.

“And such a worker,” said Felix.

“Uncle Roger says he never had a boy he could depend on like Peter,” I said.

“It’s too late to be saying all these nice things about him now,” said the Story Girl. “He won’t ever know how much we thought of him. It’s too late.”

“If he gets better I’ll tell him,” said Cecily resolutely.

“I wish I hadn’t boxed his ears that day he tried to kiss me,” went on Felicity, who was evidently raking her conscience for past offences in regard to Peter. “Of course I couldn’t be expected to let a hir — to let a boy kiss me. But I needn’t have been so cross about it. I might have been more dignified. And I told him I just hated him. That wasn’t true, but I s’pose he’ll die thinking it is. Oh, dear me, what makes people say things they’ve got to be so sorry for afterwards?”

“I suppose if Peter d-d-dies he’ll go to heaven anyhow,” sobbed Cecily. “He’s been real good all this summer, but he isn’t a church member.”

“He’s a Presbyterian, you know,” said Felicity reassuringly. Her tone expressed her conviction that that would carry Peter through if anything would. “We’re none of us church members. But of course Peter couldn’t be sent to the bad place. That would be ridiculous. What would they do with him there, when he’s so good and polite and honest and kind?”

“Oh, I think he’ll be all right, too,” sighed Cecily, “but you know he never did go to church and Sunday School before this summer.”

“Well, his father run away, and his mother was too busy earning a living to bring him up right,” argued Felicity. “Don’t you suppose that anybody, even God, would make allowances for that?”

“Of course Peter will go to heaven,” said the Story Girl. “He’s not grown up enough to go anywhere else. Children always go to heaven. But I don’t want him to go there or anywhere else. I want him to stay right here. I know heaven must be a splendid place, but I’m sure Peter would rather be here, having fun with us.”

“Sara Stanley,” rebuked Felicity. “I should think you wouldn’t say such things at such a solemn time. You’re such a queer girl.”

“Wouldn’t you rather be here yourself than in heaven?” said the Story Girl bluntly. “Wouldn’t you now, Felicity King? Tell the truth, ‘cross your heart.”

But Felicity took refuge from this inconvenient question in tears.

“If we could only DO something to help Peter!” I said desperately. “It seems dreadful not to be able to do a single thing.”

“There’s one thing we can do,” said Cecily gently. “We can pray for him.”

“So we can,” I agreed.

“I’m going to pray like sixty,” said Felix energetically.

“We’ll have to be awful good, you know,” warned Cecily. “There’s no use praying if you’re not good.”

“That will be easy,” sighed Felicity. “I don’t feel a bit like being bad. If anything happens to Peter I feel sure I’ll never be naughty again. I won’t have the heart.”

We did, indeed, pray most sincerely for Peter’s recovery. We did not, as in the case of Paddy, “tack it on after more important things,” but put it in the very forefront of our petitions. Even skeptical Dan prayed, his skepticism falling away from him like a discarded garment in this valley of the shadow, which sifts out hearts and tries souls, until we all, grownup or children, realize our weakness, and, finding that our own puny strength is as a reed shaken in the wind, creep back humbly to the God we have vainly dreamed we could do without.

Peter was no better the next day. Aunt Olivia reported that his mother was brokenhearted. We did not again ask to be released from work. Instead, we went at it with feverish zeal. If we worked hard there was less time for grief and grievous thoughts. We picked apples and dragged them to the granary doggedly. In the afternoon Aunt Janet brought us a lunch of apple turnovers; but we could not eat them. Peter, as Felicity reminded us with a burst of tears, had been so fond of apple turnovers.

And, oh, how good we were! How angelically and unnaturally good! Never was there such a band of kind, sweet-tempered, unselfish children in any orchard. Even Felicity and Dan, for once in their lives, got through the day without any exchange of left-handed compliments. Cecily confided to me that she never meant to put her hair up in curlers on Saturday nights again, because it was pretending. She was so anxious to repent of something, sweet girl, and this was all she could think of.

During the afternoon Judy Pineau brought up a tear-blotted note from Sara Ray. Sara had not been allowed to visit the hill farm since Peter had developed measles. She was an unhappy little exile, and could only relieve her anguish of soul by daily letters to Cecily, which the faithful and obliging Judy Pineau brought up for her. These epistles were as gushingly underlined as if Sara had been a correspondent of early Victorian days.

Cecily did not write back, because Mrs. Ray had decreed that no letters must be taken down from the hill farm lest they carry infection. Cecily had

offered to bake every epistle thoroughly in the oven before sending it; but Mrs. Ray was inexorable, and Cecily had to content herself by sending long verbal messages with Judy Pineau.

“My OWN DEAREST Cecily,” ran Sara’s letter. “I have just heard the sad news about POOR DEAR PETER. I can’t describe MY FEELINGS. They are DREADFUL. I have been crying ALL THE AFTERNOON. I wish I could FLY to you, but ma will not let me. She is afraid I will catch the measles, but I would rather have the measles A DOZEN TIMES OVER than be separated from you all like this. But I have felt, ever since the Judgment Sunday that I MUST OBEY MA BETTER than I used to do. If ANYTHING HAPPENS to Peter and you are let see him BEFORE IT HAPPENS give him MY LOVE and tell him HOW SORRY I AM, and that I hope we will ALL meet in A BETTER WORLD Everything in school is about the same. The master is awful cross by spells. Jimmy Frewen walked home with Nellie Bowan last night from prayer-meeting and HER ONLY FOURTEEN. Don’t you think it horrid BEGINNING SO YOUNG? YOU AND ME would NEVER do anything like that till we were GROWN UP, would we? Willy Fraser looks SO LONESOME in school these days. I must stop for ma says I waste FAR TOO MUCH TIME writing letters. Tell Judy ALL THE NEWS for me.

”Your OWN TRUE FRIEND,
”SARA RAY.

“P.S. Oh I DO hope Peter will get better. Ma is going to get me a new brown dress for the winter. “S. R.”

When evening came we went to our seats under the whispering, sighing fir trees. It was a beautiful night — clear, windless, frosty. Some one galloped down the road on horseback, lustily singing a comic song. How dared he? We felt that it was an insult to our wretchedness. If Peter were going to — going to — well, if anything happened to Peter, we felt so miserably sure that the music of life would be stilled for us for ever. How could any one in the world be happy when we were so unhappy?

Presently Aunt Olivia came down the long twilight arcade. Her bright hair was uncovered and she looked slim and queen-like in her light dress. We

thought Aunt Olivia very pretty then. Looking back from a mature standpoint I realize that she must have been an unusually beautiful woman; and she looked her prettiest as she stood under the swaying boughs in the last faint light of the autumn dusk and smiled down at our woebegone faces.

“Dear, sorrowful little people, I bring you glad tidings of great joy,” she said. “The doctor has just been here, and he finds Peter much better, and thinks he will pull through after all.”

We gazed up at her in silence for a few moments. When we had heard the news of Paddy’s recovery we had been noisy and jubilant; but we were very quiet now. We had been too near something dark and terrible and menacing; and though it was thus suddenly removed the chill and shadow of it were about us still. Presently the Story Girl, who had been standing up, leaning against a tall fir, slipped down to the ground in a huddled fashion and broke into a very passion of weeping. I had never heard any one cry so, with dreadful, rending sobs. I was used to hearing girls cry. It was as much Sara Ray’s normal state as any other, and even Felicity and Cecily availed themselves occasionally of the privilege of sex. But I had never heard any girl cry like this. It gave me the same unpleasant sensation which I had felt one time when I had seen my father cry.

“Oh, don’t, Sara, don’t,” I said gently, patting her convulsed shoulder.

“You ARE a queer girl,” said Felicity — more tolerantly than usual however—”you never cried a speck when you thought Peter was going to die — and now when he is going to get better you cry like that.”

“Sara, child, come with me,” said Aunt Olivia, bending over her. The Story Girl got up and went away, with Aunt Olivia’s arms around her. The sound of her crying died away under the firs, and with it seemed to go the dread and grief that had been our portion for hours. In the reaction our spirits rose with a bound.

“Oh, ain’t it great that Peter’s going to be all right?” said Dan, springing up.

“I never was so glad of anything in my whole life,” declared Felicity in shameless rapture.

“Can’t we send word somehow to Sara Ray tonight?” asked Cecily, the ever-thoughtful. “She’s feeling so bad — and she’ll have to feel that way till tomorrow if we can’t.”

“Let’s all go down to the Ray gate and holler to Judy Pineau till she comes out,” suggested Felix.

Accordingly, we went and “hollered,” with a right good will. We were much taken aback to find that Mrs. Ray came to the gate instead of Judy, and rather sourly demanded what we were yelling about. When she heard our news, however, she had the decency to say she was glad, and to promise she would convey the good tidings to Sara—“who is already in bed, where all children of her age should be,” added Mrs. Ray severely.

WE had no intention of going to bed for a good two hours yet. Instead, after devoutly thanking goodness that our grownups, in spite of some imperfections, were not of the Mrs. Ray type, we betook ourselves to the granary, lighted a huge lantern which Dan had made out of a turnip, and proceeded to devour all the apples we might have eaten through the day but had not. We were a blithe little crew, sitting there in the light of our goblin lantern. We had in very truth been given beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. Life was as a red rose once more.

“I’m going to make a big batch of patty-pans, first thing in the morning,” said Felicity jubilantly. “Isn’t it queer? Last night I felt just like praying, and tonight I feel just like cooking.”

“We mustn’t forget to thank God for making Peter better,” said Cecily, as we finally went to the house.

“Do you s’pose Peter wouldn’t have got better anyway?” said Dan.

“Oh, Dan, what makes you ask such questions?” exclaimed Cecily in real distress.

“I dunno,” said Dan. “They just kind of come into my head, like.
But of course I mean to thank God when I say my prayers tonight.
That’s only decent.”

CHAPTER XXX.

A COMPOUND LETTER

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Once Peter was out of danger he recovered rapidly, but he found his convalescence rather tedious; and Aunt Olivia suggested to us one day that we write a “compound letter” to amuse him, until he could come to the window and talk to us from a safe distance. The idea appealed to us; and, the day being Saturday and the apples all picked, we betook ourselves to the orchard to compose our epistles, Cecily having first sent word by a convenient caller to Sara Ray, that she, too, might have a letter ready. Later, I, having at that time a mania for preserving all documents relating to our life in Carlisle, copied those letters in the blank pages at the back of my dream book. Hence I can reproduce them verbatim, with the bouquet they have retained through all the long years since they were penned in that autumnal orchard on the hill, with its fading leaves and frosted grasses, and the “mild, delightful melancholy” of the late October day enfolding.

CECILY’S LETTER

“DEAR PETER: — I am so very glad and thankful that you are going to get better. We were so afraid you would not last Tuesday, and we felt dreadful, even Felicity. We all prayed for you. I think the others have stopped now, but I keep it up every night still, for fear you might have a relaps. (I don’t know if that is spelled right. I haven’t the dixonary handy, and if I ask the others Felicity will laugh at me, though she cannot spell lots of words herself.) I am saving some of the Honourable Mr. Whalen’s pears for you. I’ve got them hid where nobody can find them. There’s only a dozen because Dan et all the rest, but I guess you will like them. We have got all the apples picked, and are all ready to take the measles now, if we have to, but I hope we won’t. If we have to, though, I’d rather catch them from you than from any one else, because we are acquainted with

you. If I do take the measles and anything happens to me Felicity is to have my cherry vase. I'd rather give it to the Story Girl, but Dan says it ought to be kept in the family, even if Felicity is a crank. I haven't anything else valuable, since I gave Sara Ray my forget-me-not jug, but if you would like anything I've got let me know and I'll leave instructions for you to have it. The Story Girl has told us some splendid stories lately. I wish I was clever like her. Ma says it doesn't matter if you're not clever as long as you are good, but I am not even very good.

"I think this is all my news, except that I want to tell you how much we all think of you, Peter. When we heard you were sick we all said nice things about you, but we were afraid it was too late, and I said if you got better I'd tell you. It is easier to write it than to tell it out to your face. We think you are smart and polite and obliging and a great worker and a gentleman.

"Your true friend,
"CECILY KING.

"P.S. If you answer my letter don't say anything about the pears, because I don't want Dan to find out there's any left. C. K."

FELICITY'S LETTER

"DEAR PETER: — Aunt Olivia says for us all to write a compound letter to cheer you up. We are all awful glad you are getting better. It gave us an awful scare when we heard you were going to die. But you will soon be all right and able to get out again. Be careful you don't catch cold. I am going to bake some nice things for you and send them over, now that the doctor says you can eat them. And I'll send you my rosebud plate to eat off of. I'm only lending it, you know, not giving it. I let very few people use it because it is my greatest treasure. Mind you don't break it. Aunt Olivia must always wash it, not your mother.

"I do hope the rest of us won't catch the measles. It must look horrid to have red spots all over your face. We all feel pretty well yet. The Story Girl says as many queer things as ever. Felix thinks he is getting thin, but he is fatter than ever, and no wonder, with all the apples he eats. He has give up trying to eat the bitter apples at last. Beverley has grown half an

inch since July, by the mark on the hall door, and he is awful pleased about it. I told him I guessed the magic seed was taking effect at last, and he got mad. He never gets mad at anything the Story Girl says, and yet she is so sarkastic by times. Dan is pretty hard to get along with as usual, but I try to bear pashently with him. Cecily is well and says she isn't going to curl her hair any more. She is so conscienshus. I am glad my hair curls of itself, ain't you?

"We haven't seen Sara Ray since you got sick. She is awful lonesome, and Judy says she cries nearly all the time but that is nothing new. I'm awful sorry for Sara but I'm glad I'm not her. She is going to write you a letter too. You'll let me see what she puts in it, won't you? You'd better take some Mexican Tea now. It's a great blood purifyer.

"I am going to get a lovely dark blue dress for the winter. It is ever so much prettier than Sara Ray's brown one. Sara Ray's mother has no taste. The Story Girl's father is sending her a new red dress, and a red velvet cap from Paris. She is so fond of red. I can't bear it, it looks so common. Mother says I can get a velvet hood too. Cecily says she doesn't believe it's right to wear velvet when it's so expensive and the heathen are crying for the gospel. She got that idea from a Sunday School paper but I am going to get my hood all the same.

"Well, Peter, I have no more news so I will close for this time.

"hoping you will soon be quite well, I remain
"yours sincerely,
"FELICITY KING.

"P.S. The Story Girl peeked over my shoulder and says I ought to have signed it 'yours affeckshunately,' but I know better, because the Family Guide has told lots of times how you should sign yourself when you are writing to a young man who is only a friend. F. K."

FELIX'S LETTER

"DEAR PETER: — I am awful glad you are getting better. We all felt bad when we thought you wouldn't, but I felt worse than the others because we

hadn't been on very good terms lately and I had said mean things about you. I'm sorry and, Peter, you can pray for anything you like and I won't ever object again. I'm glad Uncle Alec interfered and stopped the fight. If I had licked you and you had died of the measles it would have been a dreadful thing.

"We have all the apples in and haven't much to do just now and we are having lots of fun but we wish you were here to join in. I'm a lot thinner than I was. I guess working so hard picking apples is a good thing to make you thin. The girls are all well. Felicity puts on as many airs as ever, but she makes great things to eat. I have had some splendid dreams since we gave up writing them down. That is always the way. We ain't going to school till we're sure we are not going to have the measles. This is all I can think of, so I will draw to a close. Remember, you can pray for anything you like. FELIX KING."

SARA RAY'S LETTER

"DEAR PETER: — I never wrote to A BOY before, so PLEASE excuse ALL mistakes. I am SO glad you are getting better. We were SO afraid you were GOING TO DIE. I CRIED ALL NIGHT about it. But now that you are OUT OF DANGER will you tell me WHAT IT REALLY FEELS LIKE to think you are going to die? Does it FEEL QUEER? Were you VERY badly frightened?

"Ma won't let me go up the hill AT ALL now. I would DIE if it was not for Judy Pinno. (The French names are SO HARD TO SPELL.) JUDY IS VERY OBLIGING and I feel that she SIMPATHISES WITH ME. In my LONELY HOURS I read my dream book and Cecily's old letters and they are SUCH A COMFORT to me. I have been reading one of the school library books too. I is PRETTY GOOD but I wish they had got more LOVE STORIES because they are so exciting. But the master would not let them.

"If you had DIED, Peter, and YOUR FATHER had heard it wouldn't he have FELT DREADFUL? We are having BEAUTIFUL WEATHER and the seenary is fine since the leaves turned. I think there is nothing so pretty as Nature after all.

“I hope ALL DANGER from the measles will soon be over and we can

ALL MEET AGAIN AT THE HOME ON THE HILL. Till then
FAREWELL.

”Your true friend,

“SARA RAY.

“P. S. Don’t let Felicity see this letter. S. R.”

DAN’S LETTER

“DEAR OLD PETE: — Awful glad you cheated the doctor. I thought you weren’t the kind to turn up your toes so easy. You should of heard the girls crying.

“They’re all getting their winter finery now and the talk about it would make you sick. The Story Girl is getting hers from Paris and Felicity is awful jealous though she pretends she isn’t. I can see through her.

“Kitt Mar was up here Thursday to see the girls. She’s had the measles so she isn’t scared. She’s a great girl to laugh. I like a girl that laughs, don’t you?

“We had a call from Peg Bowen yesterday. You should of seen the Story Girl hustling Pat out of the way, for all she says she don’t believe he was bewitched. Peg had your rheumatism ring on and the Story Girl’s blue beads and Sara Ray’s lace soed across the front of her dress. She wanted some tobacco and some pickles. Ma gave her some pickles but said we didn’t have no tobacco and Peg went off mad but I guess she wouldn’t bewitch anything on account of the pickles.

“I ain’t any hand to write letters so I guess I’ll stop. Hope you’ll be out soon. DAN.”

THE STORY GIRL’S LETTER

“DEAR PETER: — Oh, how glad I am that you are getting better! Those days when we thought you wouldn’t were the hardest of my whole life. It seemed too dreadful to be true that perhaps you would die. And then when we heard you were going to get better that seemed too good to be true. Oh, Peter, hurry up and get well, for we are having such good times and we miss you so much. I have coaxed Uncle Alec not to burn his potato stalks till you are well, because I remember how you always liked to see the potato stalks burn. Uncle Alec consented, though Aunt Janet said it was high time they were burned. Uncle Roger burned his last night and it was such fun.

“Pat is splendid. He has never had a sick spell since that bad one. I would send him over to be company for you, but Aunt Janet says no, because he might carry the measles back. I don’t see how he could, but we must obey Aunt Janet. She is very good to us all, but I know she does not approve of me. She says I’m my father’s own child. I know that doesn’t mean anything complimentary because she looked so queer when she saw that I had heard her, but I don’t care. I’m glad I’m like father. I had a splendid letter from him this week, with the darlingest pictures in it. He is painting a new picture which is going to make him famous. I wonder what Aunt Janet will say then.

“Do you know, Peter, yesterday I thought I saw the Family Ghost at last. I was coming through the gap in the hedge, and I saw somebody in blue standing under Uncle Alec’s tree. How my heart beat! My hair should have stood up on end with terror but it didn’t. I felt to see, and it was lying down quite flat. But it was only a visitor after all. I don’t know whether I was glad or disappointed. I don’t think it would be a pleasant experience to see the ghost. But after I had seen it think what a heroine I would be!

“Oh, Peter, what do you think? I have got acquainted with the Awkward Man at last. I never thought it would be so easy. Yesterday Aunt Olivia wanted some ferns, so I went back to the maple woods to get them for her, and I found some lovely ones by the spring. And while I was sitting there, looking into the spring who should come along but the Awkward Man himself. He sat right down beside me and began to talk. I never was so surprised in my life. We had a very interesting talk, and I told him two of

my best stories, and a great many of my secrets into the bargain. They may say what they like, but he was not one bit shy or awkward, and he has beautiful eyes. He did not tell me any of his secrets, but I believe he will some day. Of course I never said a word about his Alice-room. But I gave him a hint about his little brown book. I said I loved poetry and often felt like writing it, and then I said, 'Do you ever feel like that, Mr. Dale?' He said, yes, he sometimes felt that way, but he did not mention the brown book. I thought he might have. But after all I don't like people who tell you everything the first time you meet them, like Sara Ray. When he went away he said, 'I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again,' just as seriously and politely as if I was a grownup young lady. I am sure he could never have said it if I had been really grown up. I told him it was likely he would and that he wasn't to mind if I had a longer skirt on next time, because I'd be just the same person.

"I told the children a beautiful new fairy story to-day. I made them go to the spruce wood to hear it. A spruce wood is the proper place to tell fairy stories in. Felicity says she can't see that it makes any difference where you tell them, but oh, it does. I wish you had been there to hear it too, but when you are well I will tell it over again for you.

"I am going to call the southernwood 'applerie' after this. Beverley says that is what they call it in Scotland, and I think it sounds so much more poetical than southernwood. Felicity says the right name is 'Boy's Love,' but I think that sounds silly.

"Oh, Peter, shadows are such pretty things. The orchard is full of them this very minute. Sometimes they are so still you would think them asleep. Then they go laughing and skipping. Outside, in the oat field, they are always chasing each other. They are the wild shadows. The shadows in the orchard are the tame shadows.

"Everything seems to be rather tired growing except the spruces and chrysanthemums in Aunt Olivia's garden. The sunshine is so thick and yellow and lazy, and the crickets sing all day long. The birds are nearly all gone and most of the maple leaves have fallen.

“Just to make you laugh I’ll write you a little story I heard Uncle Alec telling last night. It was about Elder Frewen’s grandfather taking a pair of rope reins to lead a piano home. Everybody laughed except Aunt Janet. Old Mr. Frewen was HER grandfather too, and she wouldn’t laugh. One day when old Mr. Frewen was a young man of eighteen his father came home and said, ‘Sandy, I bought a piano at Simon Ward’s sale to-day. You’re to go tomorrow and bring it home.’ So next day Sandy started off on horseback with a pair of rope reins to lead the piano home. He thought it was some kind of livestock.

“And then Uncle Roger told about old Mark Ward who got up to make a speech at a church missionary social when he was drunk. (Of course he didn’t get drunk at the social. He went there that way.) And this was his speech.

“‘Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, I can’t express my thoughts on this grand subject of missions. It’s in this poor human critter’ — patting himself on the breast—’but he can’t git it out.’

“I’ll tell you these stories when you get well. I can tell them ever so much better than I can write them.

“I know Felicity is wondering why I’m writing such a long letter, so perhaps I’d better stop. If your mother reads it to you there is a good deal of it she may not understand, but I think your Aunt Jane would. “I remain “your very affectionate friend, “SARA STANLEY.”

I did not keep a copy of my own letter, and I have forgotten everything that was in it, except the first sentence, in which I told Peter I was awful glad he was getting better.

Peter’s delight on receiving our letters knew no bounds. He insisted on answering them and his letter, painstakingly disinfected, was duly delivered to us. Aunt Olivia had written it at his dictation, which was a gain, as far as spelling and punctuation went. But Peter’s individuality seemed merged and lost in Aunt Olivia’s big, dashing script. Not until the Story Girl read the letter to us in the granary by jack-o-lantern light, in a mimicry of Peter’s very voice, did we savour the real bouquet of it.

PETER'S LETTER

“DEAR EVERYBODY, BUT ESPECIALLY FELICITY: — I was awful glad to get your letters. It makes you real important to be sick, but the time seems awful long when you're getting better. Your letters were all great, but I liked Felicity's best, and next to hers the Story Girl's. Felicity, it will be awful good of you to send me things to eat and the rosebud plate. I'll be awful careful of it. I hope you won't catch the measles, for they are not nice, especially when they strike in, but you would look all right, even if you did have red spots on your face. I would like to try the Mexican Tea, because you want me to, but mother says no, she doesn't believe in it, and Burtons Bitters are a great deal healthier. If I was you I would get the velvet hood all right. The heathen live in warm countries so they don't want hoods.

“I'm glad you are still praying for me, Cecily, for you can't trust the measles. And I'm glad you're keeping you know what for me. I don't believe anything will happen to you if you do take the measles; but if anything does I'd like that little red book of yours, The Safe Compass, just to remember you by. It's such a good book to read on Sundays. It is interesting and religious, too. So is the Bible. I hadn't quite finished the Bible before I took the measles, but ma is reading the last chapters to me. There's an awful lot in that book. I can't understand the whole of it, since I'm only a hired boy, but some parts are real easy.

“I'm awful glad you have such a good opinion of me. I don't deserve it, but after this I'll try to. I can't tell you how I feel about all your kindness. I'm like the fellow the Story Girl wrote about who couldn't get it out. I have the picture the Story Girl gave me for my sermon on the wall at the foot of my bed. I like to look at it, it looks so much like Aunt Jane.

“Felix, I've given up praying that I'd be the only one to eat the bitter apples, and I'll never pray for anything like that again. It was a horrid mean prayer. I didn't know it then, but after the measles struck in I found out it was. Aunt Jane wouldn't have liked it. After this I'm going to pray prayers I needn't be ashamed of.

“Sara Ray, I don’t know what it feels like to be going to die because I didn’t know I was going to die till I got better. Mother says I was lunny most of the time after they struck in. It was just because they struck in I was lunny. I ain’t lunny naturally, Felicity. I will do what you asked in your postscript, Sara, although it will be hard.

“I’m glad Peg Bowen didn’t catch you, Dan. Maybe she bewitched me that night we were at her place, and that is why the measles struck in. I’m awful glad Mr. King is going to leave the potato stalks until I get well, and I’m obliged to the Story Girl for coaxing him. I guess she will find out about Alice yet. There were some parts of her letter I couldn’t see through, but when the measles strike in, they leave you stupid for a spell. Anyhow, it was a fine letter, and they were all fine, and I’m awful glad I have so many nice friends, even if I am only a hired boy. Perhaps I’d never have found it out if the measles hadn’t struck in. So I’m glad they did but I hope they never will again. “Your obedient servant, “PETER CRAIG.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON THE EDGE OF LIGHT AND DARK

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We celebrated the November day when Peter was permitted to rejoin us by a picnic in the orchard. Sara Ray was also allowed to come, under protest; and her joy over being among us once more was almost pathetic. She and Cecily cried in one another's arms as if they had been parted for years.

We had a beautiful day for our picnic. November dreamed that it was May. The air was soft and mellow, with pale, aerial mists in the valleys and over the leafless beeches on the western hill. The sere stubble fields brooded in glamour, and the sky was pearly blue. The leaves were still thick on the apple trees, though they were russet hued, and the aftergrowth of grass was richly green, unharmed as yet by the nipping frosts of previous nights. The wind made a sweet, drowsy murmur in the boughs, as of bees among apple blossoms.

"It's just like spring, isn't it?" asked Felicity.

The Story Girl shook her head.

"No, not quite. It looks like spring, but it isn't spring. It's as if everything was resting — getting ready to sleep. In spring they're getting ready to grow. Can't you FEEL the difference?"

"I think it's just like spring," insisted Felicity.

In the sun-sweet place before the Pulpit Stone we boys had put up a board table. Aunt Janet allowed us to cover it with an old tablecloth, the worn places in which the girls artfully concealed with frost-whitened ferns. We had the kitchen dishes, and the table was gaily decorated with Cecily's three scarlet geraniums and maple leaves in the cherry vase. As for the

viands, they were fit for the gods on high Olympus. Felicity had spent the whole previous day and the forenoon of the picnic day in concocting them. Her crowning achievement was a rich little plum cake, on the white frosting of which the words "Welcome Back" were lettered in pink candies. This was put before Peter's place, and almost overcame him.

"To think that you'd go to so much trouble for me!" he said, with a glance of adoring gratitude at Felicity. Felicity got all the gratitude, although the Story Girl had originated the idea and seeded the raisins and beaten the eggs, while Cecily had trudged all the way to Mrs. Jameson's little shop below the church to buy the pink candies. But that is the way of the world.

"We ought to have grace," said Felicity, as we sat down at the festal board. "Will any one say it?"

She looked at me, but I blushed to the roots of my hair and shook my head sheepishly. An awkward pause ensued; it looked as if we would have to proceed without grace, when Felix suddenly shut his eyes, bent his head, and said a very good grace without any appearance of embarrassment. We looked at him when it was over with an increase of respect.

"Where on earth did you learn that, Felix?" I asked.

"It's the grace Uncle Alec says at every meal," answered Felix.

We felt rather ashamed of ourselves. Was it possible that we had paid so little attention to Uncle Alec's grace that we did not recognize it when we heard it on other lips?

"Now," said Felicity jubilantly, "let's eat everything up."

In truth, it was a merry little feast. We had gone without our dinners, in order to "save our appetites," and we did ample justice to Felicity's good things. Paddy sat on the Pulpit Stone and watched us with great yellow eyes, knowing that tidbits would come his way later on. Many witty things were said — or at least we thought them witty — and uproarious was the laughter. Never had the old King orchard known a blither merrymaking or lighter hearts.

The picnic over, we played games until the early falling dusk, and then we went with Uncle Alec to the back field to burn the potato stalks — the crowning delight of the day.

The stalks were in heaps all over the field, and we were allowed the privilege of setting fire to them. ‘Twas glorious! In a few minutes the field was alight with blazing bonfires, over which rolled great, pungent clouds of smoke. From pile to pile we ran, shrieking with delight, to poke each up with a long stick and watch the gush of rose-red sparks stream off into the night. In what a whirl of smoke and firelight and wild, fantastic, hurtling shadows we were!

When we grew tired of our sport we went to the windward side of the field and perched ourselves on the high pole fence that skirted a dark spruce wood, full of strange, furtive sounds. Over us was a great, dark sky, blossoming with silver stars, and all around lay dusky, mysterious reaches of meadow and wood in the soft, empurpled night. Away to the east a shimmering silveryness beneath a palace of aerial cloud foretokened moonrise. But directly before us the potato field, with its wreathing smoke and sullen flames, the gigantic shadow of Uncle Alec crossing and recrossing it, reminded us of Peter’s famous description of the bad place, and probably suggested the Story Girl’s remark.

“I know a story,” she said, infusing just the right shade of weirdness into her voice, “about a man who saw the devil. Now, what’s the matter, Felicity?”

“I can never get used to the way you mention the — the — that name,” complained Felicity. “To hear you speak of the Old Scratch any one would think he was just a common person.”

“Never mind. Tell us the story,” I said curiously.

“It is about Mrs. John Martin’s uncle at Markdale,” said the Story Girl. “I heard Uncle Roger telling it the other night. He didn’t know I was sitting on the cellar hatch outside the window, or I don’t suppose he would have told it. Mrs. Martin’s uncle’s name was William Cowan, and he has been dead for twenty years; but sixty years ago he was a young man, and a very

wild, wicked young man. He did everything bad he could think of, and never went to church, and he laughed at everything religious, even the devil. He didn't believe there was a devil at all. One beautiful summer Sunday evening his mother pleaded with him to go to church with her, but he would not. He told her that he was going fishing instead, and when church time came he swaggered past the church, with his fishing rod over his shoulder, singing a godless song. Half way between the church and the harbour there was a thick spruce wood, and the path ran through it. When William Cowan was half way through it SOMETHING came out of the wood and walked beside him."

I have never heard anything more horribly suggestive than that innocent word "something," as enunciated by the Story Girl. I felt Cecily's hand, icy cold, clutching mine.

"What — what — was IT like?" whispered Felix, curiosity getting the better of his terror.

"IT was tall, and black, and hairy," said the Story Girl, her eyes glowing with uncanny intensity in the red glare of the fires, "and IT lifted one great, hairy hand, with claws on the end of it, and clapped William Cowan, first on one shoulder and then on the other, and said, 'Good sport to you, brother.' William Cowan gave a horrible scream and fell on his face right there in the wood. Some of the men around the church door heard the scream, and they rushed down to the wood. They saw nothing but William Cowan, lying like a dead man on the path. They took him up and carried him home; and when they undressed him to put him to bed, there, on each shoulder, was the mark of a big hand, BURNED INTO THE FLESH. It was weeks before the burns healed, and the scars never went away. Always, as long as William Cowan lived, he carried on his shoulders the prints of the devil's hand."

I really do not know how we should ever have got home, had we been left to our own devices. We were cold with fright. How could we turn our backs on the eerie spruce wood, out of which SOMETHING might pop at any moment? How cross those long, shadowy fields between us and our rooftree? How venture through the darkly mysterious bracken hollow?

Fortunately, Uncle Alec came along at this crisis and said he thought we'd better come home now, since the fires were nearly out. We slid down from the fence and started, taking care to keep close together and in front of Uncle Alec.

"I don't believe a word of that yarn," said Dan, trying to speak with his usual incredulity.

"I don't see how you can help believing it," said Cecily. "It isn't as if it was something we'd read of, or that happened far away. It happened just down at Markdale, and I've seen that very spruce wood myself."

"Oh, I suppose William Cowan got a fright of some kind," conceded Dan, "but I don't believe he saw the devil."

"Old Mr. Morrison at Lower Markdale was one of the men who undressed him, and he remembers seeing the marks," said the Story Girl triumphantly.

"How did William Cowan behave afterwards?" I asked.

"He was a changed man," said the Story Girl solemnly. "Too much changed. He never was known to laugh again, or even smile. He became a very religious man, which was a good thing, but he was dreadfully gloomy and thought everything pleasant sinful. He wouldn't even eat any more than was actually necessary to keep him alive. Uncle Roger says that if he had been a Roman Catholic he would have become a monk, but, as he was a Presbyterian, all he could do was to turn into a crank."

"Yes, but your Uncle Roger was never clapped on the shoulder and called brother by the devil," said Peter. "If he had, he mightn't have been so precious jolly afterwards himself."

"I do wish to goodness," said Felicity in exasperation, "that you'd stop talking of the — the — of such subjects in the dark. I'm so scared now that I keep thinking father's steps behind us are SOMETHING'S. Just think, my own father!"

The Story Girl slipped her arm through Felicity's.

"Never mind," she said soothingly. "I'll tell you another story — such a beautiful story that you'll forget all about the devil."

She told us one of Hans Andersen's most exquisite tales; and the magic of her voice charmed away all our fear, so that when we reached the bracken hollow, a lake of shadow surrounded by the silver shore of moonlit fields, we all went through it without a thought of His Satanic Majesty at all. And beyond us, on the hill, the homelight was glowing from the farmhouse window like a beacon of old loves.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OPENING OF THE BLUE CHEST

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November wakened from her dream of May in a bad temper. The day after the picnic a cold autumn rain set in, and we got up to find our world a drenched, wind-writhen place, with sodden fields and dour skies. The rain was weeping on the roof as if it were shedding the tears of old sorrows; the willow by the gate tossed its gaunt branches wildly, as if it were some passionate, spectral thing, wringing its fleshless hands in agony; the orchard was haggard and uncomely; nothing seemed the same except the staunch, trusty, old spruces.

It was Friday, but we were not to begin going to school again until Monday, so we spent the day in the granary, sorting apples and hearing tales. In the evening the rain ceased, the wind came around to the northwest, freezing suddenly, and a chilly yellow sunset beyond the dark hills seemed to herald a brighter morrow.

Felicity and the Story Girl and I walked down to the postoffice for the mail, along a road where fallen leaves went eddying fitfully up and down before us in weird, uncanny dances of their own. The evening was full of eerie sounds — the creaking of fir boughs, the whistle of the wind in the treetops, the vibrations of strips of dried bark on the rail fences. But we carried summer and sunshine in our hearts, and the bleak unloveliness of the outer world only intensified our inner radiance.

Felicity wore her new velvet hood, with a coquettish little collar of white fur about her neck. Her golden curls framed her lovely face, and the wind stung the pink of her cheeks to crimson. On my left hand walked the Story Girl, her red cap on her jaunty brown head. She scattered her words along the path like the pearls and diamonds of the old fairy tale. I remember that I strutted along quite insufferably, for we met several of the Carlisle boys

and I felt that I was an exceptionally lucky fellow to have such beauty on one side and such charm on the other.

There was one of father's thin letters for Felix, a fat, foreign letter for the Story Girl, addressed in her father's minute handwriting, a drop letter for Cecily from some school friend, with "In Haste" written across the corner, and a letter for Aunt Janet, postmarked Montreal.

"I can't think who that is from," said Felicity. "Nobody in Montreal ever writes to mother. Cecily's letter is from Em Frewen. She always puts 'In Haste' on her letters, no matter what is in them."

When we reached home, Aunt Janet opened and read her Montreal letter. Then she laid it down and looked about her in astonishment.

"Well, did ever any mortal!" she said.

"What in the world is the matter?" said Uncle Alec.

"This letter is from James Ward's wife in Montreal," said Aunt Janet solemnly. "Rachel Ward is dead. And she told James' wife to write to me and tell me to open the old blue chest."

"Hurrah!" shouted Dan.

"Donald King," said his mother severely, "Rachel Ward was your relation and she is dead. What do you mean by such behaviour?"

"I never was acquainted with her," said Dan sulkily. "And I wasn't hurrahing because she is dead. I hurrahed because that blue chest is to be opened at last."

"So poor Rachel is gone," said Uncle Alec. "She must have been an old woman — seventy-five I suppose. I remember her as a fine, blooming young woman. Well, well, and so the old chest is to be opened at last. What is to be done with its contents?"

"Rachel left instructions about them," answered Aunt Janet, referring to the letter. "The wedding dress and veil and letters are to be burned. There

are two jugs in it which are to be sent to James' wife. The rest of the things are to be given around among the connection. Each members is to have one, 'to remember her by.'"

"Oh, can't we open it right away this very night?" said Felicity eagerly.

"No, indeed!" Aunt Janet folded up the letter decidedly. "That chest has been locked up for fifty years, and it'll stand being locked up one more night. You children wouldn't sleep a wink tonight if we opened it now. You'd go wild with excitement."

"I'm sure I won't sleep anyhow," said Felicity. "Well, at least you'll open it the first thing in the morning, won't you, ma?"

"No, I'll do nothing of the sort," was Aunt Janet's pitiless decree. "I want to get the work out of the way first — and Roger and Olivia will want to be here, too. We'll say ten o'clock tomorrow forenoon."

"That's sixteen whole hours yet," sighed Felicity.

"I'm going right over to tell the Story Girl," said Cecily.

"Won't she be excited!"

We were all excited. We spent the evening speculating on the possible contents of the chest, and Cecily dreamed miserably that night that the moths had eaten everything in it.

The morning dawned on a beautiful world. A very slight fall of snow had come in the night — just enough to look like a filmy veil of lace flung over the dark evergreens, and the hard frozen ground. A new blossom time seemed to have revisited the orchard. The spruce wood behind the house appeared to be woven out of enchantment. There is nothing more beautiful than a thickly growing wood of firs lightly powdered with new-fallen snow. As the sun remained hidden by gray clouds, this fairy-beauty lasted all day.

The Story Girl came over early in the morning, and Sara Ray, to whom faithful Cecily had sent word, was also on hand. Felicity did not approve of this.

“Sara Ray isn’t any relation to our family,” she scolded to Cecily, “and she has no right to be present.”

“She’s a particular friend of mine,” said Cecily with dignity. “We have her in everything, and it would hurt her feelings dreadfully to be left out of this. Peter is no relation either, but he is going to be here when we open it, so why shouldn’t Sara?”

“Peter ain’t a member of the family YET, but maybe he will be some day. Hey, Felicity?” said Dan.

“You’re awful smart, aren’t you, Dan King?” said Felicity, reddening. “Perhaps you’d like to send for Kitty Marr, too — though she DOES laugh at your big mouth.”

“It seems as if ten o’clock would never come,” sighed the Story Girl. “The work is all done, and Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger are here, and the chest might just as well be opened right away.”

“Mother SAID ten o’clock and she’ll stick to it,” said Felicity crossly. “It’s only nine now.”

“Let us put the clock on half an hour,” said the Story Girl. “The clock in the hall isn’t going, so no one will know the difference.”

We all looked at each other.

“I wouldn’t dare,” said Felicity irresolutely.

“Oh, if that’s all, I’ll do it,” said the Story Girl.

When ten o’clock struck Aunt Janet came into the kitchen, remarking innocently that it hadn’t seemed anytime since nine. We must have looked horribly guilty, but none of the grownups suspected anything. Uncle Alec

brought in the axe, and pried off the cover of the old blue chest, while everybody stood around in silence.

Then came the unpacking. It was certainly an interesting performance. Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia took everything out and laid it on the kitchen table. We children were forbidden to touch anything, but fortunately we were not forbidden the use of our eyes and tongues.

“There are the pink and gold vases Grandmother King gave her,” said Felicity, as Aunt Olivia unwrapped from their tissue paper swathings a pair of slender, old-fashioned, twisted vases of pink glass, over which little gold leaves were scattered. “Aren’t they handsome?”

“And oh,” exclaimed Cecily in delight, “there’s the china fruit basket with the apple on the handle. Doesn’t it look real? I’ve thought so much about it. Oh, mother, please let me hold it for a minute. I’ll be as careful as careful.”

“There comes the china set Grandfather King gave her,” said the Story Girl wistfully. “Oh, it makes me feel sad. Think of all the hopes that Rachel Ward must have put away in this chest with all her pretty things.”

Following these, came a quaint little candlestick of blue china, and the two jugs which were to be sent to James’ wife.

“They ARE handsome,” said Aunt Janet rather enviously. “They must be a hundred years old. Aunt Sara Ward gave them to Rachel, and she had them for at least fifty years. I should have thought one would have been enough for James’ wife. But of course we must do just as Rachel wished. I declare, here’s a dozen tin patty pans!”

“Tin patty pans aren’t very romantic,” said the Story Girl discontentedly.

“I notice that you are as fond as any one of what is baked in them,” said Aunt Janet. “I’ve heard of those patty pans. An old servant Grandmother King had gave them to Rachel. Now we are coming to the linen. That was Uncle Edward Ward’s present. How yellow it has grown.”

We children were not greatly interested in the sheets and tablecloths and pillow-cases which now came out of the capacious depths of the old blue chest. But Aunt Olivia was quite enraptured over them.

“What sewing!” she said. “Look, Janet, you’d almost need a magnifying glass to see the stitches. And the dear, old-fashioned pillowslips with buttons on them!”

“Here are a dozen handkerchiefs,” said Aunt Janet. “Look at the initial in the corner of each. Rachel learned that stitch from a nun in Montreal. It looks as if it was woven into the material.”

“Here are her quilts,” said Aunt Olivia. “Yes, there is the blue and white counterpane Grandmother Ward gave her — and the Rising Sun quilt her Aunt Nancy made for her — and the braided rug. The colours are not faded one bit. I want that rug, Janet.”

Underneath the linen were Rachel Ward’s wedding clothes. The excitement of the girls waxed red hot over these. There was a Paisley shawl in the wrappings in which it had come from the store, and a wide scarf of some yellowed lace. There was the embroidered petticoat which had cost Felicity such painful blushes, and a dozen beautifully worked sets of the fine muslin “undersleeves” which had been the fashion in Rachel Ward’s youth.

“This was to have been her appearing out dress,” said Aunt

Olivia, lifting out a shot green silk. “It is all cut to

pieces — but what a pretty soft shade it was! Look at the skirt,

Janet. How many yards must it measure around?”

“Hoopskirts were in then,” said Aunt Janet. “I don’t see her wedding hat here. I was always told that she packed it away, too.”

“So was I. But she couldn’t have. It certainly isn’t here. I have heard that the white plume on it cost a small fortune. Here is her black silk mantle. It

seems like sacrilege to meddle with these clothes.”

“Don’t be foolish, Olivia. They must be unpacked at least. And they must all be burned since they have cut so badly. This purple cloth dress is quite good, however. It can be made over nicely, and it would become you very well, Olivia.”

“No, thank you,” said Aunt Olivia, with a little shudder. “I should feel like a ghost. Make it over for yourself, Janet.”

“Well, I will, if you don’t want it. I am not troubled with fancies. That seems to be all except this box. I suppose the wedding dress is in it.”

“Oh,” breathed the girls, crowding about Aunt Olivia, as she lifted out the box and cut the cord around it. Inside was lying a dress of soft silk, that had once been white but was now yellowed with age, and, enfolding it like a mist, a long, white bridal veil, redolent with some strange, old-time perfume that had kept its sweetness through all the years.

“Poor Rachel Ward,” said Aunt Olivia softly. “Here is her point lace handkerchief. She made it herself. It is like a spider’s web. Here are the letters Will Montague wrote her. And here,” she added, taking up a crimson velvet case with a tarnished gilt clasp, “are their photographs — his and hers.”

We looked eagerly at the daguerreotypes in the old case.

“Why, Rachel Ward wasn’t a bit pretty!” exclaimed the Story Girl in poignant disappointment.

No, Rachel Ward was not pretty, that had to be admitted. The picture showed a fresh young face, with strongly marked, irregular features, large black eyes, and black curls hanging around the shoulders in old-time style.

“Rachel wasn’t pretty,” said Uncle Alec, “but she had a lovely colour, and a beautiful smile. She looks far too sober in that picture.”

“She has a beautiful neck and bust,” said Aunt Olivia critically.

“Anyhow, Will Montague was really handsome,” said the Story Girl.

“A handsome rogue,” growled Uncle Alec. “I never liked him. I was only a little chap of ten but I saw through him. Rachel Ward was far too good for him.”

We would dearly have liked to get a peep into the letters, too. But Aunt Olivia would not allow that. They must be burned unread, she declared. She took the wedding dress and veil, the picture case, and the letters away with her. The rest of the things were put back into the chest, pending their ultimate distribution. Aunt Janet gave each of us boys a handkerchief. The Story Girl got the blue candlestick, and Felicity and Cecily each got a pink and gold vase. Even Sara Ray was made happy by the gift of a little china plate, with a loudly coloured picture of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh in the middle of it. Moses wore a scarlet cloak, while Aaron disported himself in bright blue. Pharaoh was arrayed in yellow. The plate had a scalloped border with a wreath of green leaves around it.

“I shall never use it to eat off,” said Sara rapturously. “I’ll put it up on the parlour mantelpiece.”

“I don’t see much use in having a plate just for ornament,” said

Felicity.

“It’s nice to have something interesting to look at,” retorted Sara, who felt that the soul must have food as well as the body.

“I’m going to get a candle for my candlestick, and use it every night to go to bed with,” said the Story Girl. “And I’ll never light it without thinking of poor Rachel Ward. But I DO wish she had been pretty.”

“Well,” said Felicity, with a glance at the clock, “it’s all over, and it has been very interesting. But that clock has got to be put back to the right time some time through the day. I don’t want bedtime coming a whole half-hour before it ought to.”

In the afternoon, when Aunt Janet was over at Uncle Roger's, seeing him and Aunt Olivia off to town, the clock was righted. The Story Girl and Peter came over to stay all night with us, and we made taffy in the kitchen, which the grownups kindly gave over to us for that purpose.

"Of course it was very interesting to see the old chest unpacked," said the Story Girl as she stirred the contents of a saucepan vigorously. "But now that it is over I believe I am sorry that it is opened. It isn't mysterious any longer. We know all about it now, and we can never imagine what things are in it any more."

"It's better to know than to imagine," said Felicity.

"Oh, no, it isn't," said the Story Girl quickly. "When you know things you have to go by facts. But when you just dream about things there's nothing to hold you down."

"You're letting the taffy scorch, and THAT'S a fact you'd better go by," said Felicity sniffing. "Haven't you got a nose?"

When we went to bed, that wonderful white enchantress, the moon, was making an elfland of the snow-misted world outside. From where I lay I could see the sharp tops of the spruces against the silvery sky. The frost was abroad, and the winds were still and the land lay in glamour.

Across the hall, the Story Girl was telling Felicity and Cecily the old, old tale of Argive Helen and "evil-hearted Paris."

"But that's a bad story," said Felicity when the tale was ended.

"She left her husband and run away with another man."

"I suppose it was bad four thousand years ago," admitted the Story Girl. "But by this time the bad must have all gone out of it. It's only the good that could last so long."

Our summer was over. It had been a beautiful one. We had known the sweetness of common joys, the delight of dawns, the dream and glamour

of noontides, the long, purple peace of carefree nights. We had had the pleasure of bird song, of silver rain on greening fields, of storm among the trees, of blossoming meadows, and of the converse of whispering leaves. We had had brotherhood with wind and star, with books and tales, and hearth fires of autumn. Ours had been the little, loving tasks of every day, blithe companionship, shared thoughts, and adventuring. Rich were we in the memory of those opulent months that had gone from us — richer than we then knew or suspected. And before us was the dream of spring. It is always safe to dream of spring. For it is sure to come; and if it be not just as we have pictured it, it will be infinitely sweeter.

THE END

THE GOLDEN ROAD (1913)

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FOREWORD

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Once upon a time we all walked on the golden road. It was a fair highway, through the Land of Lost Delight; shadow and sunshine were blessedly mingled, and every turn and dip revealed a fresh charm and a new loveliness to eager hearts and unspoiled eyes.

On that road we heard the song of morning stars; we drank in fragrances aerial and sweet as a May mist; we were rich in gossamer fancies and iris hopes; our hearts sought and found the boon of dreams; the years waited beyond and they were very fair; life was a rose-lipped comrade with purple flowers dripping from her fingers.

We may long have left the golden road behind, but its memories are the dearest of our eternal possessions; and those who cherish them as such may haply find a pleasure in the pages of this book, whose people are pilgrims on the golden road of youth.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW DEPARTURE

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“I’ve thought of something amusing for the winter,” I said as we drew into a half-circle around the glorious woodfire in Uncle Alec’s kitchen.

It had been a day of wild November wind, closing down into a wet, eerie twilight. Outside, the wind was shrilling at the windows and around the eaves, and the rain was playing on the roof. The old willow at the gate was writhing in the storm and the orchard was a place of weird music, born of all the tears and fears that haunt the halls of night. But little we cared for the gloom and the loneliness of the outside world; we kept them at bay with the light of the fire and the laughter of our young lips.

We had been having a splendid game of Blind-Man’s Buff. That is, it had been splendid at first; but later the fun went out of it because we found that Peter was, of malice prepense, allowing himself to be caught too easily, in order that he might have the pleasure of catching Felicity — which he never failed to do, no matter how tightly his eyes were bound. What remarkable goose said that love is blind? Love can see through five folds of closely-woven muffler with ease!

“I’m getting tired,” said Cecily, whose breath was coming rather quickly and whose pale cheeks had bloomed into scarlet. “Let’s sit down and get the Story Girl to tell us a story.”

But as we dropped into our places the Story Girl shot a significant glance at me which intimated that this was the psychological moment for introducing the scheme she and I had been secretly developing for some days. It was really the Story Girl’s idea and none of mine. But she had insisted that I should make the suggestion as coming wholly from myself.

“If you don’t, Felicity won’t agree to it. You know yourself, Bev, how contrary she’s been lately over anything I mention. And if she goes against it Peter will too — the ninny! — and it wouldn’t be any fun if we weren’t all in it.”

“What is it?” asked Felicity, drawing her chair slightly away from Peter’s.

“It is this. Let us get up a newspaper of our own — write it all ourselves, and have all we do in it. Don’t you think we can get a lot of fun out of it?”

Everyone looked rather blank and amazed, except the Story Girl. She knew what she had to do, and she did it.

“What a silly idea!” she exclaimed, with a contemptuous toss of her long brown curls. “Just as if WE could get up a newspaper!”

Felicity fired up, exactly as we had hoped.

“I think it’s a splendid idea,” she said enthusiastically. “I’d like to know why we couldn’t get up as good a newspaper as they have in town! Uncle Roger says the Daily Enterprise has gone to the dogs — all the news it prints is that some old woman has put a shawl on her head and gone across the road to have tea with another old woman. I guess we could do better than that. You needn’t think, Sara Stanley, that nobody but you can do anything.”

“I think it would be great fun,” said Peter decidedly. “My Aunt Jane helped edit a paper when she was at Queen’s Academy, and she said it was very amusing and helped her a great deal.”

The Story Girl could hide her delight only by dropping her eyes and frowning.

“Bev wants to be editor,” she said, “and I don’t see how he can, with no experience. Anyhow, it would be a lot of trouble.”

“Some people are so afraid of a little bother,” retorted Felicity.

“I think it would be nice,” said Cecily timidly, “and none of us have any experience of being editors, any more than Bev, so that wouldn’t matter.”

“Will it be printed?” asked Dan.

“Oh, no,” I said. “We can’t have it printed. We’ll just have to write it out — we can buy foolscap from the teacher.”

“I don’t think it will be much of a newspaper if it isn’t printed,” said Dan scornfully.

“It doesn’t matter very much what YOU think,” said Felicity.

“Thank you,” retorted Dan.

“Of course,” said the Story Girl hastily, not wishing to have Dan turned against our project, “if all the rest of you want it I’ll go in for it too. I daresay it would be real good fun, now that I come to think of it. And we’ll keep the copies, and when we become famous they’ll be quite valuable.”

“I wonder if any of us ever will be famous,” said Felix.

“The Story Girl will be,” I said.

“I don’t see how she can be,” said Felicity skeptically. “Why, she’s just one of us.”

“Well, it’s decided, then, that we’re to have a newspaper,” I resumed briskly. “The next thing is to choose a name for it. That’s a very important thing.”

“How often are you going to publish it?” asked Felix.

“Once a month.”

“I thought newspapers came out every day, or every week at least,” said Dan.

“We couldn’t have one every week,” I explained. “It would be too much work.”

“Well, that’s an argument,” admitted Dan. “The less work you can get along with the better, in my opinion. No, Felicity, you needn’t say it. I know exactly what you want to say, so save your breath to cool your porridge. I agree with you that I never work if I can find anything else to do.”

“Remember it is harder still

To have no work to do,”

quoted Cecily reprovingly.

“I don’t believe THAT,” rejoined Dan. “I’m like the Irishman who said he wished the man who begun work had stayed and finished it.”

“Well, is it decided that Bev is to be editor?” asked Felix.

“Of course it is,” Felicity answered for everybody.

“Then,” said Felix, “I move that the name be The King Monthly Magazine.”

“That sounds fine,” said Peter, hitching his chair a little nearer Felicity’s.

“But,” said Cecily timidly, “that will leave out Peter and the Story Girl and Sara Ray, just as if they didn’t have a share in it. I don’t think that would be fair.”

“You name it then, Cecily,” I suggested.

“Oh!” Cecily threw a deprecating glance at the Story Girl and Felicity. Then, meeting the contempt in the latter’s gaze, she raised her head with unusual spirit.

“I think it would be nice just to call it Our Magazine,” she said. “Then we’d all feel as if we had a share in it.”

“Our Magazine it will be, then,” I said. “And as for having a share in it, you bet we’ll all have a share in it. If I’m to be editor you’ll all have to be sub-editors, and have charge of a department.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” protested Cecily.

“You must,” I said inexorably. “‘England expects everyone to do his duty.’ That’s our motto — only we’ll put Prince Edward Island in place of England. There must be no shirking. Now, what departments will we have? We must make it as much like a real newspaper as we can.”

“Well, we ought to have an etiquette department, then,” said Felicity. “The Family Guide has one.”

“Of course we’ll have one,” I said, “and Dan will edit it.”

“Dan!” exclaimed Felicity, who had fondly expected to be asked to edit it herself.

“I can run an etiquette column as well as that idiot in the Family Guide, anyhow,” said Dan defiantly. “But you can’t have an etiquette department unless questions are asked. What am I to do if nobody asks any?”

“You must make some up,” said the Story Girl. “Uncle Roger says that is what the Family Guide man does. He says it is impossible that there can be as many hopeless fools in the world as that column would stand for otherwise.”

“We want you to edit the household department, Felicity,” I said, seeing a cloud lowering on that fair lady’s brow. “Nobody can do that as well as you. Felix will edit the jokes and the Information Bureau, and Cecily must be fashion editor. Yes, you must, Sis. It’s easy as wink. And the Story Girl will attend to the personals. They’re very important. Anyone can contribute a personal, but the Story Girl is to see there are some in every issue, even if she has to make them up, like Dan with the etiquette.”

“Bev will run the scrap book department, besides the editorials,” said the Story Girl, seeing that I was too modest to say it myself.

“Aren’t you going to have a story page?” asked Peter.

“We will, if you’ll be fiction and poetry editor,” I said.

Peter, in his secret soul, was dismayed, but he would not blanch before Felicity.

“All right,” he said, recklessly.

“We can put anything we like in the scrap book department,” I explained, “but all the other contributions must be original, and all must have the name of the writer signed to them, except the personals. We must all do our best. Our Magazine is to be ‘a feast of reason and flow of soul.’”

I felt that I had worked in two quotations with striking effect. The others, with the exception of the Story Girl, looked suitably impressed.

“But,” said Cecily, reproachfully, “haven’t you anything for Sara Ray to do? She’ll feel awful bad if she is left out.”

I had forgotten Sara Ray. Nobody, except Cecily, ever did remember Sara Ray unless she was on the spot. But we decided to put her in as advertising manager. That sounded well and really meant very little.

“Well, we’ll go ahead then,” I said, with a sigh of relief that the project had been so easily launched. “We’ll get the first issue out about the first of January. And whatever else we do we mustn’t let Uncle Roger get hold of it. He’d make such fearful fun of it.”

“I hope we can make a success of it,” said Peter moodily. He had been moody ever since he was entrapped into being fiction editor.

“It will be a success if we are determined to succeed,” I said. “‘Where there is a will there is always a way.’”

“That’s just what Ursula Townley said when her father locked her in her room the night she was going to run away with Kenneth MacNair,” said the Story Girl.

We pricked up our ears, scenting a story.

“Who were Ursula Townley and Kenneth MacNair?” I asked.

“Kenneth MacNair was a first cousin of the Awkward Man’s grandfather, and Ursula Townley was the belle of the Island in her day. Who do you suppose told me the story — no, read it to me, out of his brown book?”

“Never the Awkward Man himself!” I exclaimed incredulously.

“Yes, he did,” said the Story Girl triumphantly. “I met him one day last week back in the maple woods when I was looking for ferns. He was sitting by the spring, writing in his brown book. He hid it when he saw me and looked real silly; but after I had talked to him awhile I just asked him about it, and told him that the gossips said he wrote poetry in it, and if he did would he tell me, because I was dying to know. He said he wrote a little of everything in it; and then I begged him to read me something out of it, and he read me the story of Ursula and Kenneth.”

“I don’t see how you ever had the face,” said Felicity; and even Cecily looked as if she thought the Story Girl had gone rather far.

“Never mind that,” cried Felix, “but tell us the story. That’s the main thing.”

“I’ll tell it just as the Awkward Man read it, as far as I can,” said the Story Girl, “but I can’t put all his nice poetical touches in, because I can’t remember them all, though he read it over twice for me.”

CHAPTER II.

A WILL, A WAY AND A WOMAN

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“One day, over a hundred years ago, Ursula Townley was waiting for Kenneth MacNair in a great beechwood, where brown nuts were falling and an October wind was making the leaves dance on the ground like pixy-people.”

“What are pixy-people?” demanded Peter, forgetting the Story Girl’s dislike of interruptions.

“Hush,” whispered Cecily. “That is only one of the Awkward Man’s poetical touches, I guess.”

“There were cultivated fields between the grove and the dark blue gulf; but far behind and on each side were woods, for Prince Edward Island a hundred years ago was not what it is today. The settlements were few and scattered, and the population so scanty that old Hugh Townley boasted that he knew every man, woman and child in it.

“Old Hugh was quite a noted man in his day. He was noted for several things — he was rich, he was hospitable, he was proud, he was masterful — and he had for daughter the handsomest young woman in Prince Edward Island.

“Of course, the young men were not blind to her good looks, and she had so many lovers that all the other girls hated her—”

“You bet!” said Dan, aside —

“But the only one who found favour in her eyes was the very last man she should have pitched her fancy on, at least if old Hugh were the judge.

Kenneth MacNair was a dark-eyed young sea-captain of the next settlement, and it was to meet him that Ursula stole to the beechwood on that autumn day of crisp wind and ripe sunshine. Old Hugh had forbidden his house to the young man, making such a scene of fury about it that even Ursula's high spirit quailed. Old Hugh had really nothing against Kenneth himself; but years before either Kenneth or Ursula was born, Kenneth's father had beaten Hugh Townley in a hotly contested election. Political feeling ran high in those days, and old Hugh had never forgiven the MacNair his victory. The feud between the families dated from that tempest in the provincial teapot, and the surplus of votes on the wrong side was the reason why, thirty years after, Ursula had to meet her lover by stealth if she met him at all."

"Was the MacNair a Conservative or a Grit?" asked Felicity.

"It doesn't make any difference what he was," said the Story Girl impatiently. "Even a Tory would be romantic a hundred years ago. Well, Ursula couldn't see Kenneth very often, for Kenneth lived fifteen miles away and was often absent from home in his vessel. On this particular day it was nearly three months since they had met.

"The Sunday before, young Sandy MacNair had been in Carlyle church. He had risen at dawn that morning, walked barefooted for eight miles along the shore, carrying his shoes, hired a harbour fisherman to row him over the channel, and then walked eight miles more to the church at Carlyle, less, it is to be feared, from a zeal for holy things than that he might do an errand for his adored brother, Kenneth. He carried a letter which he contrived to pass into Ursula's hand in the crowd as the people came out. This letter asked Ursula to meet Kenneth in the beechwood the next afternoon, and so she stole away there when suspicious father and watchful stepmother thought she was spinning in the granary loft."

"It was very wrong of her to deceive her parents," said Felicity primly.

The Story Girl couldn't deny this, so she evaded the ethical side of the question skilfully.

“I am not telling you what Ursula Townley ought to have done,” she said loftily. “I am only telling you what she DID do. If you don’t want to hear it you needn’t listen, of course. There wouldn’t be many stories to tell if nobody ever did anything she shouldn’t do.

“Well, when Kenneth came, the meeting was just what might have been expected between two lovers who had taken their last kiss three months before. So it was a good half-hour before Ursula said,

““Oh, Kenneth, I cannot stay long — I shall be missed. You said in your letter that you had something important to talk of. What is it?”

““My news is this, Ursula. Next Saturday morning my vessel, The Fair Lady, with her captain on board, sails at dawn from Charlottetown harbour, bound for Buenos Ayres. At this season this means a safe and sure return — next May.”

““Kenneth!” cried Ursula. She turned pale and burst into tears. ‘How can you think of leaving me? Oh, you are cruel!’

““Why, no, sweetheart,’ laughed Kenneth. ‘The captain of The Fair Lady will take his bride with him. We’ll spend our honeymoon on the high seas, Ursula, and the cold Canadian winter under southern palms.’

““You want me to run away with you, Kenneth?’ exclaimed Ursula.

““Indeed, dear girl, there’s nothing else to do!’

““Oh, I cannot!’ she protested. ‘My father would—’

““We’ll not consult him — until afterward. Come, Ursula, you know there’s no other way. We’ve always known it must come to this. YOUR father will never forgive me for MY father. You won’t fail me now. Think of the long parting if you send me away alone on such a voyage. Pluck up your courage, and we’ll let Townleys and MacNairs whistle their mouldy feuds down the wind while we sail southward in The Fair Lady. I have a plan.’

“‘Let me hear it,’ said Ursula, beginning to get back her breath.

“‘There is to be a dance at The Springs Friday night. Are you invited, Ursula?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Good. I am not — but I shall be there — in the fir grove behind the house, with two horses. When the dancing is at its height you’ll steal out to meet me. Then ‘tis but a fifteen mile ride to Charlottetown, where a good minister, who is a friend of mine, will be ready to marry us. By the time the dancers have tired their heels you and I will be on our vessel, able to snap our fingers at fate.’

“‘And what if I do not meet you in the fir grove?’ said Ursula, a little impertinently.

“‘If you do not, I’ll sail for South America the next morning, and many a long year will pass ere Kenneth MacNair comes home again.’

“Perhaps Kenneth didn’t mean that, but Ursula thought he did, and it decided her. She agreed to run away with him. Yes, of course that was wrong, too, Felicity. She ought to have said, ‘No, I shall be married respectably from home, and have a wedding and a silk dress and bridesmaids and lots of presents.’ But she didn’t. She wasn’t as prudent as Felicity King would have been.”

“She was a shameless hussy,” said Felicity, venting on the long-dead Ursula that anger she dare not visit on the Story Girl.

“Oh, no, Felicity dear, she was just a lass of spirit. I’d have done the same. And when Friday night came she began to dress for the dance with a brave heart. She was to go to The Springs with her uncle and aunt, who were coming on horseback that afternoon, and would then go on to The Springs in old Hugh’s carriage, which was the only one in Carlyle then. They were to leave in time to reach The Springs before nightfall, for the October nights were dark and the wooded roads rough for travelling.

“When Ursula was ready she looked at herself in the glass with a good deal of satisfaction. Yes, Felicity, she was a vain baggage, that same Ursula, but that kind didn’t all die out a hundred years ago. And she had good reason for being vain. She wore the sea-green silk which had been brought out from England a year before and worn but once — at the Christmas ball at Government House. A fine, stiff, rustling silk it was, and over it shone Ursula’s crimson cheeks and gleaming eyes, and masses of nut brown hair.

“As she turned from the glass she heard her father’s voice below, loud and angry. Growing very pale, she ran out into the hall. Her father was already half way upstairs, his face red with fury. In the hall below Ursula saw her stepmother, looking troubled and vexed. At the door stood Malcolm Ramsay, a homely neighbour youth who had been courting Ursula in his clumsy way ever since she grew up. Ursula had always hated him.

“‘Ursula!’ shouted old Hugh, ‘come here and tell this scoundrel he lies. He says that you met Kenneth MacNair in the beechgrove last Tuesday. Tell him he lies! Tell him he lies!’

“Ursula was no coward. She looked scornfully at poor Ramsay.

“‘The creature is a spy and a tale-bearer,’ she said, ‘but in this he does not lie. I DID meet Kenneth MacNair last Tuesday.’

“‘And you dare to tell me this to my face!’ roared old Hugh. ‘Back to your room, girl! Back to your room and stay there! Take off that finery. You go to no more dances. You shall stay in that room until I choose to let you out. No, not a word! I’ll put you there if you don’t go. In with you — ay, and take your knitting with you. Occupy yourself with that this evening instead of kicking your heels at The Springs!’

“He snatched a roll of gray stocking from the hall table and flung it into Ursula’s room. Ursula knew she would have to follow it, or be picked up and carried in like a naughty child. So she gave the miserable Ramsay a look that made him cringe, and swept into her room with her head in the air. The next moment she heard the door locked behind her. Her first proceeding was to have a cry of anger and shame and disappointment. That

did no good, and then she took to marching up and down her room. It did not calm her to hear the rumble of the carriage out of the gate as her uncle and aunt departed.

“‘Oh, what’s to be done?’ she sobbed. ‘Kenneth will be furious. He will think I have failed him and he will go away hot with anger against me. If I could only send a word of explanation I know he would not leave me. But there seems to be no way at all — though I have heard that there’s always a way when there’s a will. Oh, I shall go mad! If the window were not so high I would jump out of it. But to break my legs or my neck would not mend the matter.’

“The afternoon passed on. At sunset Ursula heard hoof-beats and ran to the window. Andrew Kinnear of The Springs was tying his horse at the door. He was a dashing young fellow, and a political crony of old Hugh. No doubt he would be at the dance that night. Oh, if she could get speech for but a moment with him!

“When he had gone into the house, Ursula, turning impatiently from the window, tripped and almost fell over the big ball of homespun yarn her father had flung on the floor. For a moment she gazed at it resentfully — then, with a gay little laugh, she pounced on it. The next moment she was at her table, writing a brief note to Kenneth MacNair. When it was written, Ursula unwound the gray ball to a considerable depth, pinned the note on it, and rewound the yarn over it. A gray ball, the color of the twilight, might escape observation, where a white missive fluttering down from an upper window would surely be seen by someone. Then she softly opened her window and waited.

“It was dusk when Andrew went away. Fortunately old Hugh did not come to the door with him. As Andrew untied his horse Ursula threw the ball with such good aim that it struck him, as she had meant it to do, squarely on the head. Andrew looked up at her window. She leaned out, put her finger warningly on her lips, pointed to the ball, and nodded. Andrew, looking somewhat puzzled, picked up the ball, sprang to his saddle, and galloped off.

“So far, well, thought Ursula. But would Andrew understand? Would he have wit enough to think of exploring the big, knobby ball for its delicate secret? And would he be at the dance after all?

“The evening dragged by. Time had never seemed so long to Ursula. She could not rest or sleep. It was midnight before she heard the patter of a handful of gravel on her windowpanes. In a trice she was leaning out. Below in the darkness stood Kenneth MacNair.

““Oh, Kenneth, did you get my letter? And is it safe for you to be here?”

““Safe enough. Your father is in bed. I’ve waited two hours down the road for his light to go out, and an extra half-hour to put him to sleep. The horses are there. Slip down and out, Ursula. We’ll make Charlottetown by dawn yet.’

““That’s easier said than done, lad. I’m locked in. But do you go out behind the new barn and bring the ladder you will find there.’

“Five minutes later, Miss Ursula, hooded and cloaked, scrambled soundlessly down the ladder, and in five more minutes she and Kenneth were riding along the road.

““There’s a stiff gallop before us, Ursula,’ said Kenneth.

““I would ride to the world’s end with you, Kenneth MacNair,’ said Ursula. Oh, of course she shouldn’t have said anything of the sort, Felicity. But you see people had no etiquette departments in those days. And when the red sunlight of a fair October dawn was shining over the gray sea The Fair Lady sailed out of Charlottetown harbour. On her deck stood Kenneth and Ursula MacNair, and in her hand, as a most precious treasure, the bride carried a ball of gray homespun yarn.”

“Well,” said Dan, yawning, “I like that kind of a story. Nobody goes and dies in it, that’s one good thing.”

“Did old Hugh forgive Ursula?” I asked.

“The story stopped there in the brown book,” said the Story Girl, “but the Awkward Man says he did, after awhile.”

“It must be rather romantic to be run away with,” remarked Cecily, wistfully.

“Don’t you get such silly notions in your head, Cecily King,” said Felicity, severely.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTMAS HARP

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Great was the excitement in the houses of King as Christmas drew nigh. The air was simply charged with secrets. Everybody was very penurious for weeks beforehand and hoards were counted scrutinizingly every day. Mysterious pieces of handiwork were smuggled in and out of sight, and whispered consultations were held, about which nobody thought of being jealous, as might have happened at any other time. Felicity was in her element, for she and her mother were deep in preparations for the day. Cecily and the Story Girl were excluded from these doings with indifference on Aunt Janet's part and what seemed ostentatious complacency on Felicity's. Cecily took this to heart and complained to me about it.

"I'm one of this family just as much as Felicity is," she said, with as much indignation as Cecily could feel, "and I don't think she need shut me out of everything. When I wanted to stone the raisins for the mincemeat she said, no, she would do it herself, because Christmas mincemeat was very particular — as if I couldn't stone raisins right! The airs Felicity puts on about her cooking just make me sick," concluded Cecily wrathfully.

"It's a pity she doesn't make a mistake in cooking once in a while herself," I said. "Then maybe she wouldn't think she knew so much more than other people."

All parcels that came in the mail from distant friends were taken charge of by Aunts Janet and Olivia, not to be opened until the great day of the feast itself. How slowly the last week passed! But even watched pots will boil in the fulness of time, and finally Christmas day came, gray and dour and frost-bitten without, but full of revelry and rose-red mirth within. Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia and the Story Girl came over early for the day; and

Peter came too, with his shining, morning face, to be hailed with joy, for we had been afraid that Peter would not be able to spend Christmas with us. His mother had wanted him home with her.

“Of course I ought to go,” Peter had told me mournfully, “but we won’t have turkey for dinner, because ma can’t afford it. And ma always cries on holidays because she says they make her think of father. Of course she can’t help it, but it ain’t cheerful. Aunt Jane wouldn’t have cried. Aunt Jane used to say she never saw the man who was worth spoiling her eyes for. But I guess I’ll have to spend Christmas at home.”

At the last moment, however, a cousin of Mrs. Craig’s in Charlottetown invited her for Christmas, and Peter, being given his choice of going or staying, joyfully elected to stay. So we were all together, except Sara Ray, who had been invited but whose mother wouldn’t let her come.

“Sara Ray’s mother is a nuisance,” snapped the Story Girl. “She just lives to make that poor child miserable, and she won’t let her go to the party tonight, either.”

“It is just breaking Sara’s heart that she can’t,” said Cecily compassionately. “I’m almost afraid I won’t enjoy myself for thinking of her, home there alone, most likely reading the Bible, while we’re at the party.”

“She might be worse occupied than reading the Bible,” said Felicity rebukingly.

“But Mrs. Ray makes her read it as a punishment,” protested Cecily. “Whenever Sara cries to go anywhere — and of course she’ll cry tonight — Mrs. Ray makes her read seven chapters in the Bible. I wouldn’t think that would make her very fond of it. And I’ll not be able to talk the party over with Sara afterwards — and that’s half the fun gone.”

“You can tell her all about it,” comforted Felix.

“Telling isn’t a bit like talking it over,” retorted Cecily. “It’s too onesided.”

We had an exciting time opening our presents. Some of us had more than others, but we all received enough to make us feel comfortably that we were not unduly neglected in the matter. The contents of the box which the Story Girl's father had sent her from Paris made our eyes stick out. It was full of beautiful things, among them another red silk dress — not the bright, flame-hued tint of her old one, but a rich, dark crimson, with the most distracting flounces and bows and ruffles; and with it were little red satin slippers with gold buckles, and heels that made Aunt Janet hold up her hands in horror. Felicity remarked scornfully that she would have thought the Story Girl would get tired wearing red so much, and even Cecily commented apart to me that she thought when you got so many things all at once you didn't appreciate them as much as when you only got a few.

"I'd never get tired of red," said the Story Girl. "I just love it — it's so rich and glowing. When I'm dressed in red I always feel ever so much cleverer than in any other colour. Thoughts just crowd into my brain one after the other. Oh, you darling dress — you dear, sheeny, red-rosey, glistening, silky thing!"

She flung it over her shoulder and danced around the kitchen.

"Don't be silly, Sara," said Aunt Janet, a little stimy. She was a good soul, that Aunt Janet, and had a kind, loving heart in her ample bosom. But I fancy there were times when she thought it rather hard that the daughter of a roving adventurer — as she considered him — like Blair Stanley should disport herself in silk dresses, while her own daughters must go clad in gingham and muslin — for those were the days when a feminine creature got one silk dress in her lifetime, and seldom more than one.

The Story Girl also got a present from the Awkward Man — a little, shabby, worn volume with a great many marks on the leaves.

"Why, it isn't new — it's an old book!" exclaimed Felicity. "I didn't think the Awkward Man was mean, whatever else he was."

"Oh, you don't understand, Felicity," said the Story Girl patiently. "And I don't suppose I can make you understand. But I'll try. I'd ten times rather

have this than a new book. It's one of his own, don't you see — one that he has read a hundred times and loved and made a friend of. A new book, just out of a shop, wouldn't be the same thing at all. It wouldn't MEAN anything. I consider it a great compliment that he has given me this book. I'm prouder of it than of anything else I've got."

"Well, you're welcome to it," said Felicity. "I don't understand and I don't want to. I wouldn't give anybody a Christmas present that wasn't new, and I wouldn't thank anybody who gave me one."

Peter was in the seventh heaven because Felicity had given him a present — and, moreover, one that she had made herself. It was a bookmark of perforated cardboard, with a gorgeous red and yellow worsted goblet worked on it, and below, in green letters, the solemn warning, "Touch Not The Cup." As Peter was not addicted to habits of intemperance, not even to looking on dandelion wine when it was pale yellow, we did not exactly see why Felicity should have selected such a device. But Peter was perfectly satisfied, so nobody cast any blight on his happiness by carping criticism. Later on Felicity told me she had worked the bookmark for him because his father used to drink before he ran away.

"I thought Peter ought to be warned in time," she said.

Even Pat had a ribbon of blue, which he clawed off and lost half an hour after it was tied on him. Pat did not care for vain adornments of the body.

We had a glorious Christmas dinner, fit for the halls of Lucullus, and ate far more than was good for us, none daring to make us afraid on that one day of the year. And in the evening — oh, rapture and delight! — we went to Kitty Marr's party.

It was a fine December evening; the sharp air of morning had mellowed until it was as mild as autumn. There had been no snow, and the long fields, sloping down from the homestead, were brown and mellow. A weird, dreamy stillness had fallen on the purple earth, the dark fir woods, the valley rims, the sere meadows. Nature seemed to have folded satisfied hands to rest, knowing that her long wintry slumber was coming upon her.

At first, when the invitations to the party had come, Aunt Janet had said we could not go; but Uncle Alec interceded in our favour, perhaps influenced thereto by Cecily's wistful eyes. If Uncle Alec had a favourite among his children it was Cecily, and he had grown even more indulgent towards her of late. Now and then I saw him looking at her intently, and, following his eyes and thought, I had, somehow, seen that Cecily was paler and thinner than she had been in the summer, and that her soft eyes seemed larger, and that over her little face in moments of repose there was a certain languor and weariness that made it very sweet and pathetic. And I heard him tell Aunt Janet that he did not like to see the child getting so much the look of her Aunt Felicity.

"Cecily is perfectly well," said Aunt Janet sharply. "She's only growing very fast. Don't be foolish, Alec."

But after that Cecily had cups of cream where the rest of us got only milk; and Aunt Janet was very particular to see that she had her rubbers on whenever she went out.

On this merry Christmas evening, however, no fears or dim foreshadowings of any coming event clouded our hearts or faces. Cecily looked brighter and prettier than I had ever seen her, with her softly shining eyes and the nut brown gloss of her hair. Felicity was too beautiful for words; and even the Story Girl, between excitement and the crimson silk array, blossomed out with a charm and allurements more potent than any regular loveliness — and this in spite of the fact that Aunt Olivia had tabooed the red satin slippers and mercilessly decreed that stout shoes should be worn.

"I know just how you feel about it, you daughter of Eve," she said, with gay sympathy, "but December roads are damp, and if you are going to walk to Marrs' you are not going to do it in those frivolous Parisian concoctions, even with overboots on; so be brave, dear heart, and show that you have a soul above little red satin shoes."

"Anyhow," said Uncle Roger, "that red silk dress will break the hearts of all the feminine small fry at the party. You'd break their spirits, too, if you

wore the slippers. Don't do it, Sara. Leave them one wee loophole of enjoyment."

"What does Uncle Roger mean?" whispered Felicity.

"He means you girls are all dying of jealousy because of the Story Girl's dress," said Dan.

"I am not of a jealous disposition," said Felicity loftily, "and she's entirely welcome to the dress — with a complexion like that."

But we enjoyed that party hugely, every one of us. And we enjoyed the walk home afterwards, through dim, enshadowed fields where silvery star-beams lay, while Orion trod his stately march above us, and a red moon climbed up the black horizon's rim. A brook went with us part of the way, singing to us through the dark — a gay, irresponsible vagabond of valley and wilderness.

Felicity and Peter walked not with us. Peter's cup must surely have brimmed over that Christmas night. When we left the Marr house, he had boldly said to Felicity, "May I see you home?" And Felicity, much to our amazement, had taken his arm and marched off with him. The primness of her was indescribable, and was not at all ruffled by Dan's hoot of derision. As for me, I was consumed by a secret and burning desire to ask the Story Girl if I might see HER home; but I could not screw my courage to the sticking point. How I envied Peter his easy, insouciant manner! I could not emulate him, so Dan and Felix and Cecily and the Story Girl and I all walked hand in hand, huddling a little closer together as we went through James Frewen's woods — for there are strange harps in a fir grove, and who shall say what fingers sweep them? Mighty and sonorous was the music above our heads as the winds of the night stirred the great boughs tossing athwart the starlit sky. Perhaps it was that aeolian harmony which recalled to the Story Girl a legend of elder days.

"I read such a pretty story in one of Aunt Olivia's books last night," she said. "It was called 'The Christmas Harp.' Would you like to hear it? It seems to me it would just suit this part of the road."

“There isn’t anything about — about ghosts in it, is there?” said Cecily timidly.

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t tell a ghost story here for anything. I’d frighten myself too much. This story is about one of the shepherds who saw the angels on the first Christmas night. He was just a youth, and he loved music with all his heart, and he longed to be able to express the melody that was in his soul. But he could not; he had a harp and he often tried to play on it; but his clumsy fingers only made such discord that his companions laughed at him and mocked him, and called him a madman because he would not give it up, but would rather sit apart by himself, with his arms about his harp, looking up into the sky, while they gathered around their fire and told tales to wile away their long night vigils as they watched their sheep on the hills. But to him the thoughts that came out of the great silence were far sweeter than their mirth; and he never gave up the hope, which sometimes left his lips as a prayer, that some day he might be able to express those thoughts in music to the tired, weary, forgetful world. On the first Christmas night he was out with his fellow shepherds on the hills. It was chill and dark, and all, except him, were glad to gather around the fire. He sat, as usual, by himself, with his harp on his knee and a great longing in his heart. And there came a marvellous light in the sky and over the hills, as if the darkness of the night had suddenly blossomed into a wonderful meadow of flowery flame; and all the shepherds saw the angels and heard them sing. And as they sang, the harp that the young shepherd held began to play softly by itself, and as he listened to it he realized that it was playing the same music that the angels sang and that all his secret longings and aspirations and strivings were expressed in it. From that night, whenever he took the harp in his hands, it played the same music; and he wandered all over the world carrying it; wherever the sound of its music was heard hate and discord fled away and peace and goodwill reigned. No one who heard it could think an evil thought; no one could feel hopeless or despairing or bitter or angry. When a man had once heard that music it entered into his soul and heart and life and became a part of him for ever. Years went by; the shepherd grew old and bent and feeble; but still he roamed over land and sea, that his harp might carry the message of the Christmas night and the angel song to all mankind. At last his strength failed him and he fell by the wayside in the darkness; but his harp played

as his spirit passed; and it seemed to him that a Shining One stood by him, with wonderful starry eyes, and said to him, 'Lo, the music thy harp has played for so many years has been but the echo of the love and sympathy and purity and beauty in thine own soul; and if at any time in the wanderings thou hadst opened the door of that soul to evil or envy or selfishness thy harp would have ceased to play. Now thy life is ended; but what thou hast given to mankind has no end; and as long as the world lasts, so long will the heavenly music of the Christmas harp ring in the ears of men.' When the sun rose the old shepherd lay dead by the roadside, with a smile on his face; and in his hands was a harp with all its strings broken."

We left the fir woods as the tale was ended, and on the opposite hill was home. A dim light in the kitchen window betokened that Aunt Janet had no idea of going to bed until all her young fry were safely housed for the night.

"Ma's waiting up for us," said Dan. "I'd laugh if she happened to go to the door just as Felicity and Peter were strutting up. I guess she'll be cross. It's nearly twelve."

"Christmas will soon be over," said Cecily, with a sigh. "Hasn't it been a nice one? It's the first we've all spent together. Do you suppose we'll ever spend another together?"

"Lots of 'em," said Dan cheerily. "Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Cecily, her footsteps lagging somewhat. "Only things seem just a little too pleasant to last."

"If Willy Fraser had had as much spunk as Peter, Miss Cecily King mightn't be so low spirited," quoth Dan, significantly.

Cecily tossed her head and disdained reply. There are really some remarks a self-respecting young lady must ignore.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

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If we did not have a white Christmas we had a white New Year. Midway between the two came a heavy snowfall. It was winter in our orchard of old delights then, — so truly winter that it was hard to believe summer had ever dwelt in it, or that spring would ever return to it. There were no birds to sing the music of the moon; and the path where the apple blossoms had fallen were heaped with less fragrant drifts. But it was a place of wonder on a moonlight night, when the snowy arcades shone like avenues of ivory and crystal, and the bare trees cast fairylike traceries upon them. Over Uncle Stephen's Walk, where the snow had fallen smoothly, a spell of white magic had been woven. Taintless and wonderful it seemed, like a street of pearl in the new Jerusalem.

On New Year's Eve we were all together in Uncle Alec's kitchen, which was tacitly given over to our revels during the winter evenings. The Story Girl and Peter were there, of course, and Sara Ray's mother had allowed her to come up on condition that she should be home by eight sharp. Cecily was glad to see her, but the boys never hailed her arrival with overmuch delight, because, since the dark began to come down early, Aunt Janet always made one of us walk down home with her. We hated this, because Sara Ray was always so maddeningly self-conscious of having an escort. We knew perfectly well that next day in school she would tell her chums as a "dead" secret that "So-and-So King saw her home" from the hill farm the night before. Now, seeing a young lady home from choice, and being sent home with her by your aunt or mother are two entirely different things, and we thought Sara Ray ought to have sense enough to know it.

Outside there was a vivid rose of sunset behind the cold hills of fir, and the long reaches of snowy fields glowed fairily pink in the western light. The

drifts along the edges of the meadows and down the lane looked as if a series of breaking waves had, by the lifting of a magician's wand, been suddenly transformed into marble, even to their toppling curls of foam.

Slowly the splendour died, giving place to the mystic beauty of a winter twilight when the moon is rising. The hollow sky was a cup of blue. The stars came out over the white glens and the earth was covered with a kingly carpet for the feet of the young year to press.

"I'm so glad the snow came," said the Story Girl. "If it hadn't the New Year would have seemed just as dingy and worn out as the old. There's something very solemn about the idea of a New Year, isn't there? Just think of three hundred and sixty-five whole days, with not a thing happened in them yet."

"I don't suppose anything very wonderful will happen in them," said Felix pessimistically. To Felix, just then, life was flat, stale and unprofitable because it was his turn to go home with Sara Ray.

"It makes me a little frightened to think of all that may happen in them," said Cecily. "Miss Marwood says it is what we put into a year, not what we get out of it, that counts at last."

"I'm always glad to see a New Year," said the Story Girl. "I wish we could do as they do in Norway. The whole family sits up until midnight, and then, just as the clock is striking twelve, the father opens the door and welcomes the New Year in. Isn't it a pretty custom?"

"If ma would let us stay up till twelve we might do that too," said Dan, "but she never will. I call it mean."

"If I ever have children I'll let them stay up to watch the New Year in," said the Story Girl decidedly.

"So will I," said Peter, "but other nights they'll have to go to bed at seven."

“You ought to be ashamed, speaking of such things,” said Felicity, with a scandalized face.

Peter shrank into the background abashed, no doubt believing that he had broken some Family Guide precept all to pieces.

“I didn’t know it wasn’t proper to mention children,” he muttered apologetically.

“We ought to make some New Year resolutions,” suggested the Story Girl. “New Year’s Eve is the time to make them.”

“I can’t think of any resolutions I want to make,” said Felicity, who was perfectly satisfied with herself.

“I could suggest a few to you,” said Dan sarcastically.

“There are so many I would like to make,” said Cecily, “that I’m afraid it wouldn’t be any use trying to keep them all.”

“Well, let’s all make a few, just for the fun of it, and see if we can keep them,” I said. “And let’s get paper and ink and write them out. That will make them seem more solemn and binding.”

“And then pin them up on our bedroom walls, where we’ll see them every day,” suggested the Story Girl, “and every time we break a resolution we must put a cross opposite it. That will show us what progress we are making, as well as make us ashamed if we have too many crosses.”

“And let’s have a Roll of Honour in Our Magazine,” suggested Felix, “and every month we’ll publish the names of those who keep their resolutions perfect.”

“I think it’s all nonsense,” said Felicity. But she joined our circle around the table, though she sat for a long time with a blank sheet before her.

“Let’s each make a resolution in turn,” I said. “I’ll lead off.”

And, recalling with shame certain unpleasant differences of opinion I had lately had with Felicity, I wrote down in my best hand,

“I shall try to keep my temper always.”

“You’d better,” said Felicity tactfully.

It was Dan’s turn next.

“I can’t think of anything to start with,” he said, gnawing his penholder fiercely.

“You might make a resolution not to eat poison berries,” suggested Felicity.

“You’d better make one not to nag people everlastingly,” retorted Dan.

“Oh, don’t quarrel the last night of the old year,” implored Cecily.

“You might resolve not to quarrel any time,” suggested Sara Ray.

“No, sir,” said Dan emphatically. “There’s no use making a resolution you CAN’T keep. There are people in this family you’ve just GOT to quarrel with if you want to live. But I’ve thought of one — I won’t do things to spite people.”

Felicity — who really was in an unbearable mood that night — laughed disagreeably; but Cecily gave her a fierce nudge, which probably restrained her from speaking.

“I will not eat any apples,” wrote Felix.

“What on earth do you want to give up eating apples for?” asked Peter in astonishment.

“Never mind,” returned Felix.

“Apples make people fat, you know,” said Felicity sweetly.

“It seems a funny kind of resolution,” I said doubtfully. “I think our resolutions ought to be giving up wrong things or doing right ones.”

“You make your resolutions to suit yourself and I’ll make mine to suit myself,” said Felix defiantly.

“I shall never get drunk,” wrote Peter painstakingly.

“But you never do,” said the Story Girl in astonishment.

“Well, it will be all the easier to keep the resolution,” argued Peter.

“That isn’t fair,” complained Dan. “If we all resolved not to do the things we never do we’d all be on the Roll of Honour.”

“You let Peter alone,” said Felicity severely. “It’s a very good resolution and one everybody ought to make.”

“I shall not be jealous,” wrote the Story Girl.

“But are you?” I asked, surprised.

The Story Girl coloured and nodded. “Of one thing,” she confessed, “but I’m not going to tell what it is.”

“I’m jealous sometimes, too,” confessed Sara Ray, “and so my first resolution will be ‘I shall try not to feel jealous when I hear the other girls in school describing all the sick spells they’ve had.’”

“Goodness, do you want to be sick?” demanded Felix in astonishment.

“It makes a person important,” explained Sara Ray.

“I am going to try to improve my mind by reading good books and listening to older people,” wrote Cecily.

“You got that out of the Sunday School paper,” cried Felicity.

“It doesn’t matter where I got it,” said Cecily with dignity. “The main thing is to keep it.”

“It’s your turn, Felicity,” I said.

Felicity tossed her beautiful golden head.

“I told you I wasn’t going to make any resolutions. Go on yourself.”

“I shall always study my grammar lesson,” I wrote — I, who loathed grammar with a deadly loathing.

“I hate grammar too,” sighed Sara Ray. “It seems so unimportant.”

Sara was rather fond of a big word, but did not always get hold of the right one. I rather suspected that in the above instance she really meant uninteresting.

“I won’t get mad at Felicity, if I can help it,” wrote Dan.

“I’m sure I never do anything to make you mad,” exclaimed Felicity.

“I don’t think it’s polite to make resolutions about your sisters,” said Peter.

“He can’t keep it anyway,” scoffed Felicity. “He’s got such an awful temper.”

“It’s a family failing,” flashed Dan, breaking his resolution ere the ink on it was dry.

“There you go,” taunted Felicity.

“I’ll work all my arithmetic problems without any help,” scribbled Felix.

“I wish I could resolve that, too,” sighed Sara Ray, “but it wouldn’t be any use. I’d never be able to do those compound multiplication sums the teacher gives us to do at home every night if I didn’t get Judy Pineau to help me. Judy isn’t a good reader and she can’t spell AT ALL, but you can’t stick her in arithmetic as far as she went herself. I feel sure,”

concluded poor Sara, in a hopeless tone, “that I’ll NEVER be able to understand compound multiplication.”

“Multiplication is vexation,

Division is as bad,

The rule of three perplexes me,

And fractions drive me mad,”

quoted Dan.

“I haven’t got as far as fractions yet,” sighed Sara, “and I hope I’ll be too big to go to school before I do. I hate arithmetic, but I am PASSIONATELY fond of geography.”

“I will not play tit-tat-x on the fly leaves of my hymn book in church,” wrote Peter.

“Mercy, did you ever do such a thing?” exclaimed Felicity in horror.

Peter nodded shamefacedly.

“Yes — that Sunday Mr. Bailey preached. He was so long-winded, I got awful tired, and, anyway, he was talking about things I couldn’t understand, so I played tit-tat-x with one of the Markdale boys. It was the day I was sitting up in the gallery.”

“Well, I hope if you ever do the like again you won’t do it in OUR pew,” said Felicity severely.

“I ain’t going to do it at all,” said Peter. “I felt sort of mean all the rest of the day.”

“I shall try not to be vexed when people interrupt me when I’m telling stories,” wrote the Story Girl. “but it will be hard,” she added with a sigh.

“I never mind being interrupted,” said Felicity.

“I shall try to be cheerful and smiling all the time,” wrote Cecily.

“You are, anyway,” said Sara Ray loyally.

“I don’t believe we ought to be cheerful ALL the time,” said the Story Girl. “The Bible says we ought to weep with those who weep.”

“But maybe it means that we’re to weep cheerfully,” suggested Cecily.

“Sorter as if you were thinking, ‘I’m very sorry for you but I’m mighty glad I’m not in the scrape too,’” said Dan.

“Dan, don’t be irreverent,” rebuked Felicity.

“I know a story about old Mr. and Mrs. Davidson of Markdale,” said the Story Girl. “She was always smiling and it used to aggravate her husband, so one day he said very crossly, ‘Old lady, what ARE you grinning at?’ ‘Oh, well, Abiram, everything’s so bright and pleasant, I’ve just got to smile.’

“Not long after there came a time when everything went wrong — the crop failed and their best cow died, and Mrs. Davidson had rheumatism; and finally Mr. Davidson fell and broke his leg. But still Mrs. Davidson smiled. ‘What in the dickens are you grinning about now, old lady?’ he demanded. ‘Oh, well, Abiram,’ she said, ‘everything is so dark and unpleasant I’ve just got to smile.’ ‘Well,’ said the old man crossly, ‘I think you might give your face a rest sometimes.’”

“I shall not talk gossip,” wrote Sara Ray with a satisfied air.

“Oh, don’t you think that’s a little TOO strict?” asked Cecily anxiously.

“Of course, it’s not right to talk MEAN gossip, but the harmless kind doesn’t hurt. If I say to you that Emmy MacPhail is going to get a new fur collar this winter, THAT is harmless gossip, but if I say I don’t see how Emmy MacPhail can afford a new fur collar when her father can’t pay my father for the oats he got from him, that would be MEAN gossip. If I were you, Sara, I’d put MEAN gossip.”

Sara consented to this amendment.

“I will be polite to everybody,” was my third resolution, which passed without comment.

“I’ll try not to use slang since Cecily doesn’t like it,” wrote Dan.

“I think some slang is real cute,” said Felicity.

“The Family Guide says it’s very vulgar,” grinned Dan. “Doesn’t it, Sara Stanley?”

“Don’t disturb me,” said the Story Girl dreamily. “I’m just thinking a beautiful thought.”

“I’ve thought of a resolution to make,” cried Felicity. “Mr. Marwood said last Sunday we should always try to think beautiful thoughts and then our lives would be very beautiful. So I shall resolve to think a beautiful thought every morning before breakfast.”

“Can you only manage one a day?” queried Dan.

“And why before breakfast?” I asked.

“Because it’s easier to think on an empty stomach,” said Peter, in all good faith. But Felicity shot a furious glance at him.

“I selected that time,” she explained with dignity, “because when I’m brushing my hair before my glass in the morning I’ll see my resolution and remember it.”

“Mr. Marwood meant that ALL our thoughts ought to be beautiful,” said the Story Girl. “If they were, people wouldn’t be afraid to say what they think.”

“They oughtn’t to be afraid to, anyhow,” said Felix stoutly. “I’m going to make a resolution to say just what I think always.”

“And do you expect to get through the year alive if you do?” asked Dan.

“It might be easy enough to say what you think if you could always be sure just what you DO think,” said the Story Girl. “So often I can’t be sure.”

“How would you like it if people always said just what they think to you?” asked Felicity.

“I’m not very particular what SOME people think of me,” rejoined Felix.

“I notice you don’t like to be told by anybody that you’re fat,” retorted Felicity.

“Oh, dear me, I do wish you wouldn’t all say such sarcastic things to each other,” said poor Cecily plaintively. “It sounds so horrid the last night of the old year. Dear knows where we’ll all be this night next year. Peter, it’s your turn.”

“I will try,” wrote Peter, “to say my prayers every night regular, and not twice one night because I don’t expect to have time the next, — like I did the night before the party,” he added.

“I s’pose you never said your prayers until we got you to go to church,” said Felicity — who had had no hand in inducing Peter to go to church, but had stoutly opposed it, as recorded in the first volume of our family history.

“I did, too,” said Peter. “Aunt Jane taught me to say my prayers. Ma hadn’t time, being as father had run away; ma had to wash at night same as in daytime.”

“I shall learn to cook,” wrote the Story Girl, frowning.

“You’d better resolve not to make puddings of—” began Felicity, then stopped as suddenly as if she had bitten off the rest of her sentence and swallowed it. Cecily had nudged her, so she had probably remembered the Story Girl’s threat that she would never tell another story if she was ever twitted with the pudding she had made from sawdust. But we all knew what Felicity had started to say and the Story Girl dealt her a most uncousinly glance.

“I will not cry because mother won’t starch my aprons,” wrote Sara Ray.

“Better resolve not to cry about anything,” said Dan kindly.

Sara Ray shook her head forlornly.

“That would be too hard to keep. There are times when I HAVE to cry. It’s a relief.”

“Not to the folks who have to hear you,” muttered Dan aside to Cecily.

“Oh, hush,” whispered Cecily back. “Don’t go and hurt her feelings the last night of the old year. Is it my turn again? Well, I’ll resolve not to worry because my hair is not curly. But, oh, I’ll never be able to help wishing it was.”

“Why don’t you curl it as you used to do, then?” asked Dan.

“You know very well that I’ve never put my hair up in curl papers since the time Peter was dying of the measles,” said Cecily reproachfully. “I resolved then I wouldn’t because I wasn’t sure it was quite right.”

“I will keep my fingernails neat and clean,” I wrote. “There, that’s four resolutions. I’m not going to make any more. Four’s enough.”

“I shall always think twice before I speak,” wrote Felix.

“That’s an awful waste of time,” commented Dan, “but I guess you’ll need to if you’re always going to say what you think.”

“I’m going to stop with three,” said Peter.

“I will have all the good times I can,” wrote the Story Girl.

“THAT’S what I call sensible,” said Dan.

“It’s a very easy resolution to keep, anyhow,” commented Felix.

“I shall try to like reading the Bible,” wrote Sara Ray.

“You ought to like reading the Bible without trying to,” exclaimed Felicity.

“If you had to read seven chapters of it every time you were naughty I don’t believe you would like it either,” retorted Sara Ray with a flash of spirit.

“I shall try to believe only half of what I hear,” was Cecily’s concluding resolution.

“But which half?” scoffed Dan.

“The best half,” said sweet Cecily simply.

“I’ll try to obey mother ALWAYS,” wrote Sara Ray, with a tremendous sigh, as if she fully realized the difficulty of keeping such a resolution. “And that’s all I’m going to make.”

“Felicity has only made one,” said the Story Girl.

“I think it better to make just one and keep it than make a lot and break them,” said Felicity loftily.

She had the last word on the subject, for it was time for Sara Ray to go, and our circle broke up. Sara and Felix departed and we watched them down the lane in the moonlight — Sara walking demurely in one runner track, and Felix stalking grimly along in the other. I fear the romantic beauty of that silver shining night was entirely thrown away on my mischievous brother.

And it was, as I remember it, a most exquisite night — a white poem, a frosty, starry lyric of light. It was one of those nights on which one might fall asleep and dream happy dreams of gardens of mirth and song, feeling all the while through one’s sleep the soft splendour and radiance of the white moon-world outside, as one hears soft, faraway music sounding through the thoughts and words that are born of it.

As a matter of fact, however, Cecily dreamed that night that she saw three full moons in the sky, and wakened up crying with the horror of it.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST NUMBER OF “OUR MAGAZINE”

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The first number of Our Magazine was ready on New Year’s Day, and we read it that evening in the kitchen. All our staff had worked nobly and we were enormously proud of the result, although Dan still continued to scoff at a paper that wasn’t printed. The Story Girl and I read it turnabout while the others, except Felix, ate apples. It opened with a short

EDITORIAL

With this number Our Magazine makes its first bow to the public. All the editors have done their best and the various departments are full of valuable information and amusement. The tastefully designed cover is by a famous artist, Mr. Blair Stanley, who sent it to us all the way from Europe at the request of his daughter. Mr. Peter Craig, our enterprising literary editor, contributes a touching love story. (Peter, aside, in a gratified pig’s whisper: “I never was called ‘Mr.’ before.”) Miss Felicity King’s essays on Shakespeare is none the worse for being an old school composition, as it is new to most of our readers. Miss Cecily King contributes a thrilling article of adventure. The various departments are ably edited, and we feel that we have reason to be proud of Our Magazine. But we shall not rest on our oars. “Excelsior” shall ever be our motto. We trust that each succeeding issue will be better than the one that went before. We are well aware of many defects, but it is easier to see them than to remedy them. Any suggestion that would tend to the improvement of Our Magazine will be thankfully received, but we trust that no criticism will be made that will hurt anyone’s feelings. Let us all work together in harmony, and strive to make Our Magazine an influence for good and a source of innocent pleasure, and let us always remember the words of the poet.

“The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight,

But they, while their companions slept,

Were toiling upwards in the night.”

(Peter, IMPRESSIVELY:—”I’ve read many a worse editorial in the Enterprise.”)

ESSAY ON SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare’s full name was William Shakespeare. He did not always spell it the same way. He lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and wrote a great many plays. His plays are written in dialogue form. Some people think they were not written by Shakespeare but by another man of the same name. I have read some of them because our school teacher says everybody ought to read them, but I did not care much for them. There are some things in them I cannot understand. I like the stories of Valeria H. Montague in the Family Guide ever so much better. They are more exciting and truer to life. Romeo and Juliet was one of the plays I read. It was very sad. Juliet dies and I don’t like stories where people die. I like it better when they all get married especially to dukes and earls. Shakespeare himself was married to Anne Hatheway. They are both dead now. They have been dead a good while. He was a very famous man.

FELICITY KING.

(PETER, MODESTLY: “I don’t know much about Shakespeare myself but I’ve got a book of his plays that belonged to my Aunt Jane, and I guess I’ll have to tackle him as soon as I finish with the Bible.”)

THE STORY OF AN ELOPEMENT FROM CHURCH

This is a true story. It happened in Markdale to an uncle of my mothers. He wanted to marry Miss Jemima Parr. Felicity says Jemima is not a romantic name for a heroin of a story but I cant help it in this case because it is a

true story and her name really was Jemima. My mother's uncle was named Thomas Taylor. He was poor at that time and so the father of Miss Jemima Parr did not want him for a son-in-law and told him he was not to come near the house or he would set the dog on him. Miss Jemima Parr was very pretty and my mother's uncle Thomas was just crazy about her and she wanted him too. She cried almost every night after her father forbade him to come to the house except the nights she had to sleep or she would have died. And she was so frightened he might try to come for all and get tore up by the dog and it was a bulldog too that would never let go. But mother's uncle Thomas was too cute for that. He waited till one day there was preaching in the Markdale church in the middle of the week because it was sacrament time and Miss Jemima Parr and her family all went because her father was an elder. My mother's uncle Thomas went too and set in the pew just behind Miss Jemima Parr's family. When they all bowed their heads at prayer time Miss Jemima Parr didn't but set bolt upright and my mother's uncle Thomas bent over and whispered in her ear. I don't know what he said so I can't right it but Miss Jemima Parr blushed that is turned red and nodded her head. Perhaps some people may think that my mother's uncle Thomas shouldn't of whispered at prayer time in church but you must remember that Miss Jemima Parr's father had threatened to set the dog on him and that was hard lines when he was a respectable young man though not rich. Well when they were singing the last hymn my mother's uncle Thomas got up and went out very quietly and as soon as church was out Miss Jemima Parr walked out too real quick. Her family never suspected anything and they hung round talking to folks and shaking hands while Miss Jemima Parr and my mother's uncle Thomas were eloping outside. And what do you suppose they eloped in. Why in Miss Jemima Parr's father's sleigh. And when he went out they were gone and his sleigh was gone also his horse. Of course my mother's uncle Thomas didn't steal the horse. He just borrowed it and sent it home the next day. But before Miss Jemima Parr's father could get another rig to follow them they were so far away he couldn't catch them before they got married. And they lived happy together forever afterwards. Mother's uncle Thomas lived to be a very old man. He died very sudden. He felt quite well when he went to sleep and when he woke up he was dead.

PETER CRAIG.

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

The editor says we must all write up our most exciting adventure for Our Magazine. My most exciting adventure happened a year ago last November. I was nearly frightened to death. Dan says he wouldn't of been scared and Felicity says she would of known what it was but it's easy to talk.

It happened the night I went down to see Kitty Marr. I thought when I went that Aunt Olivia was visiting there and I could come home with her. But she wasn't there and I had to come home alone. Kitty came a piece of the way but she wouldn't come any further than Uncle James Frewen's gate. She said it was because it was so windy she was afraid she would get the toothache and not because she was frightened of the ghost of the dog that haunted the bridge in Uncle James' hollow. I did wish she hadn't said anything about the dog because I mightn't of thought about it if she hadn't. I had to go on alone thinking of it. I'd heard the story often but I'd never believed in it. They said the dog used to appear at one end of the bridge and walk across it with people and vanish when he got to the other end. He never tried to bite anyone but one wouldn't want to meet the ghost of a dog even if one didn't believe in him. I knew there was no such thing as ghosts and I kept saying a paraphrase over to myself and the Golden Text of the next Sunday School lesson but oh, how my heart beat when I got near the hollow! It was so dark. You could just see things dim-like but you couldn't see what they were. When I got to the bridge I walked along sideways with my back to the railing so I couldn't think the dog was behind me. And then just in the middle of the bridge I met something. It was right before me and it was big and black, just about the size of a Newfoundland dog, and I thought I could see a white nose. And it kept jumping about from one side of the bridge to the other. Oh, I hope none of my readers will ever be so frightened as I was then. I was too frightened to run back because I was afraid it would chase me and I couldn't get past it, it moved so quick, and then it just made one spring right on me and I felt its claws and I screamed and fell down. It rolled off to one side and laid there quite quiet but I didn't dare move and I don't know what would have become of me if Amos Cowan hadn't come along that very minute with a lantern. And there was me sitting in the middle of the bridge and that awful thing beside me.

And what do you think it was but a big umbrella with a white handle? Amos said it was his umbrella and it had blown away from him and he had to go back and get the lantern to look for it. I felt like asking him what on earth he was going about with an umbrella open when it wasn't raining. But the Cowans do such queer things. You remember the time Jerry Cowan sold us God's picture. Amos took me right home and I was thankful for I don't know what would have become of me if he hadn't come along. I couldn't sleep all night and I never want to have any more adventures like that one.

CECILY KING.

PERSONALS

Mr. Dan King felt somewhat indisposed the day after Christmas — probably as the result of too much mince pie. (DAN, INDIGNANTLY:—"I wasn't. I only et one piece!")

Mr. Peter Craig thinks he saw the Family Ghost on Christmas Eve. But the rest of us think all he saw was the white calf with the red tail. (PETER, MUTTERING SULKILY:—"It's a queer calf that would walk up on end and wring its hands.")

Miss Cecily King spent the night of Dec. 20th with Miss Kitty Marr. They talked most of the night about new knitted lace patterns and their beaus and were very sleepy in school next day. (CECILY, SHARPLY:—"We never mentioned such things!")

Patrick Grayfur, Esq., was indisposed yesterday, but seems to be enjoying his usual health to-day.

The King family expect their Aunt Eliza to visit them in January. She is really our great-aunt. We have never seen her but we are told she is very deaf and does not like children. So Aunt Janet says we must make ourselves scarece when she comes.

Miss Cecily King has undertaken to fill with names a square of the missionary quilt which the Mission Band is making. You pay five cents to

have your name embroidered in a corner, ten cents to have it in the centre, and a quarter if you want it left off altogether. (CECILY, INDIGNANTLY:—"That isn't the way at all.")

ADS.

WANTED — A remedy to make a fat boy thin. Address, "Patient Sufferer, care of Our Magazine."

(FELIX, SOURLY:—"Sara Ray never got that up. I'll bet it was Dan. He'd better stick to his own department.")

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Alexander King killed all her geese the twentieth of December. We all helped pick them. We had one Christmas Day and will have one every fortnight the rest of the winter.

The bread was sour last week because mother wouldn't take my advice. I told her it was too warm for it in the corner behind the stove.

Miss Felicity King invented a new recete for date cookies recently, which everybody said were excelent. I am not going to publish it though, because I don't want other people to find it out.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: — If you want to remove inkstains place the stain over steam and apply salt and lemon juice. If it was Dan who sent this question in I'd advise him to stop wiping his pen on his shirt sleeves and then he wouldn't have so many stains.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

F-l-x: — Yes, you should offer your arm to a lady when seeing her home, but don't keep her standing too long at the gate while you say good night.

(FELIX, ENRAGED:—"I never asked such a question.")

C-c-l-y: — No, it is not polite to use “Holy Moses” or “dodgasted” in ordinary conversation.

(Cecily had gone down cellar to replenish the apple plate, so this passed without protest.)

S-r-a: — No, it isn’t polite to cry all the time. As to whether you should ask a young man in, it all depends on whether he went home with you of his own accord or was sent by some elderly relative.

F-l-t-y: — It does not break any rule of etiquette if you keep a button off your best young man’s coat for a keepsake. But don’t take more than one or his mother might miss them.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Knitted mufflers are much more stylish than crocheted ones this winter. It is nice to have one the same colour as your cap.

Red mittens with a black diamond pattern on the back are much run after. Em Frewen’s grandma knits hers for her. She can knit the double diamond pattern and Em puts on such airs about it, but I think the single diamond is in better taste.

The new winter hats at Markdale are very pretty. It is so exciting to pick a hat. Boys can’t have that fun. Their hats are so much alike.

CECILY KING.

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

This is a true joke and really happened.

There was an old local preacher in New Brunswick one time whose name was Samuel Clask. He used to preach and pray and visit the sick just like a regular minister. One day he was visiting a neighbour who was dying and he prayed the Lord to have mercy on him because he was very poor and

had worked so hard all his life that he hadn't much time to attend to religion.

"And if you don't believe me, O Lord," Mr. Clask finished up with, "just take a look at his hands."

FELIX KING.

GENERAL INFORMATION BUREAU

DAN: — Do porpoises grow on trees or vines?

Ans. Neither. They inhabit the deep sea.

FELIX KING.

(DAN, AGGRIEVED:—"Well, I'd never heard of porpoises and it sounded like something that grew. But you needn't have gone and put it in the paper."

FELIX:—"It isn't any worse than the things you put in about me that I never asked at all."

CECILY, SOOTHINGLY:—"Oh, well, boys, it's all in fun, and I think Our Magazine is perfectly elegant."

FELICITY, FAILING TO SEE THE STORY GIRL AND BEVERLEY EXCHANGING WINKS BEHIND HER BACK:—"It certainly is, though SOME PEOPLE were so opposed to starting it.")

What harmless, happy fooling it all was! How we laughed as we read and listened and devoured apples! Blow high, blow low, no wind can ever quench the ruddy glow of that faraway winter night in our memories. And though Our Magazine never made much of a stir in the world, or was the means of hatching any genius, it continued to be capital fun for us throughout the year.

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT-AUNT ELIZA'S VISIT

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It was a diamond winter day in February — clear, cold, hard, brilliant. The sharp blue sky shone, the white fields and hills glittered, the fringe of icicles around the eaves of Uncle Alec's house sparkled. Keen was the frost and crisp the snow over our world; and we young fry of the King households were all agog to enjoy life — for was it not Saturday, and were we not left all alone to keep house?

Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia had had their last big “kill” of market poultry the day before; and early in the morning all our grownups set forth to Charlottetown, to be gone the whole day. They left us many charges as usual, some of which we remembered and some of which we forgot; but with Felicity in command none of us dared stray far out of line. The Story Girl and Peter came over, of course, and we all agreed that we would haste and get the work done in the forenoon, that we might have an afternoon of uninterrupted enjoyment. A taffy-pull after dinner and then a jolly hour of coasting on the hill field before supper were on our programme. But disappointment was our portion. We did manage to get the taffy made but before we could sample the result satisfactorily, and just as the girls were finishing with the washing of the dishes, Felicity glanced out of the window and exclaimed in tones of dismay,

“Oh, dear me, here's Great-aunt Eliza coming up the lane! Now, isn't that too mean?”

We all looked out to see a tall, gray-haired lady approaching the house, looking about her with the slightly puzzled air of a stranger. We had been expecting Great-aunt Eliza's advent for some weeks, for she was visiting relatives in Markdale. We knew she was liable to pounce down on us any time, being one of those delightful folk who like to “surprise” people, but

we had never thought of her coming that particular day. It must be confessed that we did not look forward to her visit with any pleasure. None of us had ever seen her, but we knew she was very deaf, and had very decided opinions as to the way in which children should behave.

“Whew!” whistled Dan. “We’re in for a jolly afternoon. She’s deaf as a post and we’ll have to split our throats to make her hear at all. I’ve a notion to skin out.”

“Oh, don’t talk like that, Dan,” said Cecily reproachfully. “She’s old and lonely and has had a great deal of trouble. She has buried three husbands. We must be kind to her and do the best we can to make her visit pleasant.”

“She’s coming to the back door,” said Felicity, with an agitated glance around the kitchen. “I told you, Dan, that you should have shovelled the snow away from the front door this morning. Cecily, set those pots in the pantry quick — hide those boots, Felix — shut the cupboard door, Peter — Sara, straighten up the lounge. She’s awfully particular and ma says her house is always as neat as wax.”

To do Felicity justice, while she issued orders to the rest of us, she was flying busily about herself, and it was amazing how much was accomplished in the way of putting the kitchen in perfect order during the two minutes in which Great-aunt Eliza was crossing the yard.

“Fortunately the sitting-room is tidy and there’s plenty in the pantry,” said Felicity, who could face anything undauntedly with a well-stocked larder behind her.

Further conversation was cut short by a decided rap at the door. Felicity opened it.

“Why, how do you do, Aunt Eliza?” she said loudly.

A slightly bewildered look appeared on Aunt Eliza’s face. Felicity perceived she had not spoken loudly enough.

“How do you do, Aunt Eliza,” she repeated at the top of her voice. “Come in — we are glad to see you. We’ve been looking for you for ever so long.”

“Are your father and mother at home?” asked Aunt Eliza, slowly.

“No, they went to town today. But they’ll be home this evening.”

“I’m sorry they’re away,” said Aunt Eliza, coming in, “because I can stay only a few hours.”

“Oh, that’s too bad,” shouted poor Felicity, darting an angry glance at the rest of us, as if to demand why we didn’t help her out. “Why, we’ve been thinking you’d stay a week with us anyway. You **MUST** stay over Sunday.”

“I really can’t. I have to go to Charlottetown tonight,” returned Aunt Eliza.

“Well, you’ll take off your things and stay to tea, at least,” urged Felicity, as hospitably as her strained vocal chords would admit.

“Yes, I think I’ll do that. I want to get acquainted with my — my nephews and nieces,” said Aunt Eliza, with a rather pleasant glance around our group. If I could have associated the thought of such a thing with my preconception of Great-aunt Eliza I could have sworn there was a twinkle in her eye. But of course it was impossible. “Won’t you introduce yourselves, please?”

Felicity shouted our names and Great-aunt Eliza shook hands all round. She performed the duty grimly and I concluded I must have been mistaken about the twinkle. She was certainly very tall and dignified and imposing — altogether a great-aunt to be respected.

Felicity and Cecily took her to the spare room and then left her in the sitting-room while they returned to the kitchen, to discuss the matter in family conclave.

“Well, and what do you think of dear Aunt Eliza?” asked Dan.

“S-s-s-sh,” warned Cecily, with a glance at the half-open hall door.

“Pshaw,” scoffed Dan, “she can’t hear us. There ought to be a law against anyone being as deaf as that.”

“She’s not so old-looking as I expected,” said Felix. “If her hair wasn’t so white she wouldn’t look much older than your mother.”

“You don’t have to be very old to be a great-aunt,” said Cecily. “Kitty Marr has a great-aunt who is just the same age as her mother. I expect it was burying so many husbands turned her hair white. But Aunt Eliza doesn’t look just as I expected she would either.”

“She’s dressed more stylishly than I expected,” said Felicity. “I thought she’d be real old-fashioned, but her clothes aren’t too bad at all.”

“She wouldn’t be bad-looking if ‘tweren’t for her nose,” said Peter. “It’s too long, and crooked besides.”

“You needn’t criticize our relations like that,” said Felicity tartly.

“Well, aren’t you doing it yourselves?” expostulated Peter.

“That’s different,” retorted Felicity. “Never you mind Great-aunt Eliza’s nose.”

“Well, don’t expect me to talk to her,” said Dan, “‘cause I won’t.”

“I’m going to be very polite to her,” said Felicity. “She’s rich. But how are we to entertain her, that’s the question.”

“What does the Family Guide say about entertaining your rich, deaf old aunt?” queried Dan ironically.

“The Family Guide says we should be polite to EVERYBODY,” said Cecily, with a reproachful look at Dan.

“The worst of it is,” said Felicity, looking worried, “that there isn’t a bit of old bread in the house and she can’t eat new, I’ve heard father say. It gives her indigestion. What will we do?”

“Make a pan of rusks and apologize for having no old bread,” suggested the Story Girl, probably by way of teasing Felicity. The latter, however, took it in all good faith.

“The Family Guide says we should never apologize for things we can’t help. It says it’s adding insult to injury to do it. But you run over home for a loaf of stale bread, Sara, and it’s a good idea about the rusks. I’ll make a panful.”

“Let me make them,” said the Story Girl, eagerly. “I can make real good rusks now.”

“No, it wouldn’t do to trust you,” said Felicity mercilessly. “You might make some queer mistake and Aunt Eliza would tell it all over the country. She’s a fearful old gossip. I’ll make the rusks myself. She hates cats, so we mustn’t let Paddy be seen. And she’s a Methodist, so mind nobody says anything against Methodists to her.”

“Who’s going to say anything, anyhow?” asked Peter belligerently.

“I wonder if I might ask her for her name for my quilt square?” speculated Cecily. “I believe I will. She looks so much friendlier than I expected. Of course she’ll choose the five-cent section. She’s an estimable old lady, but very economical.”

“Why don’t you say she’s so mean she’d skin a flea for its hide and tallow?” said Dan. “That’s the plain truth.”

“Well, I’m going to see about getting tea,” said Felicity, “so the rest of you will have to entertain her. You better go in and show her the photographs in the album. Dan, you do it.”

“Thank you, that’s a girl’s job,” said Dan. “I’d look nice sitting up to Aunt Eliza and yelling out that this was Uncle Jim and ‘tother Cousin Sarah’s twins, wouldn’t I? Cecily or the Story Girl can do it.”

“I don’t know all the pictures in your album,” said the Story Girl hastily.

“I s’pose I’ll have to do it, though I don’t like to,” sighed Cecily. “But we ought to go in. We’ve left her alone too long now. She’ll think we have no manners.”

Accordingly we all filed in rather reluctantly. Great-aunt Eliza was toasting her toes — clad, as we noted, in very smart and shapely shoes — at the stove and looking quite at her ease. Cecily, determined to do her duty even in the face of such fearful odds as Great-aunt Eliza’s deafness, dragged a ponderous, plush-covered album from its corner and proceeded to display and explain the family photographs. She did her brave best but she could not shout like Felicity, and half the time, as she confided to me later on, she felt that Great-aunt Eliza did not hear one word she said, because she didn’t seem to take in who the people were, though, just like all deaf folks, she wouldn’t let on. Great-aunt Eliza certainly didn’t talk much; she looked at the photographs in silence, but she smiled now and then. That smile bothered me. It was so twinkly and so very un-great-aunt-Elizaish. But I felt indignant with her. I thought she might have shown a little more appreciation of Cecily’s gallant efforts to entertain.

It was very dull for the rest of us. The Story Girl sat rather sulkily in her corner; she was angry because Felicity would not let her make the rusks, and also, perhaps, a little vexed because she could not charm Great-aunt Eliza with her golden voice and storytelling gift. Felix and I looked at each other and wished ourselves out in the hill field, careering gloriously adown its gleaming crust.

But presently a little amusement came our way. Dan, who was sitting behind Great-aunt Eliza, and consequently out of her view, began making comments on Cecily’s explanation of this one and that one among the photographs. In vain Cecily implored him to stop. It was too good fun to give up. For the next half-hour the dialogue ran after this fashion, while Peter and Felix and I, and even the Story Girl, suffered agonies trying to smother our bursts of laughter — for Great-aunt Eliza could see if she couldn’t hear:

CECILY, SHOUTING:—”That is Mr. Joseph Elliott of Markdale, a second cousin of mother’s.”

DAN:—"Don't brag of it, Sis. He's the man who was asked if somebody else said something in sincerity and old Joe said 'No, he said it in my cellar.'"

CECILY:—"This isn't anybody in our family. It's little Xavy Gautier who used to be hired with Uncle Roger."

DAN:—"Uncle Roger sent him to fix a gate one day and scolded him because he didn't do it right, and Xavy was mad as hops and said 'How you 'spect me to fix dat gate? I never learned jogerfy.'"

CECILY, WITH AN ANGUISHED GLANCE AT DAN:—"This is Great-uncle Robert King."

DAN:—"He's been married four times. Don't you think that's often enough, dear great-aunty?"

CECILY:—"(Dan!!) This is a nephew of Mr. Ambrose Marr's. He lives out west and teaches school."

DAN:—"Yes, and Uncle Roger says he doesn't know enough not to sleep in a field with the gate open."

CECILY:—"This is Miss Julia Stanley, who used to teach in Carlisle a few years ago."

DAN:—"When she resigned the trustees had a meeting to see if they'd ask her to stay and raise her supplement. Old Highland Sandy was alive then and he got up and said, 'If she for go let her for went. Perhaps she for marry.'"

CECILY, WITH THE AIR OF A MARTYR:—"This is Mr. Layton, who used to travel around selling Bibles and hymn books and Talmage's sermons."

DAN:—"He was so thin Uncle Roger used to say he always mistook him for a crack in the atmosphere. One time he stayed here all night and went to prayer meeting and Mr. Marwood asked him to lead in prayer. It had

been raining ‘most every day for three weeks, and it was just in haymaking time, and everybody thought the hay was going to be ruined, and old Layton got up and prayed that God would send gentle showers on the growing crops, and I heard Uncle Roger whisper to a fellow behind me, ‘If somebody don’t choke him off we won’t get the hay made this summer.’”

CECILY, IN EXASPERATION:—”(Dan, shame on you for telling such irreverent stories.) This is Mrs. Alexander Scott of Markdale. She has been very sick for a long time.”

DAN:—”Uncle Roger says all that keeps her alive is that she’s scared her husband will marry again.”

CECILY:—”This is old Mr. James MacPherson who used to live behind the graveyard.”

DAN:—”He’s the man who told mother once that he always made his own iodine out of strong tea and baking soda.”

CECILY:—”This is Cousin Ebenezer MacPherson on the Markdale road.”

DAN:—”Great temperance man! He never tasted rum in his life. He took the measles when he was forty-five and was crazy as a loon with them, and the doctor ordered them to give him a dose of brandy. When he swallowed it he looked up and says, solemn as an owl, ‘Give it to me oftener and more at a time.’”

CECILY, IMPLORINGLY:—”(Dan, do stop. You make me so nervous I don’t know what I’m doing.) This is Mr. Lemuel Goodridge. He is a minister.”

DAN:—”You ought to see his mouth. Uncle Roger says the drawing string has fell out of it. It just hangs loose — so fashion.”

Dan, whose own mouth was far from being beautiful, here gave an imitation of the Rev. Lemuel’s, to the utter undoing of Peter, Felix, and myself. Our wild guffaws of laughter penetrated even Great-aunt Eliza’s deafness, and she glanced up with a startled face. What we would have

done I do not know had not Felicity at that moment appeared in the doorway with panic-stricken eyes and exclaimed,

“Cecily, come here for a moment.”

Cecily, glad of even a temporary respite, fled to the kitchen and we heard her demanding what was the matter.

“Matter!” exclaimed Felicity, tragically. “Matter enough! Some of you left a soup plate with molasses in it on the pantry table and Pat got into it and what do you think? He went into the spare room and walked all over Aunt Eliza’s things on the bed. You can see his tracks plain as plain. What in the world can we do? She’ll be simply furious.”

I looked apprehensively at Great-aunt Eliza; but she was gazing intently at a picture of Aunt Janet’s sister’s twins, a most stolid, uninteresting pair; but evidently Great-aunt Eliza found them amusing for she was smiling widely over them.

“Let us take a little clean water and a soft bit of cotton,” came Cecily’s clear voice from the kitchen, “and see if we can’t clean the molasses off. The coat and hat are both cloth, and molasses isn’t like grease.”

“Well, we can try, but I wish the Story Girl would keep her cat home,” grumbled Felicity.

The Story Girl here flew out to defend her pet, and we four boys sat on, miserably conscious of Great-aunt Eliza, who never said a word to us, despite her previously expressed desire to become acquainted with us. She kept on looking at the photographs and seemed quite oblivious of our presence.

Presently the girls returned, having, as transpired later, been so successful in removing the traces of Paddy’s mischief that it was not deemed necessary to worry Great-aunt Eliza with any account of it. Felicity announced tea and, while Cecily conveyed Great-aunt Eliza out to the dining-room, lingered behind to consult with us for a moment.

“Ought we to ask her to say grace?” she wanted to know.

“I know a story,” said the Story Girl, “about Uncle Roger when he was just a young man. He went to the house of a very deaf old lady and when they sat down to the table she asked him to say grace. Uncle Roger had never done such a thing in his life and he turned as red as a beet and looked down and muttered, ‘E-r-r, please excuse me — I — I’m not accustomed to doing that.’ Then he looked up and the old lady said ‘Amen,’ loudly and cheerfully. She thought Uncle Roger was saying grace all the time.”

“I don’t think it’s right to tell funny stories about such things,” said Felicity coldly. “And I asked for your opinion, not for a story.”

“If we don’t ask her, Felix must say it, for he’s the only one who can, and we must have it, or she’d be shocked.”

“Oh, ask her — ask her,” advised Felix hastily.

She was asked accordingly and said grace without any hesitation, after which she proceeded to eat heartily of the excellent supper Felicity had provided. The rusks were especially good and Great-aunt Eliza ate three of them and praised them. Apart from that she said little and during the first part of the meal we sat in embarrassed silence. Towards the last, however, our tongues were loosened, and the Story Girl told us a tragic tale of old Charlottetown and a governor’s wife who had died of a broken heart in the early days of the colony.

“They say that story isn’t true,” said Felicity. “They say what she really died of was indigestion. The Governor’s wife who lives there now is a relation of our own. She is a second cousin of father’s but we’ve never seen her. Her name was Agnes Clark. And mind you, when father was a young man he was dead in love with her and so was she with him.”

“Who ever told you that?” exclaimed Dan.

“Aunt Olivia. And I’ve heard ma teasing father about it, too. Of course, it was before father got acquainted with mother.”

“Why didn’t your father marry her?” I asked.

“Well, she just simply wouldn’t marry him in the end. She got over being in love with him. I guess she was pretty fickle. Aunt Olivia said father felt awful about it for awhile, but he got over it when he met ma. Ma was twice as goodlooking as Agnes Clark. Agnes was a sight for freckles, so Aunt Olivia says. But she and father remained real good friends. Just think, if she had married him we would have been the children of the Governor’s wife.”

“But she wouldn’t have been the Governor’s wife then,” said Dan.

“I guess it’s just as good being father’s wife,” declared Cecily loyally.

“You might think so if you saw the Governor,” chuckled Dan. “Uncle Roger says it would be no harm to worship him because he doesn’t look like anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or the waters under the earth.”

“Oh, Uncle Roger just says that because he’s on the opposite side of politics,” said Cecily. “The Governor isn’t really so very ugly. I saw him at the Markdale picnic two years ago. He’s very fat and bald and red-faced, but I’ve seen far worse looking men.”

“I’m afraid your seat is too near the stove, Aunt Eliza,” shouted Felicity.

Our guest, whose face was certainly very much flushed, shook her head.

“Oh, no, I’m very comfortable,” she said. But her voice had the effect of making us uncomfortable. There was a queer, uncertain little sound in it. Was Great-aunt Eliza laughing at us? We looked at her sharply but her face was very solemn. Only her eyes had a suspicious appearance. Somehow, we did not talk much more the rest of the meal.

When it was over Great-aunt Eliza said she was very sorry but she must really go. Felicity politely urged her to stay, but was much relieved when Great-aunt Eliza adhered to her intention of going. When Felicity took her to the spare room Cecily slipped upstairs and presently came back with a little parcel in her hand.

“What have you got there?” demanded Felicity suspiciously.

“A — a little bag of roseleaves,” faltered Cecily. “I thought I’d give them to Aunt Eliza.”

“The idea! Don’t you do such a thing,” said Felicity contemptuously. “She’d think you were crazy.”

“She was awfully nice when I asked her for her name for the quilt,” protested Cecily, “and she took a tencent section after all. So I’d like to give her the roseleaves — and I’m going to, too, Miss Felicity.”

Great-aunt Eliza accepted the little gift quite graciously, bade us all goodbye, said she had enjoyed herself very much, left messages for father and mother, and finally betook herself away. We watched her cross the yard, tall, stately, erect, and disappear down the lane. Then, as often aforetime, we gathered together in the cheer of the red hearth-flame, while outside the wind of a winter twilight sang through fair white valleys brimmed with a reddening sunset, and a faint, serene, silver-cold star glimmered over the willow at the gate.

“Well,” said Felicity, drawing a relieved breath, “I’m glad she’s gone. She certainly is queer, just as mother said.”

“It’s a different kind of queerness from what I expected, though,” said the Story Girl meditatively. “There’s something I can’t quite make out about Aunt Eliza. I don’t think I altogether like her.”

“I’m precious sure I don’t,” said Dan.

“Oh, well, never mind. She’s gone now and that’s the last of it,” said Cecily comfortingly.

But it wasn't the last of it — not by any manner of means was it! When our grownups returned almost the first words Aunt Janet said were,

“And so you had the Governor's wife to tea?”

We all stared at her.

“I don't know what you mean,” said Felicity. “We had nobody to tea except Great-aunt Eliza. She came this afternoon and—”

“Great-aunt Eliza? Nonsense,” said Aunt Janet. “Aunt Eliza was in town today. She had tea with us at Aunt Louisa's. But wasn't Mrs. Governor Lesley here? We met her on her way back to Charlottetown and she told us she was. She said she was visiting a friend in Carlisle and thought she'd call to see father for old acquaintance sake. What in the world are all you children staring like that for? Your eyes are like saucers.”

“There was a lady here to tea,” said Felicity miserably, “but we thought it was Great-aunt Eliza — she never SAID she wasn't — I thought she acted queer — and we all yelled at her as if she was deaf — and said things to each other about her nose — and Pat running over her clothes—”

“She must have heard all you said while I was showing her the photographs, Dan,” cried Cecily.

“And about the Governor at tea time,” chuckled unrepentant Dan.

“I want to know what all this means,” said Aunt Janet sternly.

She knew in due time, after she had pieced the story together from our disjointed accounts. She was horrified, and Uncle Alec was mildly disturbed, but Uncle Roger roared with laughter and Aunt Olivia echoed it.

“To think you should have so little sense!” said Aunt Janet in a disgusted tone.

“I think it was real mean of her to pretend she was deaf,” said Felicity, almost on the verge of tears.

“That was Agnes Clark all over,” chuckled Uncle Roger. “How she must have enjoyed this afternoon!”

She had enjoyed it, as we learned the next day, when a letter came from her.

“Dear Cecily and all the rest of you,” wrote the Governor’s wife, “I want to ask you to forgive me for pretending to be Aunt Eliza. I suspect it was a little horrid of me, but really I couldn’t resist the temptation, and if you will forgive me for it I will forgive you for the things you said about the Governor, and we will all be good friends. You know the Governor is a very nice man, though he has the misfortune not to be handsome.

“I had just a splendid time at your place, and I envy your Aunt Eliza her nephews and nieces. You were all so nice to me, and I didn’t dare to be a bit nice to you lest I should give myself away. But I’ll make up for that when you come to see me at Government House, as you all must the very next time you come to town. I’m so sorry I didn’t see Paddy, for I love pussy cats, even if they do track molasses over my clothes. And, Cecily, thank you ever so much for that little bag of potpourri. It smells like a hundred rose gardens, and I have put it between the sheets for my very sparest room bed, where you shall sleep when you come to see me, you dear thing. And the Governor wants you to put his name on the quilt square, too, in the tencent section.

“Tell Dan I enjoyed his comments on the photographs very much. They were quite a refreshing contrast to the usual explanations of ‘who’s who.’ And Felicity, your rusks were perfection. Do send me your recipe for them, there’s a darling.

“Yours most cordially,

AGNES CLARK LESLEY.

“Well, it was decent of her to apologize, anyhow,” commented Dan.

“If we only hadn’t said that about the Governor,” moaned Felicity.

“How did you make your rusks?” asked Aunt Janet. “There was no baking-powder in the house, and I never could get them right with soda and cream of tartar.”

“There was plenty of baking-powder in the pantry,” said Felicity.

“No, there wasn’t a particle. I used the last making those cookies Thursday morning.”

“But I found another can nearly full, away back on the top shelf, ma, — the one with the yellow label. I guess you forgot it was there.”

Aunt Janet stared at her pretty daughter blankly. Then amazement gave place to horror.

“Felicity King!” she exclaimed. “You don’t mean to tell me that you raised those rusks with the stuff that was in that old yellow can?”

“Yes, I did,” faltered Felicity, beginning to look scared. “Why, ma, what was the matter with it?”

“Matter! That stuff was TOOTH-POWDER, that’s what it was. Your Cousin Myra broke the bottle her tooth-powder was in when she was here last winter and I gave her that old can to keep it in. She forgot to take it when she went away and I put it on that top shelf. I declare you must all have been bewitched yesterday.”

Poor, poor Felicity! If she had not always been so horribly vain over her cooking and so scornfully contemptuous of other people’s aspirations and mistakes along that line, I could have found it in my heart to pity her.

The Story Girl would have been more than human if she had not betrayed a little triumphant amusement, but Peter stood up for his lady manfully.

“The rusks were splendid, anyhow, so what difference does it make what they were raised with?”

Dan, however, began to taunt Felicity with her tooth-powder rusks, and kept it up for the rest of his natural life.

“Don’t forget to send the Governor’s wife the recipe for them,” he said.

Felicity, with eyes tearful and cheeks crimson from mortification, rushed from the room, but never, never did the Governor’s wife get the recipe for those rusks.

CHAPTER VII.

WE VISIT COUSIN MATTIE'S

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One Saturday in March we walked over to Baywater, for a long-talked-of visit to Cousin Mattie Dilke. By the road, Baywater was six miles away, but there was a short cut across hills and fields and woods which was scanty three. We did not look forward to our visit with any particular delight, for there was nobody at Cousin Mattie's except grownups who had been grown up so long that it was rather hard for them to remember they had ever been children. But, as Felicity told us, it was necessary to visit Cousin Mattie at least once a year, or else she would be "huffed," so we concluded we might as well go and have it over.

"Anyhow, we'll get a splendiferous dinner," said Dan. "Cousin Mattie's a great cook and there's nothing stingy about her."

"You are always thinking of your stomach," said Felicity pleasantly.

"Well, you know I couldn't get along very well without it, darling," responded Dan who, since New Year's, had adopted a new method of dealing with Felicity — whether by way of keeping his resolution or because he had discovered that it annoyed Felicity far more than angry retorts, deponent sayeth not. He invariably met her criticisms with a goodnatured grin and a flippant remark with some tender epithet tagged on to it. Poor Felicity used to get hopelessly furious over it.

Uncle Alec was dubious about our going that day. He looked abroad on the general dourness of gray earth and gray air and gray sky, and said a storm was brewing. But Cousin Mattie had been sent word that we were coming, and she did not like to be disappointed, so he let us go, warning us to stay with Cousin Mattie all night if the storm came on while we were there.

We enjoyed our walk — even Felix enjoyed it, although he had been appointed to write up the visit for Our Magazine and was rather weighed down by the responsibility of it. What mattered it though the world were gray and wintry? We walked the golden road and carried spring time in our hearts, and we beguiled our way with laughter and jest, and the tales the Story Girl told us — myths and legends of elder time.

The walking was good, for there had lately been a thaw and everything was frozen. We went over fields, crossed by spidery trails of gray fences, where the withered grasses stuck forlornly up through the snow; we lingered for a time in a group of hill pines, great, majestic tree-creatures, friends of evening stars; and finally struck into the belt of fir and maple which intervened between Carlisle and Baywater. It was in this locality that Peg Bowen lived, and our way lay near her house though not directly in sight of it. We hoped we would not meet her, for since the affair of the bewitchment of Paddy we did not know quite what to think of Peg; the boldest of us held his breath as we passed her haunts, and drew it again with a sigh of relief when they were safely left behind.

The woods were full of the brooding stillness that often precedes a storm, and the wind crept along their white, cone-sprinkled floors with a low, wailing cry. Around us were solitudes of snow, arcades picked out in pearl and silver, long avenues of untrodden marble whence sprang the cathedral columns of the firs. We were all sorry when we were through the woods and found ourselves looking down into the snug, commonplace, farmstead-dotted settlement of Baywater.

“There’s Cousin Mattie’s house — that big white one at the turn of the road,” said the Story Girl. “I hope she has that dinner ready, Dan. I’m hungry as a wolf after our walk.”

“I wish Cousin Mattie’s husband was still alive,” said Dan. “He was an awful nice old man. He always had his pockets full of nuts and apples. I used to like going there better when he was alive. Too many old women don’t suit me.”

“Oh, Dan, Cousin Mattie and her sisters-in-law are just as nice and kind as they can be,” reproached Cecily.

“Oh, they’re kind enough, but they never seem to see that a fellow gets over being five years old if he only lives long enough,” retorted Dan.

“I know a story about Cousin Mattie’s husband,” said the Story Girl. “His name was Ebenezer, you know—”

“Is it any wonder he was thin and stunted looking?” said Dan.

“Ebenezer is just as nice a name as Daniel,” said Felicity.

“Do you REALLY think so, my angel?” inquired Dan, in honey-sweet tones.

“Go on. Remember your second resolution,” I whispered to the Story Girl, who was stalking along with an outraged expression.

The Story Girl swallowed something and went on.

“Cousin Ebenezer had a horror of borrowing. He thought it was simply a dreadful disgrace to borrow ANYTHING. Well, you know he and Cousin Mattie used to live in Carlisle, where the Rays now live. This was when Grandfather King was alive. One day Cousin Ebenezer came up the hill and into the kitchen where all the family were. Uncle Roger said he looked as if he had been stealing sheep. He sat for a whole hour in the kitchen and hardly spoke a word, but just looked miserable. At last he got up and said in a desperate sort of way, ‘Uncle Abraham, can I speak with you in private for a minute?’ ‘Oh, certainly,’ said grandfather, and took him into the parlour. Cousin Ebenezer shut the door, looked all around him and then said imploringly, ‘MORE PRIVATE STILL.’ So grandfather took him into the spare room and shut that door. He was getting frightened. He thought something terrible must have happened Cousin Ebenezer. Cousin Ebenezer came right up to grandfather, took hold of the lapel of his coat, and said in a whisper, ‘Uncle Abraham, CAN — YOU — LEND — ME — AN — AXE?’”

“He needn’t have made such a mystery about it,” said Cecily, who had missed the point entirely, and couldn’t see why the rest of us were

laughing. But Cecily was such a darling that we did not mind her lack of a sense of humour.

“It’s kind of mean to tell stories like that about people who are dead,” said Felicity.

“Sometimes it’s safer than when they’re alive though, sweetheart,” commented Dan.

We had our expected good dinner at Cousin Mattie’s — may it be counted unto her for righteousness. She and her sisters-in-law, Miss Louisa Jane and Miss Caroline, were very kind to us. We had quite a nice time, although I understood why Dan objected to them when they patted us all on the head and told us whom we resembled and gave us peppermint lozenges.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE VISIT PEG BOWEN

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We left Cousin Mattie's early, for it still looked like a storm, though no more so than it had in the morning. We intended to go home by a different path — one leading through cleared land overgrown with scrub maple, which had the advantage of being farther away from Peg Bowen's house. We hoped to be home before it began to storm, but we had hardly reached the hill above the village when a fine, driving snow began to fall. It would have been wiser to have turned back even then; but we had already come a mile and we thought we would have ample time to reach home before it became really bad. We were sadly mistaken; by the time we had gone another half-mile we were in the thick of a bewildering, blinding snowstorm. But it was by now just as far back to Cousin Mattie's as it was to Uncle Alec's, so we struggled on, growing more frightened at every step. We could hardly face the stinging snow, and we could not see ten feet ahead of us. It had turned bitterly cold and the tempest howled all around us in white desolation under the fast-darkening night. The narrow path we were trying to follow soon became entirely obliterated and we stumbled blindly on, holding to each other, and trying to peer through the furious whirl that filled the air. Our plight had come upon us so suddenly that we could not realize it. Presently Peter, who was leading the van because he was supposed to know the path best, stopped.

"I can't see the road any longer," he shouted. "I don't know where we are."

We all stopped and huddled together in a miserable group. Fear filled our hearts. It seemed ages ago that we had been snug and safe and warm at Cousin Mattie's. Cecily began to cry with cold. Dan, in spite of her protests, dragged off his overcoat and made her put it on.

“We can’t stay here,” he said. “We’ll all freeze to death if we do. Come on — we’ve got to keep moving. The snow ain’t so deep yet. Take hold of my hand, Cecily. We must all hold together. Come, now.”

“It won’t be nice to be frozen to death, but if we get through alive think what a story we’ll have to tell,” said the Story Girl between her chattering teeth.

In my heart I did not believe we would ever get through alive. It was almost pitch dark now, and the snow grew deeper every moment. We were chilled to the heart. I thought how nice it would be to lie down and rest; but I remembered hearing that that was fatal, and I endeavoured to stumble on with the others. It was wonderful how the girls kept up, even Cecily. It occurred to me to be thankful that Sara Ray was not with us.

But we were wholly lost now. All around us was a horror of great darkness. Suddenly Felicity fell. We dragged her up, but she declared she could not go on — she was done out.

“Have you any idea where we are?” shouted Dan to Peter.

“No,” Peter shouted back, “the wind is blowing every which way. I haven’t any idea where home is.”

Home! Would we ever see it again? We tried to urge Felicity on, but she only repeated drowsily that she must lie down and rest. Cecily, too, was reeling against me. The Story Girl still stood up staunchly and counselled struggling on, but she was numb with cold and her words were hardly distinguishable. Some wild idea was in my mind that we must dig a hole in the snow and all creep into it. I had read somewhere that people had thus saved their lives in snowstorms. Suddenly Felix gave a shout.

“I see a light,” he cried.

“Where? Where?” We all looked but could see nothing.

“I don’t see it now but I saw it a moment ago,” shouted Felix. “I’m sure I did. Come on — over in this direction.”

Inspired with fresh hope we hurried after him. Soon we all saw the light — and never shone a fairer beacon. A few more steps and, coming into the shelter of the woodland on the further side, we realized where we were.

“That’s Peg Bowen’s house,” exclaimed Peter, stopping short in dismay.

“I don’t care whose house it is,” declared Dan. “We’ve got to go to it.”

“I s’pose so,” acquiesced Peter ruefully. “We can’t freeze to death even if she is a witch.”

“For goodness’ sake don’t say anything about witches so close to her house,” gasped Felicity. “I’ll be thankful to get in anywhere.”

We reached the house, climbed the flight of steps that led to that mysterious second story door, and Dan rapped. The door opened promptly and Peg Bowen stood before us, in what seemed exactly the same costume she had worn on the memorable day when we had come, bearing gifts, to propitiate her in the matter of Paddy.

“Behind her was a dim room scantily illumined by the one small candle that had guided us through the storm; but the old Waterloo stove was colouring the gloom with tremulous, rose-red whorls of light, and warm and cosy indeed seemed Peg’s retreat to us snow-covered, frost-chilled, benighted wanderers.

“Gracious goodness, where did yez all come from?” exclaimed Peg. “Did they turn yez out?”

“We’ve been over to Baywater, and we got lost in the storm coming back,” explained Dan. “We didn’t know where we were till we saw your light. I guess we’ll have to stay here till the storm is over — if you don’t mind.”

“And if it won’t inconvenience you,” said Cecily timidly.

“Oh, it’s no inconvenience to speak of. Come in. Well, yez HAVE got some snow on yez. Let me get a broom. You boys stomp your feet well and

shake your coats. You girls give me your things and I'll hang them up. Guess yez are most froze. Well, sit up to the stove and git het up."

Peg bustled away to gather up a dubious assortment of chairs, with backs and rungs missing, and in a few minutes we were in a circle around her roaring stove, getting dried and thawed out. In our wildest flights of fancy we had never pictured ourselves as guests at the witch's hearthstone. Yet here we were; and the witch herself was actually brewing a jorum of ginger tea for Cecily, who continued to shiver long after the rest of us were roasted to the marrow. Poor Sis drank that scalding draught, being in too great awe of Peg to do aught else.

"That'll soon fix your shivers," said our hostess kindly. "And now I'll get yez all some tea."

"Oh, please don't trouble," said the Story Girl hastily.

"'Tain't any trouble," said Peg briskly; then, with one of the sudden changes to fierceness which made her such a terrifying personage, "Do yez think my vittels ain't clean?"

"Oh, no, no," cried Felicity quickly, before the Story Girl could speak, "none of us would ever think THAT. Sara only meant she didn't want you to go to any bother on our account."

"It ain't any bother," said Peg, mollified. "I'm spry as a cricket this winter, though I have the realagy sometimes. Many a good bite I've had in your ma's kitchen. I owe yez a meal."

No more protests were made. We sat in awed silence, gazing with timid curiosity about the room, the stained, plastered walls of which were well-nigh covered with a motley assortment of pictures, chromos, and advertisements, pasted on without much regard for order or character.

We had heard much of Peg's pets and now we saw them. Six cats occupied various cosy corners; one of them, the black goblin which had so terrified us in the summer, blinked satirically at us from the centre of Peg's bed. Another, a dilapidated, striped beastie, with both ears and one eye gone,

glared at us from the sofa in the corner. A dog, with only three legs, lay behind the stove; a crow sat on a roost above our heads, in company with a matronly old hen; and on the clock shelf were a stuffed monkey and a grinning skull. We had heard that a sailor had given Peg the monkey. But where had she got the skull? And whose was it? I could not help puzzling over these gruesome questions.

Presently tea was ready and we gathered around the festal board — a board literally as well as figuratively, for Peg's table was the work of her own unskilled hands. The less said about the viands of that meal, and the dishes they were served in, the better. But we ate them — bless you, yes! — as we would have eaten any witch's banquet set before us. Peg might or might not be a witch — common sense said not; but we knew she was quite capable of turning every one of us out of doors in one of her sudden fierce fits if we offended her; and we had no mind to trust ourselves again to that wild forest where we had fought a losing fight with the demon forces of night and storm.

But it was not an agreeable meal in more ways than one. Peg was not at all careful of anybody's feelings. She hurt Felix's cruelly as she passed him his cup of tea.

“You've gone too much to flesh, boy. So the magic seed didn't work, hey?”

How in the world had Peg found out about that magic seed? Felix looked uncommonly foolish.

“If you'd come to me in the first place I'd soon have told you how to get thin,” said Peg, nodding wisely.

“Won't you tell me now?” asked Felix eagerly, his desire to melt his too solid flesh overcoming his dread and shame.

“No, I don't like being second fiddle,” answered Peg with a crafty smile. “Sara, you're too scrawny and pale — not much like your ma. I knew her well. She was counted a beauty, but she made no great things of a match. Your father had some money but he was a tramp like meself. Where is he now?”

“In Rome,” said the Story Girl rather shortly.

“People thought your ma was crazy when she took him. But she’d a right to please herself. Folks is too ready to call other folks crazy. There’s people who say I’M not in my right mind. Did yez ever” — Peg fixed Felicity with a piercing glance—”hear anything so ridiculous?”

“Never,” said Felicity, white to the lips.

“I wish everybody was as sane as I am,” said Peg scornfully. Then she looked poor Felicity over critically. “You’re goodlooking but proud. And your complexion won’t wear. It’ll be like your ma’s yet — too much red in it.”

“Well, that’s better than being the colour of mud,” muttered Peter, who wasn’t going to hear his lady traduced, even by a witch. All the thanks he got was a furious look from Felicity, but Peg had not heard him and now she turned her attention to Cecily.

“You look delicate. I daresay you’ll never live to grow up.”

Cecily’s lip trembled and Dan’s face turned crimson.

“Shut up,” he said to Peg. “You’ve no business to say such things to people.”

I think my jaw dropped. I know Peter’s and Felix’s did. Felicity broke in wildly.

“Oh, don’t mind him, Miss Bowen. He’s got SUCH a temper — that’s just the way he talks to us all at home. PLEASE excuse him.”

“Bless you, I don’t mind him,” said Peg, from whom the unexpected seemed to be the thing to expect. “I like a lad of spurrit. And so your father run away, did he, Peter? He used to be a beau of mine — he seen me home three times from singing school when we was young. Some folks said he did it for a dare. There’s such a lot of jealousy in the world, ain’t there? Do you know where he is now?”

“No,” said Peter.

“Well, he’s coming home before long,” said Peg mysteriously.

“Who told you that?” cried Peter in amazement.

“Better not ask,” responded Peg, looking up at the skull.

If she meant to make the flesh creep on our bones she succeeded. But now, much to our relief, the meal was over and Peg invited us to draw our chairs up to the stove again.

“Make yourselves at home,” she said, producing her pipe from her pocket. “I ain’t one of the kind who thinks their houses too good to live in. Guess I won’t bother washing the dishes. They’ll do yez for breakfast if yez don’t forget your places. I s’pose none of yez smokes.”

“No,” said Felicity, rather primly.

“Then yez don’t know what’s good for yez,” retorted Peg, rather grumpily. But a few whiffs of her pipe placated her and, observing Cecily sigh, she asked her kindly what was the matter.

“I’m thinking how worried they’ll be at home about us,” explained Cecily.

“Bless you, dearie, don’t be worrying over that. I’ll send them word that yez are all snug and safe here.”

“But how can you?” cried amazed Cecily.

“Better not ask,” said Peg again, with another glance at the skull.

An uncomfortable silence followed, finally broken by Peg, who introduced her pets to us and told how she had come by them. The black cat was her favourite.

“That cat knows more than I do, if yez’ll believe it,” she said proudly. “I’ve got a rat too, but he’s a bit shy when strangers is round. Your cat got all right again that time, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” said the Story Girl.

“Thought he would,” said Peg, nodding sagely. “I seen to that. Now, don’t yez all be staring at the hole in my dress.”

“We weren’t,” was our chorus of protest.

“Looked as if yez were. I tore that yesterday but I didn’t mend it. I was brought up to believe that a hole was an accident but a patch was a disgrace. And so your Aunt Olivia is going to be married after all?”

This was news to us. We felt and looked dazed.

“I never heard anything of it,” said the Story Girl.

“Oh, it’s true enough. She’s a great fool. I’ve no faith in husbands. But one good thing is she ain’t going to marry that Henry Jacobs of Markdale. He wants her bad enough. Just like his presumption, — thinking himself good enough for a King. His father is the worst man alive. He chased me off his place with his dog once. But I’ll get even with him yet.”

Peg looked very savage, and visions of burned barns floated through our minds.

“He’ll be punished in hell, you know,” said Peter timidly.

“But I won’t be there to see that,” rejoined Peg. “Some folks say I’ll go there because I don’t go to church oftener. But I don’t believe it.”

“Why don’t you go?” asked Peter, with a temerity that bordered on rashness.

“Well, I’ve got so sunburned I’m afraid folks might take me for an Injun,” explained Peg, quite seriously. “Besides, your minister makes such awful long prayers. Why does he do it?”

“I suppose he finds it easier to talk to God than to people,” suggested Peter reflectively.

“Well, anyway, I belong to the round church,” said Peg comfortably, “and so the devil can’t catch ME at the corners. I haven’t been to Carlisle church for over three years. I thought I’d a-died laughing the last time I was there. Old Elder Marr took up the collection that day. He’d on a pair of new boots and they squeaked all the way up and down the aisles. And every time the boots squeaked the elder made a face, like he had toothache. It was awful funny. How’s your missionary quilt coming on, Cecily?”

Was there anything Peg didn’t know?

“Very well,” said Cecily.

“You can put my name on it, if you want to.”

“Oh, thank you. Which section — the five-cent one or the tencent one?” asked Cecily timidly.

“The tencent one, of course. The best is none too good for me. I’ll give you the ten cents another time. I’m short of change just now — not being as rich as Queen Victory. There’s her picture up there — the one with the blue sash and diamint crown and the lace curting on her head. Can any of yez tell me this — is Queen Victory a married woman?”

“Oh, yes, but her husband is dead,” answered the Story Girl.

“Well, I s’pose they couldn’t have called her an old maid, seeing she was a queen, even if she’d never got married. Sometimes I sez to myself, ‘Peg, would you like to be Queen Victory?’ But I never know what to answer. In summer, when I can roam anywhere in the woods and the sunshine — I wouldn’t be Queen Victory for anything. But when it’s winter and cold and I can’t git nowheres — I feel as if I wouldn’t mind changing places with her.”

Peg put her pipe back in her mouth and began to smoke fiercely. The candle wick burned long, and was topped by a little cap of fiery red that seemed to wink at us like an impish gnome. The most grotesque shadow of Peg flickered over the wall behind her. The one-eyed cat remitted his grim

watch and went to sleep. Outside the wind screamed like a ravening beast at the window. Suddenly Peg removed her pipe from her mouth, bent forward, gripped my wrist with her sinewy fingers until I almost cried out with pain, and gazed straight into my face. I felt horribly frightened of her. She seemed an entirely different creature. A wild light was in her eyes, a furtive, animal-like expression was on her face. When she spoke it was in a different voice and in different language.

“Do you hear the wind?” she asked in a thrilling whisper. “What IS the wind? What IS the wind?”

“I — I — don’t know,” I stammered.

“No more do I,” said Peg, “and nobody knows. Nobody knows what the wind is. I wish I could find out. I mightn’t be so afraid of the wind if I knew what it was. I am afraid of it. When the blasts come like that I want to crouch down and hide me. But I can tell you one thing about the wind — it’s the only free thing in the world — THE — ONLY — FREE — THING. Everything else is subject to some law, but the wind is FREE. It bloweth where it listeth and no man can tame it. It’s free — that’s why I love it, though I’m afraid of it. It’s a grand thing to be free — free free — free!”

Peg’s voice rose almost to a shriek. We were dreadfully frightened, for we knew there were times when she was quite crazy and we feared one of her “spells” was coming on her. But with a swift movement she turned the man’s coat she wore up over her shoulders and head like a hood, completely hiding her face. Then she crouched forward, elbows on knees, and relapsed into silence. None of us dared speak or move. We sat thus for half an hour. Then Peg jumped up and said briskly in her usual tone,

“Well, I guess yez are all sleepy and ready for bed. You girls can sleep in my bed over there, and I’ll take the sofy. Yez can put the cat off if yez like, though he won’t hurt yez. You boys can go downstairs. There’s a big pile of straw there that’ll do yez for a bed, if yez put your coats on. I’ll light yez down, but I ain’t going to leave yez a light for fear yez’d set fire to the place.”

Saying goodnight to the girls, who looked as if they thought their last hour was come, we went to the lower room. It was quite empty, save for a pile of fire wood and another of clean straw. Casting a stealthy glance around, ere Peg withdrew the light, I was relieved to see that there were no skulls in sight. We four boys snuggled down in the straw. We did not expect to sleep, but we were very tired and before we knew it our eyes were shut, to open no more till morning. The poor girls were not so fortunate. They always averred they never closed an eye. Four things prevented them from sleeping. In the first place Peg snored loudly; in the second place the fitful gleams of firelight kept flickering over the skull for half the night and making gruesome effects on it; in the third place Peg's pillows and bedclothes smelled rankly of tobacco smoke; and in the fourth place they were afraid the rat Peg had spoken of might come out to make their acquaintance. Indeed, they were sure they heard him skirmishing about several times.

When we wakened in the morning the storm was over and a young morning was looking through rosy eyelids across a white world. The little clearing around Peg's cabin was heaped with dazzling drifts, and we boys fell to and shovelled out a road to her well. She gave us breakfast — stiff oatmeal porridge without milk, and a boiled egg apiece. Cecily could NOT eat her porridge; she declared she had such a bad cold that she had no appetite; a cold she certainly had; the rest of us choked our messes down and after we had done so Peg asked us if we had noticed a soapy taste.

“The soap fell into the porridge while I was making it,” she said. “But,” — smacking her lips, — “I’m going to make yez an Irish stew for dinner. It’ll be fine.”

An Irish stew concocted by Peg! No wonder Dan said hastily,

“You are very kind but we’ll have to go right home.”

“Yez can’t walk,” said Peg.

“Oh, yes, we can. The drifts are so hard they’ll carry, and the snow will be pretty well blown off the middle of the fields. It’s only three-quarters of a mile. We boys will go home and get a pung and come back for you girls.”

But the girls wouldn't listen to this. They must go with us, even Cecily.

"Seems to me yez weren't in such a hurry to leave last night," observed Peg sarcastically.

"Oh, it's only because they'll be so anxious about us at home, and it's Sunday and we don't want to miss Sunday School," explained Felicity.

"Well, I hope your Sunday School will do yez good," said Peg, rather grumpily. But she relented again at the last and gave Cecily a wishbone.

"Whatever you wish on that will come true," she said. "But you only have the one wish, so don't waste it."

"We're so much obliged to you for all your trouble," said the Story Girl politely.

"Never mind the trouble. The expense is the thing," retorted Peg grimly.

"Oh!" Felicity hesitated. "If you would let us pay you — give you something—"

"No, thank yez," responded Peg loftily. "There is people who take money for their hospitality, I've heerd, but I'm thankful to say I don't associate with that class. Yez are welcome to all yez have had here, if yez ARE in a big hurry to get away."

She shut the door behind us with something of a slam, and her black cat followed us so far, with stealthy, furtive footsteps, that we were frightened of it. Eventually it turned back; then, and not till then, did we feel free to discuss our adventure.

"Well, I'm thankful we're out of THAT," said Felicity, drawing a long breath. "Hasn't it just been an awful experience?"

"We might all have been found frozen stark and stiff this morning," remarked the Story Girl with apparent relish.

"I tell you, it was a lucky thing we got to Peg Bowen's," said Dan.

“Miss Marwood says there is no such thing as luck,” protested Cecily. “We ought to say it was Providence instead.”

“Well, Peg and Providence don’t seem to go together very well, somehow,” retorted Dan. “If Peg is a witch it must be the Other One she’s in co. with.”

“Dan, it’s getting to be simply scandalous the way you talk,” said Felicity. “I just wish ma could hear you.”

“Is soap in porridge any worse than tooth-powder in rusks, lovely creature?” asked Dan.

“Dan, Dan,” admonished Cecily, between her coughs, “remember it’s Sunday.”

“It seems hard to remember that,” said Peter. “It doesn’t seem a mite like Sunday and it seems awful long since yesterday.”

“Cecily, you’ve got a dreadful cold,” said the Story Girl anxiously.

“In spite of Peg’s ginger tea,” added Felix.

“Oh, that ginger tea was AWFUL,” exclaimed poor Cecily. “I thought I’d never get it down — it was so hot with ginger — and there was so much of it! But I was so frightened of offending Peg I’d have tried to drink it all if there had been a bucketful. Oh, yes, it’s very easy for you all to laugh! You didn’t have to drink it.”

“We had to eat two meals, though,” said Felicity with a shiver. “And I don’t know when those dishes of hers were washed. I just shut my eyes and took gulps.”

“Did you notice the soapy taste in the porridge?” asked the Story Girl.

“Oh, there were so many queer tastes about it I didn’t notice one more than another,” answered Felicity wearily.

“What bothers me,” remarked Peter absently, “is that skull. Do you suppose Peg really finds things out by it?”

“Nonsense! How could she?” scoffed Felix, bold as a lion in daylight.

“She didn’t SAY she did, you know,” I said cautiously.

“Well, we’ll know in time if the things she said were going to happen do,” mused Peter.

“Do you suppose your father is really coming home?” queried Felicity.

“I hope not,” answered Peter decidedly.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” said Felicity severely.

“No, I oughtn’t. Father got drunk all the time he was home, and wouldn’t work and was bad to mother,” said Peter defiantly. “She had to support him as well as herself and me. I don’t want to see any father coming home, and you’d better believe it. Of course, if he was the right sort of a father it’d be different.”

“What I would like to know is if Aunt Olivia is going to be married,” said the Story Girl absently. “I can hardly believe it. But now that I think of it — Uncle Roger has been teasing her ever since she was in Halifax last summer.”

“If she does get married you’ll have to come and live with us,” said Cecily delightedly.

Felicity did not betray so much delight and the Story Girl remarked with a weary little sigh that she hoped Aunt Olivia wouldn’t. We all felt rather weary, somehow. Peg’s predictions had been unsettling, and our nerves had all been more or less strained during our sojourn under her roof. We were glad when we found ourselves at home.

The folks had not been at all troubled about us, but it was because they were sure the storm had come up before we would think of leaving Cousin Mattie’s and not because they had received any mysterious message from

Peg's skull. We were relieved at this, but on the whole, our adventure had not done much towards clearing up the vexed question of Peg's witchcraft.

CHAPTER IX.

EXTRACTS FROM THE FEBRUARY AND MARCH NUMBERS OF “OUR MAGAZINE”

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RESOLUTION HONOUR ROLL

Miss Felicity King.

HONOURABLE MENTION

Mr. Felix King. Mr. Peter Craig. Miss Sara Ray.

EDITORIAL

The editor wishes to make a few remarks about the Resolution Honour Roll. As will be seen, only one name figures on it. Felicity says she has thought a beautiful thought every morning before breakfast without missing one morning, not even the one we were at Peg Bowen's. Some of our number think it not fair that Felicity should be on the honour roll (FELICITY, ASIDE: “That's Dan, of course.”) when she only made one resolution and won't tell us what any of the thoughts were. So we have decided to give honourable mention to everybody who has kept one resolution perfect. Felix has worked all his arithmetic problems by himself. He complains that he never got more than a third of them right and the teacher has marked him away down; but one cannot keep resolutions without some inconvenience. Peter has never played tit-tat-x in church or got drunk and says it wasn't as bad as he expected. (PETER, INDIGNANTLY: “I never said it.” CECILY, SOOTHINGLY: “Now, Peter, Bev only meant that as a joke.”) Sara Ray has never talked any mean gossip, but does not find conversation as interesting as it used to be. (SARA RAY, WONDERINGLY: “I don't remember of saying that.”)

Felix did not eat any apples until March, but forgot and ate seven the day we were at Cousin Mattie's. (FELIX: "I only ate five!") He soon gave up trying to say what he thought always. He got into too much trouble. We think Felix ought to change to old Grandfather King's rule. It was, "Hold your tongue when you can, and when you can't tell the truth." Cecily feels she has not read all the good books she might, because some she tried to read were very dull and the Pansy books were so much more interesting. And it is no use trying not to feel bad because her hair isn't curly and she has marked that resolution out. The Story Girl came very near to keeping her resolution to have all the good times possible, but she says she missed two, if not three, she might have had. Dan refuses to say anything about his resolutions and so does the editor.

PERSONALS

We regret that Miss Cecily King is suffering from a severe cold.

Mr. Alexander Marr of Markdale died very suddenly last week. We never heard of his death till he was dead.

Miss Cecily King wishes to state that she did not ask the question about "Holy Moses" and the other word in the January number. Dan put it in for a mean joke.

The weather has been cold and fine. We have only had one bad storm. The coasting on Uncle Roger's hill continues good.

Aunt Eliza did not favour us with a visit after all. She took cold and had to go home. We were sorry that she had a cold but glad that she had to go home. Cecily said she thought it wicked of us to be glad. But when we asked her "cross her heart" if she wasn't glad herself she had to say she was.

Miss Cecily King has got three very distinguished names on her quilt square. They are the Governor and his wife and a witch's.

The King family had the honour of entertaining the Governor's wife to tea on February the seventeenth. We are all invited to visit Government House

but some of us think we won't go.

A tragic event occurred last Tuesday. Mrs. James Frewen came to tea and there was no pie in the house. Felicity has not yet fully recovered.

A new boy is coming to school. His name is Cyrus Brisk and his folks moved up from Markdale. He says he is going to punch Willy Fraser's head if Willy keeps on thinking he is Miss Cecily King's beau.

(CECILY: "I haven't ANY beau! I don't mean to think of such a thing for at least eight years yet!")

Miss Alice Reade of Charlottetown Royalty has come to Carlisle to teach music. She boards at Mr. Peter Armstrong's. The girls are all going to take music lessons from her. Two descriptions of her will be found in another column. Felix wrote one, but the girls thought he did not do her justice, so Cecily wrote another one. She admits she copied most of the description out of Valeria H. Montague's story Lord Marmaduke's First, Last, and Only Love; or the Bride of the Castle by the Sea, but says they fit Miss Reade better than anything she could make up.

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Always keep the kitchen tidy and then you needn't mind if company comes unexpectedly.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: We don't know anything that will take the stain out of a silk dress when a soft-boiled egg is dropped on it. Better not wear your silk dress so often, especially when boiling eggs.

Ginger tea is good for colds.

OLD HOUSEKEEPER: Yes, when the baking-powder gives out you can use tooth-powder instead.

(FELICITY: "I never wrote that! I don't care, I don't think it's fair for other people to be putting things in my department!")

Our apples are not keeping well this year. They are rotting; and besides father says we eat an awful lot of them.

PERSEVERANCE: I will give you the recipe for dumplings you ask for. But remember it is not everyone who can make dumplings, even from the recipe. There's a knack in it.

If the soap falls into the porridge do not tell your guests about it until they have finished eating it because it might take away their appetite.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

P-r C-g: — Do not criticize people's noses unless you are sure they can't hear you, and don't criticize your best girl's great-aunt's nose in any case.

(FELICITY, TOSSING HER HEAD: "Oh, my! I s'pose Dan thought that was extra smart.")

C-y K-g: — When my most intimate friend walks with another girl and exchanges lace patterns with her, what ought I to do? Ans. Adopt a dignified attitude.

F-y K-g: — It is better not to wear your second best hat to church, but if your mother says you must it is not for me to question her decision.

(FELICITY: "Dan just copied that word for word out of the Family Guide, except about the hat part.")

P-r C-g: — Yes, it would be quite proper to say good evening to the family ghost if you met it.

F-x K-g: — No, it is not polite to sleep with your mouth open. What's more, it isn't safe. Something might fall into it.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Crocheted watch pockets are all the rage now. If you haven't a watch they do to carry your pencil in or a piece of gum.

It is stylish to have hair ribbons to match your dress. But it is hard to match gray drugget. I like scarlet for that.

It is stylish to pin a piece of ribbon on your coat the same colour as your chum wears in her hair. Mary Martha Cowan saw them doing it in town and started us doing it here. I always wear Kitty's ribbon and Kitty wears mine, but the Story Girl thinks it is silly.

CECILY KING.

AN ACCOUNT OF OUR VISIT TO COUSIN MATTIE'S

We all walked over to Cousin Mattie's last week. They were all well there and we had a fine dinner. On our way back a snowstorm came up and we got lost in the woods. We didn't know where we were or nothing. If we hadn't seen a light I guess we'd all have been frozen and snowed over, and they would never have found us till spring and that would be very sad. But we saw a light and made for it and it was Peg Bowen's. Some people think she is a witch and it's hard to tell, but she was real hospitable and took us all in. Her house was very untidy but it was warm. She has a skull. I mean a loose skull, not her own. She lets on it tells her things, but Uncle Alec says it couldn't because it was only an Indian skull that old Dr. Beecham had and Peg stole it when he died, but Uncle Roger says he wouldn't trust himself with Peg's skull for anything. She gave us supper. It was a horrid meal. The Story Girl says I must not tell what I found in the bread and butter because it would be too disgusting to read in Our Magazine but it don't matter because we were all there, except Sara Ray, and know what it was. We stayed all night and us boys slept in straw. None of us had ever slept on straw before. We got home in the morning. That is all I can write about our visit to Cousin Mattie's.

FELIX KING.

MY WORST ADVENTURE

It's my turn to write it so I suppose I must. I guess my worst adventure was two years ago when a whole lot of us were coasting on Uncle Rogers hill. Charlie Cowan and Fred Marr had started, but halfway down their sled got stuck and I run down to shove them off again. Then I stood there just a moment to watch them with my back to the top of the hill. While I was standing there Rob Marr started Kitty and Em Frewen off on his sled. His sled had a wooden tongue in it and it slanted back over the girls' heads. I was right in the way and they yelled to me to get out, but just as I heard them it struck me. The sled took me between the legs and I was histed back over the tongue and dropped in a heap behind before I knew what had happened to me. I thought a tornado had struck me. The girls couldn't stop though they thought I was killed, but Rob came tearing down and helped me up. He was awful scared but I wasn't killed nor my back wasn't broken but my nose bled something awful and kept on bleeding for three days. Not all the time but by spells.

DAN KING.

THE STORY OF HOW CARLISLE GOT ITS NAME

This is a true story to. Long ago there was a girl lived in charlotte town. I dont know her name so I cant right it and maybe it is just as well for Felicity might think it wasnt romantik like Miss Jemima Parrs. She was awful pretty and a young englishman who had come out to make his fortune fell in love with her and they were engaged to be married the next spring. His name was Mr. Carlisle. In the winter he started off to hunt cariboo for a spell. Cariboos lived on the island then. There aint any here now. He got to where it is Carlisle now. It wasn't anything then only woods and a few indians. He got awful sick and was sick for ever so long in a indian camp and only an old micmac squaw to wait on him. Back in town they all thought he was dead and his girl felt bad for a little while and then got over it and took up with another beau. The girls say that wasnt romantik but I think it was sensible but if it had been me that died I'd have felt bad if she forgot me so soon. But he hadnt died and when he got back to town he went right to her house and walked in and there she was standing up to be married to the other fellow. Poor Mr. Carlisle felt awful. He was sick and week and it went to his head. He just turned and run and

run till he got back to the old micmac's camp and fell in front of it. But the indians had gone because it was spring and it didnt matter because he really was dead this time and people come looking for him from town and found him and buried him there and called the place after him. They say the girl was never happy again and that was hard lines on her but maybe she deserved it.

PETER CRAIG.

MISS ALICE READE

Miss Alice Reade is a very pretty girl. She has kind of curly blackish hair and big gray eyes and a pale face. She is tall and thin but her figure is pretty fair and she has a nice mouth and a sweet way of speaking. The girls are crazy about her and talk about her all the time.

FELIX KING.

BEAUTIFUL ALICE

That is what we girls call Miss Reade among ourselves. She is divinely beautiful. Her magnificent wealth of raven hair flows back in glistening waves from her sun-kissed brow. (DAN: "If Felix had said she was sunburned you'd have all jumped on him." (CECILY, COLDLY: "Sun-kissed doesn't mean sunburned." DAN: "What does it mean then?" CECILY, EMBARRASSED: "I — I don't know. But Miss Montague says the Lady Geraldine's brow was sun-kissed and of course an earl's daughter wouldn't be sunburned. "THE STORY GIRL: "Oh, don't interrupt the reading like this. It spoils it.") Her eyes are gloriously dark and deep, like midnight lakes mirroring the stars of heaven. Her features are like sculptured marble and her mouth is a trembling, curving Cupid's bow. (PETER, ASIDE: "What kind of a thing is that?") Her creamy skin is as fair and flawless as the petals of a white lily. Her voice is like the ripple of a woodland brook and her slender form is matchless in its symmetry. (DAN: "That's Valeria's way of putting it, but Uncle Roger says she don't show her feed much." FELICITY: "Dan! if Uncle Roger is vulgar you needn't be!") Her hands are like a poet's dreams. She dresses so nicely and looks so stylish in her clothes. Her favourite colour is blue. Some people

think she is stiff and some say she is stuck-up, but she isn't a bit. It's just that she is different from them and they don't like it. She is just lovely and we adore her.)

CECILY KING.

CHAPTER X.

DISAPPEARANCE OF PADDY

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As I remember, the spring came late that year in Carlisle. It was May before the weather began to satisfy the grownups. But we children were more easily pleased, and we thought April a splendid month because the snow all went early and left gray, firm, frozen ground for our rambles and games. As the days slipped by they grew more gracious; the hillsides began to look as if they were thinking of mayflowers; the old orchard was washed in a bath of tingling sunshine and the sap stirred in the big trees; by day the sky was veiled with delicate cloud drift, fine and filmy as woven mist; in the evenings a full, low moon looked over the valleys, as pallid and holy as some aureoled saint; a sound of laughter and dream was on the wind and the world grew young with the mirth of April breezes.

“It’s so nice to be alive in the spring,” said the Story Girl one twilight as we swung on the boughs of Uncle Stephen’s walk.

“It’s nice to be alive any time,” said Felicity, complacently.

“But it’s nicer in the spring,” insisted the Story Girl. “When I’m dead I think I’ll FEEL dead all the rest of the year, but when spring comes I’m sure I’ll feel like getting up and being alive again.”

“You do say such queer things,” complained Felicity. “You won’t be really dead any time. You’ll be in the next world. And I think it’s horrid to talk about people being dead anyhow.”

“We’ve all got to die,” said Sara Ray solemnly, but with a certain relish. It was as if she enjoyed looking forward to something in which nothing, neither an unsympathetic mother, nor the cruel fate which had made her a

colourless little nonentity, could prevent her from being the chief performer.

“I sometimes think,” said Cecily, rather wearily, “that it isn’t so dreadful to die young as I used to suppose.”

She prefaced her remark with a slight cough, as she had been all too apt to do of late, for the remnants of the cold she had caught the night we were lost in the storm still clung to her.

“Don’t talk such nonsense, Cecily,” cried the Story Girl with unwonted sharpness, a sharpness we all understood. All of us, in our hearts, though we never spoke of it to each other, thought Cecily was not as well as she ought to be that spring, and we hated to hear anything said which seemed in any way to touch or acknowledge the tiny, faint shadow which now and again showed itself dimly athwart our sunshine.

“Well, it was you began talking of being dead,” said Felicity angrily. “I don’t think it’s right to talk of such things. Cecily, are you sure your feet ain’t damp? We ought to go in anyhow — it’s too chilly out here for you.”

“You girls had better go,” said Dan, “but I ain’t going in till old Isaac Frewen goes. I’ve no use for him.”

“I hate him, too,” said Felicity, agreeing with Dan for once in her life. “He chews tobacco all the time and spits on the floor — the horrid pig!”

“And yet his brother is an elder in the church,” said Sara Ray wonderingly.

“I know a story about Isaac Frewen,” said the Story Girl. “When he was young he went by the name of Oatmeal Frewen and he got it this way. He was noted for doing outlandish things. He lived at Markdale then and he was a great, overgrown, awkward fellow, six feet tall. He drove over to Baywater one Saturday to visit his uncle there and came home the next afternoon, and although it was Sunday he brought a big bag of oatmeal in the wagon with him. When he came to Carlisle church he saw that service was going on there, and he concluded to stop and go in. But he didn’t like to leave his oatmeal outside for fear something would happen to it,

because there were always mischievous boys around, so he hoisted the bag on his back and walked into church with it and right to the top of the aisle to Grandfather King's pew. Grandfather King used to say he would never forget it to his dying day. The minister was preaching and everything was quiet and solemn when he heard a snicker behind him. Grandfather King turned around with a terrible frown — for you know in those days it was thought a dreadful thing to laugh in church — to rebuke the offender; and what did he see but that great, hulking young Isaac stalking up the aisle, bending a little forward under the weight of a big bag of oatmeal? Grandfather King was so amazed he couldn't laugh, but almost everyone else in the church was laughing, and grandfather said he never blamed them, for no funnier sight was ever seen. Young Isaac turned into grandfather's pew and thumped the bag of oatmeal down on the seat with a thud that cracked it. Then he plumped down beside it, took off his hat, wiped his face, and settled back to listen to the sermon, just as if it was all a matter of course. When the service was over he hoisted his bag up again, marched out of church, and drove home. He could never understand why it made so much talk; but he was known by the name of Oatmeal Frewen for years."

Our laughter, as we separated, rang sweetly through the old orchard and across the far, dim meadows. Felicity and Cecily went into the house and Sara Ray and the Story Girl went home, but Peter decoyed me into the granary to ask advice.

"You know Felicity has a birthday next week," he said, "and I want to write her an ode."

"A — a what?" I gasped.

"An ode," repeated Peter, gravely. "It's poetry, you know. I'll put it in Our Magazine."

"But you can't write poetry, Peter," I protested.

"I'm going to try," said Peter stoutly. "That is, if you think she won't be offended at me."

“She ought to feel flattered,” I replied.

“You never can tell how she’ll take things,” said Peter gloomily. “Of course I ain’t going to sign my name, and if she ain’t pleased I won’t tell her I wrote it. Don’t you let on.”

I promised I wouldn’t and Peter went off with a light heart. He said he meant to write two lines every day till he got it done.

Cupid was playing his world-old tricks with others than poor Peter that spring. Allusion has been made in these chronicles to one, Cyrus Brisk, and to the fact that our brown-haired, soft-voiced Cecily had found favour in the eyes of the said Cyrus. Cecily did not regard her conquest with any pride. On the contrary, it annoyed her terribly to be teased about Cyrus. She declared she hated both him and his name. She was as uncivil to him as sweet Cecily could be to anyone, but the gallant Cyrus was nothing daunted. He laid determined siege to Cecily’s young heart by all the methods known to lovelorn swains. He placed delicate tributes of spruce gum, molasses taffy, “conversation” candies and decorated slate pencils on her desk; he persistently “chose” her in all school games calling for a partner; he entreated to be allowed to carry her basket from school; he offered to work her sums for her; and rumour had it that he had made a wild statement to the effect that he meant to ask if he might see her home some night from prayer meeting. Cecily was quite frightened that he would; she confided to me that she would rather die than walk home with him, but that if he asked her she would be too bashful to say no. So far, however, Cyrus had not molested her out of school, nor had he as yet thumped Willy Fraser — who was reported to be very low in his spirits over the whole affair.

And now Cyrus had written Cecily a letter — a love letter, mark you. Moreover, he had sent it through the postoffice, with a real stamp on it. Its arrival made a sensation among us. Dan brought it from the office and, recognizing the handwriting of Cyrus, gave Cecily no peace until she showed us the letter. It was a very sentimental and rather ill-spelled epistle in which the inflammable Cyrus reproached her in heartrending words for her coldness, and begged her to answer his letter, saying that if she did he would keep the secret “in violets.” Cyrus probably meant “inviolable” but

Cecily thought it was intended for a poetical touch. He signed himself “your troo lover, Cyrus Brisk” and added in a postscript that he couldn’t eat or sleep for thinking of her.

“Are you going to answer it?” asked Dan.

“Certainly not,” said Cecily with dignity.

“Cyrus Brisk wants to be kicked,” growled Felix, who never seemed to be any particular friend of Willy Fraser’s either. “He’d better learn how to spell before he takes to writing love letters.”

“Maybe Cyrus will starve to death if you don’t,” suggested Sara Ray.

“I hope he will,” said Cecily cruelly. She was truly vexed over the letter; and yet, so contradictory a thing is the feminine heart, even at twelve years old, I think she was a little flattered by it also. It was her first love letter and she confided to me that it gives you a very queer feeling to get it. At all events — the letter, though unanswered, was not torn up. I feel sure Cecily preserved it. But she walked past Cyrus next morning at school with a frozen countenance, evincing not the slightest pity for his pangs of unrequited affection. Cecily winced when Pat caught a mouse, visited a school chum the day the pigs were killed that she might not hear their squealing, and would not have stepped on a caterpillar for anything; yet she did not care at all how much she made the brisk Cyrus suffer.

Then, suddenly, all our spring gladness and Maytime hopes were blighted as by a killing frost. Sorrow and anxiety pervaded our days and embittered our dreams by night. Grim tragedy held sway in our lives for the next fortnight.

Paddy disappeared. One night he lapped his new milk as usual at Uncle Roger’s dairy door and then sat blandly on the flat stone before it, giving the world assurance of a cat, sleek sides glistening, plummy tail gracefully folded around his paws, brilliant eyes watching the stir and flicker of bare willow boughs in the twilight air above him. That was the last seen of him. In the morning he was not.

At first we were not seriously alarmed. Paddy was no roving Thomas, but occasionally he vanished for a day or so. But when two days passed without his return we became anxious, the third day worried us greatly, and the fourth found us distracted.

“Something has happened to Pat,” the Story Girl declared miserably. “He never stayed away from home more than two days in his life.”

“What could have happened to him?” asked Felix.

“He’s been poisoned — or a dog has killed him,” answered the Story Girl in tragic tones.

Cecily began to cry at this; but tears were of no avail. Neither was anything else, apparently. We searched every nook and cranny of barns and outbuildings and woods on both the King farms; we inquired far and wide; we roved over Carlisle meadows calling Paddy’s name, until Aunt Janet grew exasperated and declared we must stop making such exhibitions of ourselves. But we found and heard no trace of our lost pet. The Story Girl moped and refused to be comforted; Cecily declared she could not sleep at night for thinking of poor Paddy dying miserably in some corner to which he had dragged his failing body, or lying somewhere mangled and torn by a dog. We hated every dog we saw on the ground that he might be the guilty one.

“It’s the suspense that’s so hard,” sobbed the Story Girl. “If I just knew what had happened to him it wouldn’t be QUITE so hard. But I don’t know whether he’s dead or alive. He may be living and suffering, and every night I dream that he has come home and when I wake up and find it’s only a dream it just breaks my heart.”

“It’s ever so much worse than when he was so sick last fall,” said Cecily drearily. “Then we knew that everything was done for him that could be done.”

We could not appeal to Peg Bowen this time. In our desperation we would have done it, but Peg was far away. With the first breath of spring she was up and off, answering to the lure of the long road. She had not been seen in

her accustomed haunts for many a day. Her pets were gaining their own living in the woods and her house was locked up.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WITCH'S WISHBONE

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When a fortnight had elapsed we gave up all hope.

“Pat is dead,” said the Story Girl hopelessly, as we returned one evening from a bootless quest to Andrew Cowan’s where a strange gray cat had been reported — a cat which turned out to be a yellowish brown nondescript, with no tail to speak of.

“I’m afraid so,” I acknowledged at last.

“If only Peg Bowen had been at home she could have found him for us,” asserted Peter. “Her skull would have told her where he was.”

“I wonder if the wishbone she gave me would have done any good,” cried Cecily suddenly. “I’d forgotten all about it. Oh, do you suppose it’s too late yet?”

“There’s nothing in a wishbone,” said Dan impatiently.

“You can’t be sure. She TOLD me I’d get the wish I made on it. I’m going to try whenever I get home.”

“It can’t do any harm, anyhow,” said Peter, “but I’m afraid you’ve left it too late. If Pat is dead even a witch’s wishbone can’t bring him back to life.”

“I’ll never forgive myself for not thinking about it before,” mourned Cecily.

As soon as we got home she flew to the little box upstairs where she kept her treasures, and brought therefrom the dry and brittle wishbone.

“Peg told me how it must be done. I’m to hold the wishbone with both hands, like this, and walk backward, repeating the wish nine times. And when I’ve finished the ninth time I’m to turn around nine times, from right to left, and then the wish will come true right away.”

“Do you expect to see Pat when you finish turning?” said Dan skeptically.

None of us had any faith in the incantation except Peter, and, by infection, Cecily. You never could tell what might happen. Cecily took the wishbone in her trembling little hands and began her backward pacing, repeating solemnly, “I wish that we may find Paddy alive, or else his body, so that we can bury him decently.” By the time Cecily had repeated this nine times we were all slightly infected with the desperate hope that something might come of it; and when she had made her nine gyrations we looked eagerly down the sunset lane, half expecting to see our lost pet. But we saw only the Awkward Man turning in at the gate. This was almost as surprising as the sight of Pat himself would have been; but there was no sign of Pat and hope flickered out in every breast but Peter’s.

“You’ve got to give the spell time to work,” he expostulated. “If Pat was miles away when it was wished it wouldn’t be reasonable to expect to see him right off.”

But we of little faith had already lost that little, and it was a very disconsolate group which the Awkward Man presently joined.

He was smiling — his rare, beautiful smile which only children ever saw — and he lifted his hat to the girls with no trace of the shyness and awkwardness for which he was notorious.

“Good evening,” he said. “Have you little people lost a cat lately?”

We stared. Peter said “I knew it!” in a triumphant pig’s whisper. The Story Girl started eagerly forward.

“Oh, Mr. Dale, can you tell us anything of Paddy?” she cried.

“A silver gray cat with black points and very fine marking?”

“Yes, yes!”

“Alive?”

“Yes.”

“Well, doesn’t that beat the Dutch!” muttered Dan.

But we were all crowding about the Awkward Man, demanding where and when he had found Paddy.

“You’d better come over to my place and make sure that it really is your cat,” suggested the Awkward Man, “and I’ll tell you all about finding him on the way. I must warn you that he is pretty thin — but I think he’ll pull through.”

We obtained permission to go without much difficulty, although the spring evening was wearing late, for Aunt Janet said she supposed none of us would sleep a wink that night if we didn’t. A joyful procession followed the Awkward Man and the Story Girl across the gray, starlitten meadows to his home and through his pine-guarded gate.

“You know that old barn of mine back in the woods?” said the Awkward Man. “I go to it only about once in a blue moon. There was an old barrel there, upside down, one side resting on a block of wood. This morning I went to the barn to see about having some hay hauled home, and I had occasion to move the barrel. I noticed that it seemed to have been moved slightly since my last visit, and it was now resting wholly on the floor. I lifted it up — and there was a cat lying on the floor under it. I had heard you had lost yours and I took it this was your pet. I was afraid he was dead at first. He was lying there with his eyes closed; but when I bent over him he opened them and gave a pitiful little mew; or rather his mouth made the motion of a mew, for he was too weak to utter a sound.”

“Oh, poor, poor Paddy,” said tender-hearted Cecily tearfully.

“He couldn’t stand, so I carried him home and gave him just a little milk. Fortunately he was able to lap it. I gave him a little more at intervals all

day, and when I left he was able to crawl around. I think he'll be all right, but you'll have to be careful how you feed him for a few days. Don't let your hearts run away with your judgment and kill him with kindness."

"Do you suppose any one put him under that barrel?" asked the Story Girl.

"No. The barn was locked. Nothing but a cat could get in. I suppose he went under the barrel, perhaps in pursuit of a mouse, and somehow knocked it off the block and so imprisoned himself."

Paddy was sitting before the fire in the Awkward Man's clean, bare kitchen. Thin! Why, he was literally skin and bone, and his fur was dull and lustreless. It almost broke our hearts to see our beautiful Paddy brought so low.

"Oh, how he must have suffered!" moaned Cecily.

"He'll be as prosperous as ever in a week or two," said the Awkward Man kindly.

The Story Girl gathered Paddy up in her arms. Most mellifluously did he purr as we crowded around to stroke him; with friendly joy he licked our hands with his little red tongue; poor Paddy was a thankful cat; he was no longer lost, starving, imprisoned, helpless; he was with his comrades once more and he was going home — home to his old familiar haunts of orchard and dairy and granary, to his daily rations of new milk and cream, to the cosy corner of his own fireside. We trooped home joyfully, the Story Girl in our midst carrying Paddy hugged against her shoulder. Never did April stars look down on a happier band of travellers on the golden road. There was a little gray wind out in the meadows that night, and it danced along beside us on viewless, fairy feet, and sang a delicate song of the lovely, waiting years, while the night laid her beautiful hands of blessing over the world.

"You see what Peg's wishbone did," said Peter triumphantly.

"Now, look here, Peter, don't talk nonsense," expostulated Dan. "The Awkward Man found Paddy this morning and had started to bring us word

before Cecily ever thought of the wishbone. Do you mean to say you believe he wouldn't have come walking up our lane just when he did if she had never thought of it?"

"I mean to say that I wouldn't mind if I had several wishbones of the same kind," retorted Peter stubbornly.

"Of course I don't think the wishbone had really anything to do with our getting Paddy back, but I'm glad I tried it, for all that," remarked Cecily in a tone of satisfaction.

"Well, anyhow, we've got Pat and that's the main thing," said Felix.

"And I hope it will be a lesson to him to stay home after this," commented Felicity.

"They say the barrens are full of mayflowers," said the Story Girl. "Let us have a mayflower picnic tomorrow to celebrate Paddy's safe return."

CHAPTER XII.

FLOWERS O' MAY

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Accordingly we went a-maying, following the lure of dancing winds to a certain westward sloping hill lying under the spiritlike blue of spring skies, feathered over with lispings young pines and firs, which cupped little hollows and corners where the sunshine got in and never got out again, but stayed there and grew mellow, coaxing dear things to bloom long before they would dream of waking up elsewhere.

‘Twas there we found our mayflowers, after faithful seeking. Mayflowers, you must know, never flaunt themselves; they must be sought as becomes them, and then they will yield up their treasures to the seeker — clusters of star-white and dawn-pink that have in them the very soul of all the springs that ever were, reincarnated in something it seems gross to call perfume, so exquisite and spiritual is it.

We wandered gaily over the hill, calling to each other with laughter and jest, getting parted and delightfully lost in that little pathless wilderness, and finding each other unexpectedly in nooks and dips and sunny silences, where the wind purred and gentled and went softly. When the sun began to hang low, sending great fan-like streamers of radiance up to the zenith, we foregathered in a tiny, sequestered valley, full of young green fern, lying in the shadow of a wooded hill. In it was a shallow pool — a glimmering green sheet of water on whose banks nymphs might dance as blithely as ever they did on Argive hill or in Cretan dale. There we sat and stripped the faded leaves and stems from our spoil, making up the blossoms into bouquets to fill our baskets with sweetness. The Story Girl twisted a spray of divinest pink in her brown curls, and told us an old legend of a beautiful Indian maiden who died of a broken heart when the first snows of winter were falling, because she believed her long-absent lover was false. But he came back in the spring time from his long captivity; and when he heard

that she was dead he sought her grave to mourn her, and lo, under the dead leaves of the old year he found sweet sprays of a blossom never seen before, and knew that it was a message of love and remembrance from his dark-eyed sweetheart.

“Except in stories Indian girls are called squaws,” remarked practical Dan, tying his mayflowers together in one huge, solid, cabbage-like bunch. Not for Dan the bother of filling his basket with the loose sprays, mingled with feathery elephant’s-ears and trails of creeping spruce, as the rest of us, following the Story Girl’s example, did. Nor would he admit that ours looked any better than his.

“I like things of one kind together. I don’t like them mixed,” he said.

“You have no taste,” said Felicity.

“Except in my mouth, best beloved,” responded Dan.

“You do think you are so smart,” retorted Felicity, flushing with anger.

“Don’t quarrel this lovely day,” implored Cecily.

“Nobody’s quarrelling, Sis. I ain’t a bit mad. It’s Felicity. What on earth is that at the bottom of your basket, Cecily?”

“It’s a History of the Reformation in France,” confessed poor Cecily, “by a man named D-a-u-b-i-g-n-y. I can’t pronounce it. I heard Mr. Marwood saying it was a book everyone ought to read, so I began it last Sunday. I brought it along today to read when I got tired picking flowers. I’d ever so much rather have brought Ester Reid. There’s so much in the history I can’t understand, and it is so dreadful to read of people being burned to death. But I felt I OUGHT to read it.”

“Do you really think your mind has improved any?” asked Sara Ray seriously, wreathing the handle of her basket with creeping spruce.

“No, I’m afraid it hasn’t one bit,” answered Cecily sadly. “I feel that I haven’t succeeded very well in keeping my resolutions.”

“I’ve kept mine,” said Felicity complacently.

“It’s easy to keep just one,” retorted Cecily, rather resentfully.

“It’s not so easy to think beautiful thoughts,” answered Felicity.

“It’s the easiest thing in the world,” said the Story Girl, tiptoeing to the edge of the pool to peep at her own arch reflection, as some nymph left over from the golden age might do. “Beautiful thoughts just crowd into your mind at times.”

“Oh, yes, AT TIMES. But that’s different from thinking one REGULARLY at a given hour. And mother is always calling up the stairs for me to hurry up and get dressed, and it’s VERY hard sometimes.”

“That’s so,” conceded the Story Girl. “There ARE times when I can’t think anything but gray thoughts. Then, other days, I think pink and blue and gold and purple and rainbow thoughts all the time.”

“The idea! As if thoughts were coloured,” giggled Felicity.

“Oh, they are!” cried the Story Girl. “Why, I can always SEE the colour of any thought I think. Can’t you?”

“I never heard of such a thing,” declared Felicity, “and I don’t believe it. I believe you are just making that up.”

“Indeed I’m not. Why, I always supposed everyone thought in colours. It must be very tiresome if you don’t.”

“When you think of me what colour is it?” asked Peter curiously.

“Yellow,” answered the Story Girl promptly. “And Cecily is a sweet pink, like those mayflowers, and Sara Ray is very pale blue, and Dan is red and Felix is yellow, like Peter, and Bev is striped.”

“What colour am I?” asked Felicity, amid the laughter at my expense.

“You’re — you’re like a rainbow,” answered the Story Girl rather reluctantly. She had to be honest, but she would rather not have complimented Felicity. “And you needn’t laugh at Bev. His stripes are beautiful. It isn’t HE that is striped. It’s just the THOUGHT of him. Peg Bowen is a queer sort of yellowish green and the Awkward Man is lilac. Aunt Olivia is pansy-purple mixed with gold, and Uncle Roger is navy blue.”

“I never heard such nonsense,” declared Felicity. The rest of us were rather inclined to agree with her for once. We thought the Story Girl was making fun of us. But I believe she really had a strange gift of thinking in colours. In later years, when we were grown up, she told me of it again. She said that everything had colour in her thought; the months of the year ran through all the tints of the spectrum, the days of the week were arrayed as Solomon in his glory, morning was golden, noon orange, evening crystal blue, and night violet. Every idea came to her mind robed in its own especial hue. Perhaps that was why her voice and words had such a charm, conveying to the listeners’ perception such fine shadings of meaning and tint and music.

“Well, let’s go and have something to eat,” suggested Dan. “What colour is eating, Sara?”

“Golden brown, just the colour of a molasses cooky,” laughed the Story Girl.

We sat on the ferny bank of the pool and ate of the generous basket Aunt Janet had provided, with appetites sharpened by the keen spring air and our wilderness roving. Felicity had made some very nice sandwiches of ham which we all appreciated except Dan, who declared he didn’t like things minced up and dug out of the basket a chunk of boiled pork which he proceeded to saw up with a jack-knife and devour with gusto.

“I told ma to put this in for me. There’s some CHEW to it,” he said.

“You are not a bit refined,” commented Felicity.

“Not a morsel, my love,” grinned Dan.

“You make me think of a story I heard Uncle Roger telling about Cousin Annetta King,” said the Story Girl. “Great-uncle Jeremiah King used to live where Uncle Roger lives now, when Grandfather King was alive and Uncle Roger was a boy. In those days it was thought rather coarse for a young lady to have too hearty an appetite, and she was more admired if she was delicate about what she ate. Cousin Annetta set out to be very refined indeed. She pretended to have no appetite at all. One afternoon she was invited to tea at Grandfather King’s when they had some special company — people from Charlottetown. Cousin Annetta said she could hardly eat anything. ‘You know, Uncle Abraham,’ she said, in a very affected, fine-young-lady voice, ‘I really hardly eat enough to keep a bird alive. Mother says she wonders how I continue to exist.’ And she picked and pecked until Grandfather King declared he would like to throw something at her. After tea Cousin Annetta went home, and just about dark Grandfather King went over to Uncle Jeremiah’s on an errand. As he passed the open, lighted pantry window he happened to glance in, and what do you think he saw? Delicate Cousin Annetta standing at the dresser, with a big loaf of bread beside her and a big platterful of cold, boiled pork in front of her; and Annetta was hacking off great chunks, like Dan there, and gobbling them down as if she was starving. Grandfather King couldn’t resist the temptation. He stepped up to the window and said, ‘I’m glad your appetite has come back to you, Annetta. Your mother needn’t worry about your continuing to exist as long as you can tuck away fat, salt pork in that fashion.’

“Cousin Annetta never forgave him, but she never pretended to be delicate again.”

“The Jews don’t believe in eating pork,” said Peter.

“I’m glad I’m not a Jew and I guess Cousin Annetta was too,” said Dan.

“I like bacon, but I can never look at a pig without wondering if they were ever intended to be eaten,” remarked Cecily naively.

When we finished our lunch the barrens were already wrapping themselves in a dim, blue dusk and falling upon rest in dell and dingle. But out in the open there was still much light of a fine emerald-golden sort and the

robins whistled us home in it. “Horns of Elfland” never sounded more sweetly around hoary castle and ruined fane than those vesper calls of the robins from the twilight spruce woods and across green pastures lying under the pale radiance of a young moon.

When we reached home we found that Miss Reade had been up to the hill farm on an errand and was just leaving. The Story Girl went for a walk with her and came back with an important expression on her face.

“You look as if you had a story to tell,” said Felix.

“One is growing. It isn’t a whole story yet,” answered the Story Girl mysteriously.

“What is it?” asked Cecily.

“I can’t tell you till it’s fully grown,” said the Story Girl. “But I’ll tell you a pretty little story the Awkward Man told us — told me — tonight. He was walking in his garden as we went by, looking at his tulip beds. His tulips are up ever so much higher than ours, and I asked him how he managed to coax them along so early. And he said HE didn’t do it — it was all the work of the pixies who lived in the woods across the brook. There were more pixy babies than usual this spring, and the mothers were in a hurry for the cradles. The tulips are the pixy babies’ cradles, it seems. The mother pixies come out of the woods at twilight and rock their tiny little brown babies to sleep in the tulip cups. That is the reason why tulip blooms last so much longer than other blossoms. The pixy babies must have a cradle until they are grown up. They grow very fast, you see, and the Awkward Man says on a spring evening, when the tulips are out, you can hear the sweetest, softest, clearest, fairy music in his garden, and it is the pixy folk singing as they rock the pixy babies to sleep.”

“Then the Awkward Man says what isn’t true,” said Felicity severely.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SURPRISING ANNOUNCEMENT

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“Nothing exciting has happened for ever so long,” said the Story Girl discontentedly, one late May evening, as we lingered under the wonderful white bloom of the cherry trees. There was a long row of them in the orchard, with a Lombardy poplar at either end, and a hedge of lilacs behind. When the wind blew over them all the spicy breezes of Ceylon’s isle were never sweeter.

It was a time of wonder and marvel, of the soft touch of silver rain on greening fields, of the incredible delicacy of young leaves, of blossom in field and garden and wood. The whole world bloomed in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the evasive, fleeting charm of spring and girlhood and young morning. We felt and enjoyed it all without understanding or analyzing it. It was enough to be glad and young with spring on the golden road.

“I don’t like excitement very much,” said Cecily. “It makes one so tired. I’m sure it was exciting enough when Paddy was missing, but we didn’t find that very pleasant.”

“No, but it was interesting,” returned the Story Girl thoughtfully. “After all, I believe I’d rather be miserable than dull.”

“I wouldn’t then,” said Felicity decidedly. “And you need never be dull when you have work to do. ‘Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do!’”

“Well, mischief is interesting,” laughed the Story Girl. “And I thought you didn’t think it ladylike to speak of that person, Felicity?”

“It’s all right if you call him by his polite name,” said Felicity stiffly.

“Why does the Lombardy poplar hold its branches straight up in the air like that, when all the other poplars hold theirs out or hang them down?” interjected Peter, who had been gazing intently at the slender spire showing darkly against the fine blue eastern sky.

“Because it grows that way,” said Felicity.

“Oh I know a story about that,” cried the Story Girl. “Once upon a time an old man found the pot of gold at the rainbow’s end. There IS a pot there, it is said, but it is very hard to find because you can never get to the rainbow’s end before it vanishes from your sight. But this old man found it, just at sunset, when Iris, the guardian of the rainbow gold, happened to be absent. As he was a long way from home, and the pot was very big and heavy, he decided to hide it until morning and then get one of his sons to go with him and help him carry it. So he hid it under the boughs of the sleeping poplar tree.

“When Iris came back she missed the pot of gold and of course she was in a sad way about it. She sent Mercury, the messenger of the gods, to look for it, for she didn’t dare leave the rainbow again, lest somebody should run off with that too. Mercury asked all the trees if they had seen the pot of gold, and the elm, oak and pine pointed to the poplar and said,

“‘The poplar can tell you where it is.’

“‘How can I tell you where it is?’ cried the poplar, and she held up all her branches in surprise, just as we hold up our hands — and down tumbled the pot of gold. The poplar was amazed and indignant, for she was a very honest tree. She stretched her boughs high above her head and declared that she would always hold them like that, so that nobody could hide stolen gold under them again. And she taught all the little poplars she knew to stand the same way, and that is why Lombardy poplars always do. But the aspen poplar leaves are always shaking, even on the very calmest day. And do you know why?”

And then she told us the old legend that the cross on which the Saviour of the world suffered was made of aspen poplar wood and so never again could its poor, shaken, shivering leaves know rest or peace. There was an aspen in the orchard, the very embodiment of youth and spring in its litheness and symmetry. Its little leaves were hanging tremulously, not yet so fully blown as to hide its development of bough and twig, making poetry against the spiritual tints of a spring sunset.

“It does look sad,” said Peter, “but it is a pretty tree, and it wasn’t its fault.”

“There’s a heavy dew and it’s time we stopped talking nonsense and went in,” decreed Felicity. “If we don’t we’ll all have a cold, and then we’ll be miserable enough, but it won’t be very exciting.”

“All the same, I wish something exciting would happen,” finished the Story Girl, as we walked up through the orchard, peopled with its nun-like shadows.

“There’s a new moon tonight, so may be you’ll get your wish,” said Peter. “My Aunt Jane didn’t believe there was anything in the moon business, but you never can tell.”

The Story Girl did get her wish. Something happened the very next day. She joined us in the afternoon with a quite indescribable expression on her face, compounded of triumph, anticipation, and regret. Her eyes betrayed that she had been crying, but in them shone a chastened exultation. Whatever the Story Girl mourned over it was evident she was not without hope.

“I have some news to tell you,” she said importantly. “Can you guess what it is?”

We couldn’t and wouldn’t try.

“Tell us right off,” implored Felix. “You look as if it was something tremendous.”

“So it is. Listen — Aunt Olivia is going to be married.”

We stared in blank amazement. Peg Bowen’s hint had faded from our minds and we had never put much faith in it.

“Aunt Olivia! I don’t believe it,” cried Felicity flatly. “Who told you?”

“Aunt Olivia herself. So it is perfectly true. I’m awfully sorry in one way — but oh, won’t it be splendid to have a real wedding in the family? She’s going to have a big wedding — and I am to be bridesmaid.”

“I shouldn’t think you were old enough to be a bridesmaid,” said Felicity sharply.

“I’m nearly fifteen. Anyway, Aunt Olivia says I have to be.”

“Who’s she going to marry?” asked Cecily, gathering herself together after the shock, and finding that the world was going on just the same.

“His name is Dr. Seton and he is a Halifax man. She met him when she was at Uncle Edward’s last summer. They’ve been engaged ever since. The wedding is to be the third week in June.”

“And our school concert comes off the next week,” complained Felicity. “Why do things always come together like that? And what are you going to do if Aunt Olivia is going away?”

“I’m coming to live at your house,” answered the Story Girl rather timidly. She did not know how Felicity might like that. But Felicity took it rather well.

“You’ve been here most of the time anyhow, so it’ll just be that you’ll sleep and eat here, too. But what’s to become of Uncle Roger?”

“Aunt Olivia says he’ll have to get married, too. But Uncle Roger says he’d rather hire a housekeeper than marry one, because in the first case he could turn her off if he didn’t like her, but in the second case he couldn’t.”

“There’ll be a lot of cooking to do for the wedding,” reflected Felicity in a tone of satisfaction.

“I s’pose Aunt Olivia will want some rusks made. I hope she has plenty of tooth-powder laid in,” said Dan.

“It’s a pity you don’t use some of that tooth-powder you’re so fond of talking about yourself,” retorted Felicity. “When anyone has a mouth the size of yours the teeth show so plain.”

“I brush my teeth every Sunday,” asseverated Dan.

“Every Sunday! You ought to brush them every DAY.”

“Did anyone ever hear such nonsense?” demanded Dan sincerely.

“Well, you know, it really does say so in the Family Guide,” said Cecily quietly.

“Then the Family Guide people must have lots more spare time than I have,” retorted Dan contemptuously.

“Just think, the Story Girl will have her name in the papers if she’s bridesmaid,” marvelled Sara Ray.

“In the Halifax papers, too,” added Felix, “since Dr. Seton is a Halifax man. What is his first name?”

“Robert.”

“And will we have to call him Uncle Robert?”

“Not until he’s married to her. Then we will, of course.”

“I hope your Aunt Olivia won’t disappear before the ceremony,” remarked Sara Ray, who was surreptitiously reading “The Vanquished Bride,” by Valeria H. Montague in the Family Guide.

“I hope Dr. Seton won’t fail to show up, like your cousin Rachel Ward’s beau,” said Peter.

“That makes me think of another story I read the other day about Great-uncle Andrew King and Aunt Georgina,” laughed the Story Girl. “It happened eighty years ago. It was a very stormy winter and the roads were bad. Uncle Andrew lived in Carlisle, and Aunt Georgina — she was Miss Georgina Matheson then — lived away up west, so he couldn’t get to see her very often. They agreed to be married that winter, but Georgina couldn’t set the day exactly because her brother, who lived in Ontario, was coming home for a visit, and she wanted to be married while he was home. So it was arranged that she was to write Uncle Andrew and tell him what day to come. She did, and she told him to come on a Tuesday. But her writing wasn’t very good and poor Uncle Andrew thought she wrote Thursday. So on Thursday he drove all the way to Georgina’s home to be married. It was forty miles and a bitter cold day. But it wasn’t any colder than the reception he got from Georgina. She was out in the porch, with her head tied up in a towel, picking geese. She had been all ready Tuesday, and her friends and the minister were there, and the wedding supper prepared. But there was no bridegroom and Georgina was furious. Nothing Uncle Andrew could say would appease her. She wouldn’t listen to a word of explanation, but told him to go, and never show his nose there again. So poor Uncle Andrew had to go ruefully home, hoping that she would relent later on, because he was really very much in love with her.”

“And did she?” queried Felicity.

“She did. Thirteen years exactly from that day they were married. It took her just that long to forgive him.”

“It took her just that long to find out she couldn’t get anybody else,” said Dan, cynically.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PRODIGAL RETURNS

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Aunt Olivia and the Story Girl lived in a whirlwind of dressmaking after that, and enjoyed it hugely. Cecily and Felicity also had to have new dresses for the great event, and they talked of little else for a fortnight. Cecily declared that she hated to go to sleep because she was sure to dream that she was at Aunt Olivia's wedding in her old faded gingham dress and a ragged apron.

"And no shoes or stockings," she added, "and I can't move, and everyone walks past and looks at my feet."

"That's only in a dream," mourned Sara Ray, "but I may have to wear my last summer's white dress to the wedding. It's too short, but ma says it's plenty good for this summer. I'll be so mortified if I have to wear it."

"I'd rather not go at all than wear a dress that wasn't nice," said Felicity pleasantly.

"I'd go to the wedding if I had to go in my school dress," cried Sara Ray. "I've never been to anything. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"My Aunt Jane always said that if you were neat and tidy it didn't matter whether you were dressed fine or not," said Peter.

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about your Aunt Jane," said Felicity crossly.

Peter looked grieved but held his peace. Felicity was very hard on him that spring, but his loyalty never wavered. Everything she said or did was right in Peter's eyes.

“It’s all very well to be neat and tidy,” said Sara Ray, “but I like a little style too.”

“I think you’ll find your mother will get you a new dress after all,” comforted Cecily. “Anyway, nobody will notice you because everyone will be looking at the bride. Aunt Olivia will make a lovely bride. Just think how sweet she’ll look in a white silk dress and a floating veil.”

“She says she is going to have the ceremony performed out here in the orchard under her own tree,” said the Story Girl. “Won’t that be romantic? It almost makes me feel like getting married myself.”

“What a way to talk,” rebuked Felicity, “and you only fifteen.”

“Lots of people have been married at fifteen,” laughed the Story Girl. “Lady Jane Gray was.”

“But you are always saying that Valeria H. Montague’s stories are silly and not true to life, so that is no argument,” retorted Felicity, who knew more about cooking than about history, and evidently imagined that the Lady Jane Gray was one of Valeria’s titled heroines.

The wedding was a perennial source of conversation among us in those days; but presently its interest palled for a time in the light of another quite tremendous happening. One Saturday night Peter’s mother called to take him home with her for Sunday. She had been working at Mr. James Frewen’s, and Mr. Frewen was driving her home. We had never seen Peter’s mother before, and we looked at her with discreet curiosity. She was a plump, black-eyed little woman, neat as a pin, but with a rather tired and careworn face that looked as if it should have been rosy and jolly. Life had been a hard battle for her, and I rather think that her curly-headed little lad was all that had kept heart and spirit in her. Peter went home with her and returned Sunday evening. We were in the orchard sitting around the Pulpit Stone, where we had, according to the custom of the households of King, been learning our golden texts and memory verses for the next Sunday School lesson. Paddy, grown sleek and handsome again, was sitting on the stone itself, washing his jowls.

Peter joined us with a very queer expression on his face. He seemed bursting with some news which he wanted to tell and yet hardly liked to.

“Why are you looking so mysterious, Peter?” demanded the Story Girl.

“What do you think has happened?” asked Peter solemnly.

“What has?”

“My father has come home,” answered Peter.

The announcement produced all the sensation he could have wished. We crowded around him in excitement.

“Peter! When did he come back?”

“Saturday night. He was there when ma and I got home. It give her an awful turn. I didn’t know him at first, of course.”

“Peter Craig, I believe you are glad your father has come back,” cried the Story Girl.

“‘Course I’m glad,” retorted Peter.

“And after you saying you didn’t want ever to see him again,” said Felicity.

“You just wait. You haven’t heard my story yet. I wouldn’t have been glad to see father if he’d come back the same as he went away. But he is a changed man. He happened to go into a revival meeting one night this spring and he got converted. And he’s come home to stay, and he says he’s never going to drink another drop, but he’s going to look after his family. Ma isn’t to do any more washing for nobody but him and me, and I’m not to be a hired boy any longer. He says I can stay with your Uncle Roger till the fall ‘cause I promised I would, but after that I’m to stay home and go to school right along and learn to be whatever I’d like to be. I tell you it made me feel queer. Everything seemed to be upset. But he gave ma forty dollars — every cent he had — so I guess he really is converted.”

“I hope it will last, I’m sure,” said Felicity. She did not say it nastily, however. We were all glad for Peter’s sake, though a little dizzy over the unexpectedness of it all.

“This is what I’d like to know,” said Peter. “How did Peg Bowen know my father was coming home? Don’t you tell me she isn’t a witch after that.”

“And she knew about your Aunt Olivia’s wedding, too,” added Sara Ray.

“Oh, well, she likely heard that from some one. Grown up folks talk things over long before they tell them to children,” said Cecily.

“Well, she couldn’t have heard father was coming home from any one,” answered Peter. “He was converted up in Maine, where nobody knew him, and he never told a soul he was coming till he got here. No, you can believe what you like, but I’m satisfied at last that Peg is a witch and that skull of hers does tell her things. She told me father was coming home and he come!”

“How happy you must be,” sighed Sara Ray romantically. “It’s just like that story in the Family Guide, where the missing earl comes home to his family just as the Countess and Lady Violetta are going to be turned out by the cruel heir.”

Felicity sniffed.

“There’s some difference, I guess. The earl had been imprisoned for years in a loathsome dungeon.”

Perhaps Peter’s father had too, if we but realized it — imprisoned in the dungeon of his own evil appetites and habits, than which none could be more loathsome. But a Power, mightier than the forces of evil, had struck off his fetters and led him back to his long-forfeited liberty and light. And no countess or lady of high degree could have welcomed a long-lost earl home more joyfully than the tired little washerwoman had welcomed the erring husband of her youth.

But in Peter's ointment of joy there was a fly or two. So very, very few things are flawless in this world, even on the golden road.

"Of course I'm awful glad that father has come back and that ma won't have to wash any more," he said with a sigh, "but there are two things that kind of worry me. My Aunt Jane always said that it didn't do any good to worry, and I s'pose it don't, but it's kind of a relief."

"What's worrying you?" asked Felix.

"Well, for one thing I'll feel awful bad to go away from you all. I'll miss you just dreadful, and I won't even be able to go to the same school. I'll have to go to Markdale school."

"But you must come and see us often," said Felicity graciously. "Markdale isn't so far away, and you could spend every other Saturday afternoon with us anyway."

Peter's black eyes filled with adoring gratitude.

"That's so kind of you, Felicity. I'll come as often as I can, of course; but it won't be the same as being around with you all the time. The other thing is even worse. You see, it was a Methodist revival father got converted in, and so of course he joined the Methodist church. He wasn't anything before. He used to say he was a Nothingarian and lived up to it — kind of bragging like. But he's a strong Methodist now, and is going to go to Markdale Methodist church and pay to the salary. Now what'll he say when I tell him I'm a Presbyterian?"

"You haven't told him, yet?" asked the Story Girl.

"No, I didn't dare. I was scared he'd say I'd have to be a Methodist."

"Well, Methodists are pretty near as good as Presbyterians," said Felicity, with the air of one making a great concession.

"I guess they're every bit as good," retorted Peter. "But that ain't the point. I've got to be a Presbyterian, 'cause I stick to a thing when I once decide

it. But I expect father will be mad when he finds out.”

“If he’s converted he oughtn’t to get mad,” said Dan.

“Well, lots o’ people do. But if he isn’t mad he’ll be sorry, and that’ll be even worse, for a Presbyterian I’m bound to be. But I expect it will make things unpleasant.”

“You needn’t tell him anything about it,” advised Felicity. “Just keep quiet and go to the Methodist church until you get big, and then you can go where you please.”

“No, that wouldn’t be honest,” said Peter sturdily. “My Aunt Jane always said it was best to be open and above board in everything, and especially in religion. So I’ll tell father right out, but I’ll wait a few weeks so as not to spoil things for ma too soon if he acts up.”

Peter was not the only one who had secret cares. Sara Ray was beginning to feel worried over her looks. I heard her and Cecily talking over their troubles one evening while I was weeding the onion bed and they were behind the hedge knitting lace. I did not mean to eavesdrop. I supposed they knew I was there until Cecily overwhelmed me with indignation later on.

“I’m so afraid, Cecily, that I’m going to be homely all my life,” said poor Sara with a tremble in her voice. “You can stand being ugly when you are young if you have any hope of being better looking when you grow up. But I’m getting worse. Aunt Mary says I’m going to be the very image of Aunt Matilda. And Aunt Matilda is as homely as she can be. It isn’t” — and poor Sara sighed—“a very cheerful prospect. If I am ugly nobody will ever want to marry me, and,” concluded Sara candidly, “I don’t want to be an old maid.”

“But plenty of girls get married who aren’t a bit pretty,” comforted Cecily. “Besides, you are real nice looking at times, Sara. I think you are going to have a nice figure.”

“But just look at my hands,” moaned Sara. “They’re simply covered with warts.”

“Oh, the warts will all disappear before you grow up,” said Cecily.

“But they won’t disappear before the school concert. How am I to get up there and recite? You know there is one line in my recitation, ‘She waved her lily-white hand,’ and I have to wave mine when I say it. Fancy waving a lily-white hand all covered with warts. I’ve tried every remedy I ever heard of, but nothing does any good. Judy Pineau said if I rubbed them with toad-spit it would take them away for sure. But how am I to get any toad-spit?”

“It doesn’t sound like a very nice remedy, anyhow,” shuddered Cecily. “I’d rather have the warts. But do you know, I believe if you didn’t cry so much over every little thing, you’d be ever so much better looking. Crying spoils your eyes and makes the end of your nose red.”

“I can’t help crying,” protested Sara. “My feelings are so very sensitive. I’ve given up trying to keep THAT resolution.”

“Well, men don’t like crybabies,” said Cecily sagely. Cecily had a good deal of Mother Eve’s wisdom tucked away in that smooth, brown head of hers.

“Cecily, do you ever intend to be married?” asked Sara in a confidential tone.

“Goodness!” cried Cecily, quite shocked. “It will be time enough when I grow up to think of that, Sara.”

“I should think you’d have to think of it now, with Cyrus Brisk as crazy after you as he is.”

“I wish Cyrus Brisk was at the bottom of the Red Sea,” exclaimed Cecily, goaded into a spurt of temper by mention of the detested name.

“What has Cyrus been doing now?” asked Felicity, coming around the corner of the hedge.

“Doing NOW! It’s ALL the time. He just worries me to death,” returned Cecily angrily. “He keeps writing me letters and putting them in my desk or in my reader. I never answer one of them, but he keeps on. And in the last one, mind you, he said he’d do something desperate right off if I wouldn’t promise to marry him when we grew up.”

“Just think, Cecily, you’ve had a proposal already,” said Sara Ray in an awe-struck tone.

“But he hasn’t done anything desperate yet, and that was last week,” commented Felicity, with a toss of her head.

“He sent me a lock of his hair and wanted one of mine in exchange,” continued Cecily indignantly. “I tell you I sent his back to him pretty quick.”

“Did you never answer any of his letters?” asked Sara Ray.

“No, indeed! I guess not!”

“Do you know,” said Felicity, “I believe if you wrote him just once and told him your exact opinion of him in good plain English it would cure him of his nonsense.”

“I couldn’t do that. I haven’t enough spunk,” confessed Cecily with a blush. “But I’ll tell you what I did do once. He wrote me a long letter last week. It was just awfully SOFT, and every other word was spelled wrong. He even spelled baking soda, ‘bacon soda!’”

“What on earth had he to say about baking soda in a love-letter?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, he said his mother sent him to the store for some and he forgot it because he was thinking about me. Well, I just took his letter and wrote in all the words, spelled right, above the wrong ones, in red ink, just as Mr. Perkins makes us do with our dictation exercises, and sent it back to him. I thought maybe he’d feel insulted and stop writing to me.”

“And did he?”

“No, he didn’t. It is my opinion you can’t insult Cyrus Brisk. He is too thick-skinned. He wrote another letter, and thanked me for correcting his mistakes, and said it made him feel glad because it showed I was beginning to take an interest in him when I wanted him to spell better. Did you ever? Miss Marwood says it is wrong to hate anyone, but I don’t care, I hate Cyrus Brisk.”

“Mrs. Cyrus Brisk WOULD be an awful name,” giggled Felicity.

“Flossie Brisk says Cyrus is ruining all the trees on his father’s place cutting your name on them,” said Sara Ray. “His father told him he would whip him if he didn’t stop, but Cyrus keeps right on. He told Flossie it relieved his feelings. Flossie says he cut yours and his together on the birch tree in front of the parlour window, and a row of hearts around them.”

“Just where every visitor can see them, I suppose,” lamented Cecily. “He just worries my life out. And what I mind most of all is, he sits and looks

at me in school with such melancholy, reproachful eyes when he ought to be working sums. I won't look at him, but I FEEL him staring at me, and it makes me so nervous."

"They say his mother was out of her mind at one time," said Felicity.

I do not think Felicity was quite well pleased that Cyrus should have passed over her rose-red prettiness to set his affections on that demure elf of a Cecily. She did not want the allegiance of Cyrus in the least, but it was something of a slight that he had not wanted her to want it.

"And he sends me pieces of poetry he cuts out of the papers," Cecily went on, "with lots of the lines marked with a lead pencil. Yesterday he put one in his letter, and this is what he marked:

"If you will not relent to me

Then must I learn to know

Darkness alone till life be flown.

Here — I have the piece in my sewing-bag — I'll read it all to you."

Those three graceless girls read the sentimental rhyme and giggled over it. Poor Cyrus! His young affections were sadly misplaced. But after all, though Cecily never relented towards him, he did not condemn himself to darkness alone till life was flown. Quite early in life he wedded a stout, rosy, buxom lass, the very antithesis of his first love; he prospered in his undertakings, raised a large and respectable family, and was eventually appointed a Justice of the Peace. Which was all very sensible of Cyrus.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

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June was crowded full of interest that year. We gathered in with its sheaf of fragrant days the choicest harvest of childhood. Things happened right along. Cecily declared she hated to go to sleep for fear she might miss something. There were so many dear delights along the golden road to give us pleasure — the earth dappled with new blossom, the dance of shadows in the fields, the rustling, rain-wet ways of the woods, the faint fragrance in meadow lanes, liltings of birds and croon of bees in the old orchard, windy pipings on the hills, sunset behind the pines, limpid dews filling primrose cups, crescent moons through darklings boughs, soft nights alight with blinking stars. We enjoyed all these boons, unthinkingly and lightheartedly, as children do. And besides these, there was the absorbing little drama of human life which was being enacted all around us, and in which each of us played a satisfying part — the gay preparations for Aunt Olivia's mid-June wedding, the excitement of practising for the concert with which our schoolteacher, Mr. Perkins, had elected to close the school year, and Cecily's troubles with Cyrus Brisk, which furnished unholy mirth for the rest of us, though Cecily could not see the funny side of it at all.

Matters went from bad to worse in the case of the irrepressible Cyrus. He continued to shower Cecily with notes, the spelling of which showed no improvement; he worried the life out of her by constantly threatening to fight Willy Fraser — although, as Felicity sarcastically pointed out, he never did it.

“But I'm always afraid he will,” said Cecily, “and it would be such a DISGRACE to have two boys fighting over me in school.”

“You must have encouraged Cyrus a little in the beginning or he’d never have been so persevering,” said Felicity unjustly.

“I never did!” cried outraged Cecily. “You know very well, Felicity King, that I hated Cyrus Brisk ever since the very first time I saw his big, fat, red face. So there!”

“Felicity is just jealous because Cyrus didn’t take a notion to her instead of you, Sis,” said Dan.

“Talk sense!” snapped Felicity.

“If I did you wouldn’t understand me, sweet little sister,” rejoined aggravating Dan.

Finally Cyrus crowned his iniquities by stealing the denied lock of Cecily’s hair. One sunny afternoon in school, Cecily and Kitty Marr asked and received permission to sit out on the side bench before the open window, where the cool breeze swept in from the green fields beyond. To sit on this bench was always considered a treat, and was only allowed as a reward of merit; but Cecily and Kitty had another reason for wishing to sit there. Kitty had read in a magazine that sun-baths were good for the hair; so both she and Cecily tossed their long braids over the windowsill and let them hang there in the broiling sunshine. And while Cecily sat thus, diligently working a fraction sum on her slate, that base Cyrus asked permission to go out, having previously borrowed a pair of scissors from one of the big girls who did fancy work at the noon recess. Outside, Cyrus sneaked up close to the window and cut off a piece of Cecily’s hair.

This rape of the lock did not produce quite such terrible consequences as the more famous one in Pope’s poem, but Cecily’s soul was no less agitated than Belinda’s. She cried all the way home from school about it, and only checked her tears when Dan declared he’d fight Cyrus and make him give it up.

“Oh, no, You mustn’t.” said Cecily, struggling with her sobs. “I won’t have you fighting on my account for anything. And besides, he’d likely lick you — he’s so big and rough. And the folks at home might find out all about it,

and Uncle Roger would never give me any peace, and mother would be cross, for she'd never believe it wasn't my fault. It wouldn't be so bad if he'd only taken a little, but he cut a great big chunk right off the end of one of the braids. Just look at it. I'll have to cut the other to make them fair — and they'll look so awful stubby."

But Cyrus' acquirement of the chunk of hair was his last triumph. His downfall was near; and, although it involved Cecily in a most humiliating experience, over which she cried half the following night, in the end she confessed it was worth undergoing just to get rid of Cyrus.

Mr. Perkins was an exceedingly strict disciplinarian. No communication of any sort was permitted between his pupils during school hours. Anyone caught violating this rule was promptly punished by the infliction of one of the weird penances for which Mr. Perkins was famous, and which were generally far worse than ordinary whipping.

One day in school Cyrus sent a letter across to Cecily. Usually he left his effusions in her desk, or between the leaves of her books; but this time it was passed over to her under cover of the desk through the hands of two or three scholars. Just as Em Frewen held it over the aisle Mr. Perkins wheeled around from his station before the blackboard and caught her in the act.

"Bring that here, Emmeline," he commanded.

Cyrus turned quite pale. Em carried the note to Mr. Perkins. He took it, held it up, and scrutinized the address.

"Did you write this to Cecily, Emmeline?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Who wrote it then?"

Em said quite shamelessly that she didn't know — it had just been passed over from the next row.

“And I suppose you have no idea where it came from?” said Mr. Perkins, with his frightful, sardonic grin. “Well, perhaps Cecily can tell us. You may take your seat, Emmeline, and you will remain at the foot of your spelling class for a week as punishment for passing the note. Cecily, come here.”

Indignant Em sat down and poor, innocent Cecily was haled forth to public ignominy. She went with a crimson face.

“Cecily,” said her tormentor, “do you know who wrote this letter to you?”

Cecily, like a certain renowned personage, could not tell a lie.

“I — I think so, sir,” she murmured faintly.

“Who was it?”

“I can’t tell you that,” stammered Cecily, on the verge of tears.

“Ah!” said Mr. Perkins politely. “Well, I suppose I could easily find out by opening it. But it is very impolite to open other people’s letters. I think I have a better plan. Since you refuse to tell me who wrote it, open it yourself, take this chalk, and copy the contents on the blackboard that we may all enjoy them. And sign the writer’s name at the bottom.”

“Oh,” gasped Cecily, choosing the lesser of two evils, “I’ll tell you who wrote it — it was —

“Hush!” Mr. Perkins checked her with a gentle motion of his hand. He was always most gentle when most inexorable. “You did not obey me when I first ordered you to tell me the writer. You cannot have the privilege of doing so now. Open the note, take the chalk, and do as I command you.”

Worms will turn, and even meek, mild, obedient little souls like Cecily may be goaded to the point of wild, sheer rebellion.

“I — I won’t!” she cried passionately.

Mr. Perkins, martinet though he was, would hardly, I think, have inflicted such a punishment on Cecily, who was a favourite of his, had he known the real nature of that luckless missive. But, as he afterwards admitted, he thought it was merely a note from some other girl, of such trifling sort as schoolgirls are wont to write; and moreover, he had already committed himself to the decree, which, like those of Mede and Persian, must not alter. To let Cecily off, after her mad defiance, would be to establish a revolutionary precedent.

“So you really think you won’t?” he queried smilingly. “Well, on second thoughts, you may take your choice. Either you will do as I have bidden you, or you will sit for three days with” — Mr. Perkins’ eye skimmed over the schoolroom to find a boy who was sitting alone—”with Cyrus Brisk.”

This choice of Mr. Perkins, who knew nothing of the little drama of emotions that went on under the routine of lessons and exercises in his domain, was purely accidental, but we took it at the time as a stroke of diabolical genius. It left Cecily no choice. She would have done almost anything before she would have sat with Cyrus Brisk. With flashing eyes she tore open the letter, snatched up the chalk, and dashed at the blackboard.

In a few minutes the contents of that letter graced the expanse usually sacred to more prosaic compositions. I cannot reproduce it verbatim, for I had no after opportunity of refreshing my memory. But I remember that it was exceedingly sentimental and exceedingly ill-spelled — for Cecily mercilessly copied down poor Cyrus’ mistakes. He wrote her that he wore her hare over his hart—”and he stole it,” Cecily threw passionately over her shoulder at Mr. Perkins — that her eyes were so sweet and lovely that he couldn’t find words nice enuf to describ them, that he could never forget how butiful she had looked in prar meeting the evening before, and that some meels he couldn’t eat for thinking of her, with more to the same effect and he signed it “yours till deth us do part, Cyrus Brisk.”

As the writing proceeded we scholars exploded into smothered laughter, despite our awe of Mr. Perkins. Mr. Perkins himself could not keep a straight face. He turned abruptly away and looked out of the window, but we could see his shoulders shaking. When Cecily had finished and had

thrown down the chalk with bitter vehemence, he turned around with a very red face.

“That will do. You may sit down. Cyrus, since it seems you are the guilty person, take the eraser and wipe that off the board. Then go stand in the corner, facing the room, and hold your arms straight above your head until I tell you to take them down.”

Cyrus obeyed and Cecily fled to her seat and wept, nor did Mr. Perkins meddle with her more that day. She bore her burden of humiliation bitterly for several days, until she was suddenly comforted by a realization that Cyrus had ceased to persecute her. He wrote no more letters, he gazed no longer in rapt adoration, he brought no more votive offerings of gum and pencils to her shrine. At first we thought he had been cured by the unmerciful chaffing he had to undergo from his mates, but eventually his sister told Cecily the true reason. Cyrus had at last been driven to believe that Cecily's aversion to him was real, and not merely the defence of maiden coyness. If she hated him so intensely that she would rather write that note on the blackboard than sit with him, what use was it to sigh like a furnace longer for her? Mr. Perkins had blighted love's young dream for Cyrus with a killing frost. Thenceforth sweet Cecily kept the noiseless tenor of her way unvexed by the attentions of enamoured swains.

CHAPTER XVI.

AUNT UNA'S STORY

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Felicity, and Cecily, Dan, Felix, Sara Ray and I were sitting one evening on the mossy stones in Uncle Roger's hill pasture, where we had sat the morning the Story Girl told us the tale of the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess. But it was evening now and the valley beneath us was brimmed up with the glow of the afterlight. Behind us, two tall, shapely spruce trees rose up against the sunset, and through the dark oriel of their sundered branches an evening star looked down. We sat on a little strip of emerald grassland and before us was a sloping meadow all white with daisies.

We were waiting for Peter and the Story Girl. Peter had gone to Markdale after dinner to spend the afternoon with his reunited parents because it was his birthday. He had left us grimly determined to confess to his father the dark secret of his Presbyterianism, and we were anxious to know what the result had been. The Story Girl had gone that morning with Miss Reade to visit the latter's home near Charlottetown, and we expected soon to see her coming gaily along over the fields from the Armstrong place.

Presently Peter came jauntily stepping along the field path up the hill.

"Hasn't Peter got tall?" said Cecily.

"Peter is growing to be a very fine looking boy," decreed Felicity.

"I notice he's got ever so much handsomer since his father came home," said Dan, with a killing sarcasm that was wholly lost on Felicity, who gravely responded that she supposed it was because Peter felt so much freer from care and responsibility.

"What luck, Peter?" yelled Dan, as soon as Peter was within earshot.

“Everything’s all right,” he shouted jubilantly. “I told father right off, licketty-split, as soon as I got home,” he added when he reached us. “I was anxious to have it over with. I says, solemn-like, ‘Dad, there’s something I’ve got to tell you, and I don’t know how you’ll take it, but it can’t be helped,’ I says. Dad looked pretty sober, and he says, says he, ‘What have you been up to, Peter? Don’t be afraid to tell me. I’ve been forgiven to seventy times seven, so surely I can forgive a little, too?’ ‘Well,’ I says, desperate-like, ‘the truth is, father, I’m a Presbyterian. I made up my mind last summer, the time of the Judgment Day, that I’d be a Presbyterian, and I’ve got to stick to it. I’m sorry I can’t be a Methodist, like you and mother and Aunt Jane, but I can’t and that’s all there is to it,’ I says. Then I waited, scared-like. But father, he just looked relieved and he says, says he, ‘Goodness, boy, you can be a Presbyterian or anything else you like, so long as it’s Protestant. I’m not caring,’ he says. ‘The main thing is that you must be good and do what’s right.’ I tell you,” concluded Peter emphatically, “father is a Christian all right.”

“Well, I suppose your mind will be at rest now,” said Felicity. “What’s that you have in your buttonhole?”

“That’s a four-leaved clover,” answered Peter exultantly. “That means good luck for the summer. I found it in Markdale. There ain’t much clover in Carlisle this year of any kind of leaf. The crop is going to be a failure. Your Uncle Roger says it’s because there ain’t enough old maids in Carlisle. There’s lots of them in Markdale, and that’s the reason, he says, why they always have such good clover crops there.”

“What on earth have old maids to do with it?” cried Cecily.

“I don’t believe they’ve a single thing to do with it, but Mr. Roger says they have, and he says a man called Darwin proved it. This is the rigmarole he got off to me the other day. The clover crop depends on there being plenty of bumblebees, because they are the only insects with tongues long enough to — to — fer — fertilize — I think he called it the blossoms. But mice eat bumblebees and cats eat mice and old maids keep cats. So your Uncle Roger says the more old maids the more cats, and the more cats the fewer field-mice, and the fewer field-mice the more bumblebees, and the more bumblebees the better clover crops.”

“So don’t worry if you do get to be old maids, girls,” said Dan.
“Remember, you’ll be helping the clover crops.”

“I never heard such stuff as you boys talk,” said Felicity, “and Uncle Roger is no better.”

“There comes the Story Girl,” cried Cecily eagerly. “Now we’ll hear all about Beautiful Alice’s home.”

The Story Girl was bombarded with eager questions as soon as she arrived. Miss Reade’s home was a dream of a place, it appeared. The house was just covered with ivy and there was a most delightful old garden—”and,” added the Story Girl, with the joy of a connoisseur who has found a rare gem, “the sweetest little story connected with it. And I saw the hero of the story too.”

“Where was the heroine?” queried Cecily.

“She is dead.”

“Oh, of course she’d have to die,” exclaimed Dan in disgust. “I’d like a story where somebody lived once in awhile.”

“I’ve told you heaps of stories where people lived,” retorted the Story Girl. “If this heroine hadn’t died there wouldn’t have been any story. She was Miss Reade’s aunt and her name was Una, and I believe she must have been just like Miss Reade herself. Miss Reade told me all about her. When we went into the garden I saw in one corner of it an old stone bench arched over by a couple of pear trees and all grown about with grass and violets. And an old man was sitting on it — a bent old man with long, snow-white hair and beautiful sad blue eyes. He seemed very lonely and sorrowful and I wondered that Miss Reade didn’t speak to him. But she never let on she saw him and took me away to another part of the garden. After awhile he got up and went away and then Miss Reade said, ‘Come over to Aunt Una’s seat and I will tell you about her and her lover — that man who has just gone out.’

“‘Oh, isn’t he too old for a lover?’ I said.

“Beautiful Alice laughed and said it was forty years since he had been her Aunt Una’s lover. He had been a tall, handsome young man then, and her Aunt Una was a beautiful girl of nineteen.

“We went over and sat down and Miss Reade told me all about her. She said that when she was a child she had heard much of her Aunt Una — that she seemed to have been one of those people who are not soon forgotten, whose personality seems to linger about the scenes of their lives long after they have passed away.”

“What is a personality? Is it another word for ghost?” asked Peter.

“No,” said the Story Girl shortly. “I can’t stop in a story to explain words.”

“I don’t believe you know what it is yourself,” said Felicity.

The Story Girl picked up her hat, which she had thrown down on the grass, and placed it defiantly on her brown curls.

“I’m going in,” she announced. “I have to help Aunt Olivia ice a cake tonight, and you all seem more interested in dictionaries than stories.”

“That’s not fair,” I exclaimed. “Dan and Felix and Sara Ray and Cecily and I have never said a word. It’s mean to punish us for what Peter and Felicity did. We want to hear the rest of the story. Never mind what a personality is but go on — and, Peter, you young ass, keep still.”

“I only wanted to know,” muttered Peter sulkily.

“I DO know what personality is, but it’s hard to explain,” said the Story Girl, relenting. “It’s what makes you different from Dan, Peter, and me different from Felicity or Cecily. Miss Reade’s Aunt Una had a personality that was very uncommon. And she was beautiful, too, with white skin and night-black eyes and hair — a ‘moonlight beauty,’ Miss Reade called it. She used to keep a kind of a diary, and Miss Reade’s mother used to read parts of it to her. She wrote verses in it and they were lovely; and she wrote descriptions of the old garden which she loved very much. Miss Reade said that everything in the garden, plot or shrub or tree, recalled to

her mind some phrase or verse of her Aunt Una's, so that the whole place seemed full of her, and her memory haunted the walks like a faint, sweet perfume.

“Una had, as I've told you, a lover; and they were to have been married on her twentieth birthday. Her wedding dress was to have been a gown of white brocade with purple violets in it. But a little while before it she took ill with fever and died; and she was buried on her birthday instead of being married. It was just in the time of opening roses. Her lover has been faithful to her ever since; he has never married, and every June, on her birthday, he makes a pilgrimage to the old garden and sits for a long time in silence on the bench where he used to woo her on crimson eves and moonlight nights of long ago. Miss Reade says she always loves to see him sitting there because it gives her such a deep and lasting sense of the beauty and strength of love which can thus outlive time and death. And sometimes, she says, it gives her a little eerie feeling, too, as if her Aunt Una were really sitting there beside him, keeping tryst, although she has been in her grave for forty years.”

“It would be real romantic to die young and have your lover make a pilgrimage to your garden every year,” reflected Sara Ray.

“It would be more comfortable to go on living and get married to him,” said Felicity. “Mother says all those sentimental ideas are bosh and I expect they are. It's a wonder Beautiful Alice hasn't a beau herself. She is so pretty and ladylike.”

“The Carlisle fellows all say she is too stuck up,” said Dan.

“There's nobody in Carlisle half good enough for her,” cried the Story Girl, “except — ex-cept—”

“Except who?” asked Felix.

“Never mind,” said the Story Girl mysteriously.

CHAPTER XVII.

AUNT OLIVIA'S WEDDING

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What a delightful, old-fashioned, wholesome excitement there was about Aunt Olivia's wedding! The Monday and Tuesday preceding it we did not go to school at all, but were all kept home to do chores and run errands. The cooking and decorating and arranging that went on those two days was amazing, and Felicity was so happy over it all that she did not even quarrel with Dan — though she narrowly escaped it when he told her that the Governor's wife was coming to the wedding.

"Mind you have some of her favourite rusks for her," he said.

"I guess," said Felicity with dignity, "that Aunt Olivia's wedding supper will be good enough for even a Governor's wife."

"I s'pose none of us except the Story Girl will get to the first table," said Felix, rather gloomily.

"Never mind," comforted Felicity. "There's a whole turkey to be kept for us, and a freezerful of ice cream. Cecily and I are going to wait on the tables, and we'll put away a little of everything that's extra nice for our suppers."

"I do so want to have my supper with you," sighed Sara Ray, "but I s'pose ma will drag me with her wherever she goes. She won't trust me out of her sight a minute the whole evening — I know she won't."

"I'll get Aunt Olivia to ask her to let you have your supper with us," said Cecily. "She can't refuse the bride's request."

“You don’t know all ma can do,” returned Sara darkly. “No, I feel that I’ll have to eat my supper with her. But I suppose I ought to be very thankful I’m to get to the wedding at all, and that ma did get me a new white dress for it. Even yet I’m so scared something will happen to prevent me from getting to it.”

Monday evening shrouded itself in clouds, and all night long the voice of the wind answered to the voice of the rain. Tuesday the downpour continued. We were quite frantic about it. Suppose it kept on raining over Wednesday! Aunt Olivia couldn’t be married in the orchard then. That would be too bad, especially when the late apple tree had most obligingly kept its store of blossom until after all the other trees had faded and then burst lavishly into bloom for Aunt Olivia’s wedding. That apple tree was always very late in blooming, and this year it was a week later than usual. It was a sight to see — a great tree-pyramid with high, far-spreading boughs, over which a wealth of rosy snow seemed to have been flung. Never had bride a more magnificent canopy.

To our rapture, however, it cleared up beautifully Tuesday evening, and the sun, before setting in purple pomp, poured a flood of wonderful radiance over the whole great, green, diamond-dripping world, promising a fair morrow. Uncle Alec drove off to the station through it to bring home the bridegroom and his best man. Dan was full of a wild idea that we should all meet them at the gate, armed with cowbells and tin-pans, and “charivari” them up the lane. Peter sided with him, but the rest of us voted down the suggestion.

“Do you want Dr. Seton to think we are a pack of wild Indians?” asked Felicity severely. “A nice opinion he’d have of our manners!”

“Well, it’s the only chance we’ll have to chivaree them,” grumbled Dan. “Aunt Olivia wouldn’t mind. SHE can take a joke.”

“Ma would kill you if you did such a thing,” warned Felicity. “Dr. Seton lives in Halifax and they NEVER chivaree people there. He would think it very vulgar.”

“Then he should have stayed in Halifax and got married there,” retorted Dan, sulkily.

We were very curious to see our uncle-elect. When he came and Uncle Alec took him into the parlour, we were all crowded into the dark corner behind the stairs to peep at him. Then we fled to the moonlight world outside and discussed him at the dairy.

“He’s bald,” said Cecily disappointedly.

“And RATHER short and stout,” said Felicity.

“He’s forty, if he’s a day,” said Dan.

“Never you mind,” cried the Story Girl loyally, “Aunt Olivia loves him with all her heart.”

“And more than that, he’s got lots of money,” added Felicity.

“Well, he may be all right,” said Peter, “but it’s my opinion that your Aunt Olivia could have done just as well on the Island.”

“YOUR opinion doesn’t matter very much to our family,” said Felicity crushingly.

But when we made the acquaintance of Dr. Seton next morning we liked him enormously, and voted him a jolly good fellow. Even Peter remarked aside to me that he guessed Miss Olivia hadn’t made much of a mistake after all, though it was plain he thought she was running a risk in not sticking to the Island. The girls had not much time to discuss him with us. They were all exceedingly busy and whisked about at such a rate that they seemed to possess the power of being in half a dozen places at once. The importance of Felicity was quite terrible. But after dinner came a lull.

“Thank goodness, everything is ready at last,” breathed Felicity devoutly, as we foregathered for a brief space in the fir wood. “We’ve nothing more to do now but get dressed. It’s really a serious thing to have a wedding in the family.”

“I have a note from Sara Ray,” said Cecily. “Judy Pineau brought it up when she brought Mrs. Ray’s spoons. Just let me read it to you: —

DEAREST CECILY: — A DREADFUL MISFORTUNE has happened to me. Last

night I went with Judy to water the cows and in the spruce bush we found a WASPS’ NEST and Judy thought it was AN OLD ONE and she POKED IT WITH A STICK. And it was a NEW ONE, full of wasps, and they all flew out and STUNG US TERRIBLY, on the face and hands.

My face is all swelled up and I can HARDLY SEE out of one eye.

The SUFFERING was awful but I didn’t mind that as much as being scared ma wouldn’t take me to the wedding. But she says I can go and I’m going. I know that I am a HARD-LOOKING SIGHT, but it isn’t anything catching. I am writing this so that you won’t get a shock when you see me. Isn’t it SO STRANGE to think your dear Aunt Olivia is going away? How you will miss her! But your loss will be her gain.

““Au revoir,

““Your loving chum,

SARA RAY.’”

“That poor child,” said the Story Girl.

“Well, all I hope is that strangers won’t take her for one of the family,” remarked Felicity in a disgusted tone.

Aunt Olivia was married at five o’clock in the orchard under the late apple tree. It was a pretty scene. The air was full of the perfume of apple bloom, and the bees blundered foolishly and delightfully from one blossom to another, half drunken with perfume. The old orchard was full of smiling guests in wedding garments. Aunt Olivia was most beautiful amid the frost of her bridal veil, and the Story Girl, in an unusually long white dress, with her brown curls clubbed up behind, looked so tall and grownup that we hardly recognized her. After the ceremony — during which Sara Ray cried all the time — there was a royal wedding supper, and Sara Ray was permitted to eat her share of the feast with us.

“I’m glad I was stung by the wasps after all,” she said delightedly. “If I hadn’t been ma would never have let me eat with you. She just got tired explaining to people what was the matter with my face, and so she was glad to get rid of me. I know I look awful, but, oh, wasn’t the bride a dream?”

We missed the Story Girl, who, of course, had to have her supper at the bridal table; but we were a hilarious little crew and the girls had nobly kept their promise to save tidbits for us. By the time the last table was cleared away Aunt Olivia and our new uncle were ready to go. There was an orgy of tears and leavetakings, and then they drove away into the odorous moonlight night. Dan and Peter pursued them down the lane with a fiendish din of bells and pans, much to Felicity’s wrath. But Aunt Olivia and Uncle Robert took it in good part and waved their hands back to us with peals of laughter.

“They’re just that pleased with themselves that they wouldn’t mind if there was an earthquake,” said Felix, grinning.

“It’s been splendid and exciting, and everything went off well,” sighed Cecily, “but, oh dear, it’s going to be so queer and lonesome without Aunt Olivia. I just believe I’ll cry all night.”

“You’re tired to death, that’s what’s the matter with you,” said Dan, returning. “You girls have worked like slaves today.”

“Tomorrow will be even harder,” said Felicity comfortingly. “Everything will have to be cleaned up and put away.”

Peg Bowen paid us a call the next day and was regaled with a feast of fat things left over from the supper.

“Well, I’ve had all I can eat,” she said, when she had finished and brought out her pipe. “And that doesn’t happen to me every day. There ain’t been as much marrying as there used to be, and half the time they just sneak off to the minister, as if they were ashamed of it, and get married without any wedding or supper. That ain’t the King way, though. And so Olivia’s gone off at last. She weren’t in any hurry but they tell me she’s done well. Time’ll show.”

“Why don’t you get married yourself, Peg?” queried Uncle Roger teasingly. We held our breath over his temerity.

“Because I’m not so easy to please as your wife will be,” retorted Peg.

She departed in high good humour over her repartee. Meeting Sara Ray on the doorstep she stopped and asked her what was the matter with her face.

“Wasps,” stammered Sara Ray, laconic from terror.

“Humph! And your hands?”

“Warts.”

“I’ll tell you what’ll take them away. You get a pertater and go out under the full moon, cut the pertater in two, rub your warts with one half and say, ‘One, two, three, warts, go away from me.’ Then rub them with the other half and say, ‘One, two, three, four, warts, never trouble me more.’ Then bury the pertater and never tell a living soul where you buried it. You won’t have no more warts. Mind you bury the pertater, though. If you don’t, and anyone picks it up, she’ll get your warts.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

SARA RAY HELPS OUT

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We all missed Aunt Olivia greatly; she had been so merry and companionable, and had possessed such a knack of understanding small fry. But youth quickly adapts itself to changed conditions; in a few weeks it seemed as if the Story Girl had always been living at Uncle Alec's, and as if Uncle Roger had always had a fat, jolly housekeeper with a double chin and little, twinkling blue eyes. I don't think Aunt Janet ever quite got over missing Aunt Olivia, or looked upon Mrs. Hawkins as anything but a necessary evil; but life resumed its even tenor on the King farm, broken only by the ripples of excitement over the school concert and letters from Aunt Olivia describing her trip through the land of Evangeline. We incorporated the letters in Our Magazine under the heading "From Our Special Correspondent" and were very proud of them.

At the end of June our school concert came off and was a great event in our young lives. It was the first appearance of most of us on any platform, and some of us were very nervous. We all had recitations, except Dan, who had refused flatly to take any part and was consequently carefree.

"I'm sure I shall die when I find myself up on that platform, facing people," sighed Sara Ray, as we talked the affair over in Uncle Stephen's Walk the night before the concert.

"I'm afraid I'll faint," was Cecily's more moderate foreboding.

"I'm not one single bit nervous," said Felicity complacently.

"I'm not nervous this time," said the Story Girl, "but the first time I recited I was."

“My Aunt Jane,” remarked Peter, “used to say that an old teacher of hers told her that when she was going to recite or speak in public she must just get it firmly into her mind that it was only a lot of cabbage heads she had before her, and she wouldn’t be nervous.”

“One mightn’t be nervous, but I don’t think there would be much inspiration in reciting to cabbage heads,” said the Story Girl decidedly. “I want to recite to PEOPLE, and see them looking interested and thrilled.”

“If I can only get through my piece without breaking down I don’t care whether I thrill people or not,” said Sara Ray.

“I’m afraid I’ll forget mine and get stuck,” foreboded Felix. “Some of you fellows be sure and prompt me if I do — and do it quick, so’s I won’t get worse rattled.”

“I know one thing,” said Cecily resolutely, “and that is, I’m going to curl my hair for tomorrow night. I’ve never curled it since Peter almost died, but I simply must tomorrow night, for all the other girls are going to have theirs in curls.”

“The dew and heat will take all the curl out of yours and then you’ll look like a scarecrow,” warned Felicity.

“No, I won’t. I’m going to put my hair up in paper tonight and wet it with a curling-fluid that Judy Pineau uses. Sara brought me up a bottle of it. Judy says it is great stuff — your hair will keep in curl for days, no matter how damp the weather is. I’ll leave my hair in the papers till tomorrow evening, and then I’ll have beautiful curls.”

“You’d better leave your hair alone,” said Dan gruffly. “Smooth hair is better than a lot of fly-away curls.”

But Cecily was not to be persuaded. Curls she craved and curls she meant to have.

“I’m thankful my warts have all gone, any-way,” said Sara Ray.

“So they have,” exclaimed Felicity. “Did you try Peg’s recipe?”

“Yes. I didn’t believe in it but I tried it. For the first few days afterwards I kept watching my warts, but they didn’t go away, and then I gave up and forgot them. But one day last week I just happened to look at my hands and there wasn’t a wart to be seen. It was the most amazing thing.”

“And yet you’ll say Peg Bowen isn’t a witch,” said Peter.

“Pshaw, it was just the potato juice,” scoffed Dan.

“It was a dry old potato I had, and there wasn’t much juice in it,” said Sara Ray. “One hardly knows what to believe. But one thing is certain — my warts are gone.”

Cecily put her hair up in curl-papers that night, thoroughly soaked in Judy Pineau’s curling-fluid. It was a nasty job, for the fluid was very sticky, but Cecily persevered and got it done. Then she went to bed with a towel tied over her head to protect the pillow. She did not sleep well and had uncanny dreams, but she came down to breakfast with an expression of triumph. The Story Girl examined her head critically and said,

“Cecily, if I were you I’d take those papers out this morning.”

“Oh, no; if I do my hair will be straight again by night. I mean to leave them in till the last minute.”

“I wouldn’t do that — I really wouldn’t,” persisted the Story Girl. “If you do your hair will be too curly and all bushy and fuzzy.”

Cecily finally yielded and went upstairs with the Story Girl. Presently we heard a little shriek — then two little shrieks — then three. Then Felicity came flying down and called her mother. Aunt Janet went up and presently came down again with a grim mouth. She filled a large pan with warm water and carried it upstairs. We dared ask her no questions, but when Felicity came down to wash the dishes we bombarded her.

“What on earth is the matter with Cecily?” demanded Dan. “Is she sick?”

“No, she isn’t. I warned her not to put her hair in curls but she wouldn’t listen to me. I guess she wishes she had now. When people haven’t natural curly hair they shouldn’t try to make it curly. They get punished if they do.”

“Look here, Felicity, never mind all that. Just tell us what has happened Sis.”

“Well, this is what has happened her. That ninny of a Sara Ray brought up a bottle of mucilage instead of Judy’s curling-fluid, and Cecily put her hair up with THAT. It’s in an awful state.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Dan. “Look here, will she ever get it out?”

“Goodness knows. She’s got her head in soak now. Her hair is just matted together hard as a board. That’s what comes of vanity,” said Felicity, than whom no vainer girl existed.

Poor Cecily paid dearly enough for HER vanity. She spent a bad forenoon, made no easier by her mother’s severe rebukes. For an hour she “soaked” her head; that is, she stood over a panful of warm water and kept dipping her head in with tightly shut eyes. Finally her hair softened sufficiently to be disentangled from the curl papers; and then Aunt Janet subjected it to a merciless shampoo. Eventually they got all the mucilage washed out of it and Cecily spent the remainder of the forenoon sitting before the open oven door in the hot kitchen drying her illused tresses. She felt very downhearted; her hair was of that order which, glossy and smooth normally, is dry and harsh and lustreless for several days after being shampooed.

“I’ll look like a fright tonight,” said the poor child to me with trembling voice. “The ends will be sticking out all over my head.”

“Sara Ray is a perfect idiot,” I said wrathfully

“Oh, don’t be hard on poor Sara. She didn’t mean to bring me mucilage. It’s really all my own fault, I know. I made a solemn vow when Peter was dying that I would never curl my hair again, and I should have kept it. It

isn't right to break solemn vows. But my hair will look like dried hay tonight."

Poor Sara Ray was quite overwhelmed when she came up and found what she had done. Felicity was very hard on her, and Aunt Janet was coldly disapproving, but sweet Cecily forgave her unreservedly, and they walked to the school that night with their arms about each other's waists as usual.

The schoolroom was crowded with friends and neighbours. Mr. Perkins was flying about, getting things into readiness, and Miss Reade, who was the organist of the evening, was sitting on the platform, looking her sweetest and prettiest. She wore a delightful white lace hat with a fetching little wreath of tiny forget-me-nots around the brim, a white muslin dress with sprays of blue violets scattered over it, and a black lace scarf.

"Doesn't she look angelic?" said Cecily rapturously.

"Mind you," said Sara Ray, "the Awkward Man is here — in the corner behind the door. I never remember seeing him at a concert before."

"I suppose he came to hear the Story Girl recite," said Felicity. "He is such a friend of hers."

The concert went off very well. Dialogues, choruses and recitations followed each other in rapid succession. Felix got through his without "getting stuck," and Peter did excellently, though he stuffed his hands in his trousers pockets — a habit of which Mr. Perkins had vainly tried to break him. Peter's recitation was one greatly in vogue at that time, beginning,

"My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills

My father feeds his flocks."

At our first practice Peter had started gaily in, rushing through the first line with no thought whatever of punctuation—"My name is Norval on the Grampian Hills."

“Stop, stop, Peter,” quoth Mr. Perkins, sarcastically, “your name might be Norval if you were never on the Grampian Hills. There’s a semicolon in that line, I wish you to remember.”

Peter did remember it. Cecily neither fainted nor failed when it came her turn. She recited her little piece very well, though somewhat mechanically. I think she really did much better than if she had had her desired curls. The miserable conviction that her hair, alone among that glossy-tressed bevy, was looking badly, quite blotted out all nervousness and self-consciousness from her mind. Her hair apart, she looked very pretty. The prevailing excitement had made bright her eye and flushed her cheeks rosily — too rosily, perhaps. I heard a Carlisle woman behind me whisper that Cecily King looked consumptive, just like her Aunt Felicity; and I hated her fiercely for it.

Sara Ray also managed to get through respectably, although she was pitifully nervous. Her bow was naught but a short nod—”as if her head worked on wires,” whispered Felicity uncharitably — and the wave of her lily-white hand more nearly resembled an agonized jerk than a wave. We all felt relieved when she finished. She was, in a sense, one of “our crowd,” and we had been afraid she would disgrace us by breaking down.

Felicity followed her and recited her selection without haste, without rest, and absolutely without any expression whatever. But what mattered it how she recited? To look at her was sufficient. What with her splendid fleece of golden curls, her great, brilliant blue eyes, her exquisitely tinted face, her dimpled hands and arms, every member of the audience must have felt it was worth the ten cents he had paid merely to see her.

The Story Girl followed. An expectant silence fell over the room, and Mr. Perkins’ face lost the look of tense anxiety it had worn all the evening. Here was a performer who could be depended on. No need to fear stage fright or forgetfulness on her part. The Story Girl was not looking her best that night. White never became her, and her face was pale, though her eyes were splendid. But nobody thought about her appearance when the power and magic of her voice caught and held her listeners spellbound.

Her recitation was an old one, figuring in one of the School Readers, and we scholars all knew it off by heart. Sara Ray alone had not heard the Story Girl recite it. The latter had not been drilled at practices as had the other pupils, Mr. Perkins choosing not to waste time teaching her what she already knew far better than he did. The only time she had recited it had been at the “dress rehearsal” two nights before, at which Sara Ray had not been present.

In the poem a Florentine lady of old time, wedded to a cold and cruel husband, had died, or was supposed to have died, and had been carried to “the rich, the beautiful, the dreadful tomb” of her proud family. In the night she wakened from her trance and made her escape. Chilled and terrified, she had made her way to her husband’s door, only to be driven away brutally as a restless ghost by the horror-stricken inmates. A similar reception awaited her at her father’s. Then she had wandered blindly through the streets of Florence until she had fallen exhausted at the door of the lover of her girlhood. He, unafraid, had taken her in and cared for her. On the morrow, the husband and father, having discovered the empty tomb, came to claim her. She refused to return to them and the case was carried to the court of law. The verdict given was that a woman who had been “to burial borne” and left for dead, who had been driven from her husband’s door and from her childhood home, “must be adjudged as dead in law and fact,” was no more daughter or wife, but was set free to form what new ties she would. The climax of the whole selection came in the line,

“The court pronounces the defendant — DEAD!” and the Story Girl was wont to render it with such dramatic intensity and power that the veriest dullard among her listeners could not have missed its force and significance.

She swept along through the poem royally, playing on the emotions of her audience as she had so often played on ours in the old orchard. Pity, terror, indignation, suspense, possessed her hearers in turn. In the court scene she surpassed herself. She was, in very truth, the Florentine judge, stern, stately, impassive. Her voice dropped into the solemnity of the all-important line,

“‘The court pronounces the defendant—’”

She paused for a breathless moment, the better to bring out the tragic import of the last word.

“DEAD,” piped up Sara Ray in her shrill, plaintive little voice.

The effect, to use a hackneyed but convenient phrase, can better be imagined than described. Instead of the sigh of relieved tension that should have swept over the audience at the conclusion of the line, a burst of laughter greeted it. The Story Girl’s performance was completely spoiled. She dealt the luckless Sara a glance that would have slain her on the spot could glances kill, stumbled lamely and impotently through the few remaining lines of her recitation, and fled with crimson cheeks to hide her mortification in the little corner that had been curtained off for a dressing-room. Mr. Perkins looked things not lawful to be uttered, and the audience tittered at intervals for the rest of the performance.

Sara Ray alone remained serenely satisfied until the close of the concert, when we surrounded her with a whirlwind of reproaches.

“Why,” she stammered aghast, “what did I do? I — I thought she was stuck and that I ought to prompt her quick.”

“You little fool, she just paused for effect,” cried Felicity angrily. Felicity might be rather jealous of the Story Girl’s gift, but she was furious at beholding “one of our family” made ridiculous in such a fashion. “You have less sense than anyone I ever heard of, Sara Ray.”

Poor Sara dissolved in tears.

“I didn’t know. I thought she was stuck,” she wailed again.

She cried all the way home, but we did not try to comfort her. We felt quite out of patience with her. Even Cecily was seriously annoyed. This second blunder of Sara’s was too much even for her loyalty. We saw her turn in at her own gate and go sobbing up her lane with no relenting.

The Story Girl was home before us, having fled from the schoolhouse as soon as the programme was over. We tried to sympathize with her but she would not be sympathized with.

“Please don’t ever mention it to me again,” she said, with compressed lips. “I never want to be reminded of it. Oh, that little IDIOT!”

“She spoiled Peter’s sermon last summer and now she’s spoiled your recitation,” said Felicity. “I think it’s time we gave up associating with Sara Ray.”

“Oh, don’t be quite so hard on her,” pleaded Cecily. “Think of the life the poor child has to live at home. I know she’ll cry all night.”

“Oh, let’s go to bed,” growled Dan. “I’m good and ready for it. I’ve had enough of school concerts.”

CHAPTER XIX.

BY WAY OF THE STARS

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But for two of us the adventures of the night were not yet over. Silence settled down over the old house — the eerie, whisperful, creeping silence of night. Felix and Dan were already sound asleep; I was drifting near the coast o' dreams when I was aroused by a light tap on the door.

"Bev, are you asleep?" came in the Story Girl's whisper.

"No, what is it?"

"S-s-h. Get up and dress and come out. I want you."

With a good deal of curiosity and some misgiving I obeyed. What was in the wind now? Outside in the hall I found the Story Girl, with a candle in her hand, and her hat and jacket.

"Where are you going?" I whispered in amazement.

"Hush. I've got to go to the school and you must come with me. I left my coral necklace there. The clasp came loose and I was so afraid I'd lose it that I took it off and put it in the bookcase. I was feeling so upset when the concert was over that I forgot all about it."

The coral necklace was a very handsome one which had belonged to the Story Girl's mother. She had never been permitted to wear it before, and it had only been by dint of much coaxing that she had induced Aunt Janet to let her wear it to the concert.

"But there's no sense in going for it in the dead of night," I objected. "It will be quite safe. You can go for it in the morning."

“Lizzie Paxton and her daughter are going to clean the school tomorrow, and I heard Lizzie say tonight she meant to be at it by five o’clock to get through before the heat of the day. You know perfectly well what Liz Paxton’s reputation is. If she finds that necklace I’ll never see it again. Besides, if I wait till the morning, Aunt Janet may find out that I left it there and she’d never let me wear it again. No, I’m going for it now. If you’re afraid,” added the Story Girl with delicate scorn, “of course you needn’t come.”

Afraid! I’d show her!

“Come on,” I said.

We slipped out of the house noiselessly and found ourselves in the unutterable solemnity and strangeness of a dark night. It was a new experience, and our hearts thrilled and our nerves tingled to the charm of it. Never had we been abroad before at such an hour. The world around us was not the world of daylight. ‘Twas an alien place, full of weird, evasive enchantment and magicry.

Only in the country can one become truly acquainted with the night. There it has the solemn calm of the infinite. The dim wide fields lie in silence, wrapped in the holy mystery of darkness. A wind, loosened from wild places far away, steals out to blow over dewy, starlit, immemorial hills. The air in the pastures is sweet with the hush of dreams, and one may rest here like a child on its mother’s breast.

“Isn’t it wonderful?” breathed the Story Girl as we went down the long hill. “Do you know, I can forgive Sara Ray now. I thought tonight I never could — but now it doesn’t matter any more. I can even see how funny it was. Oh, wasn’t it funny? ‘DEAD’ in that squeaky little voice of Sara’s! I’ll just behave to her tomorrow as if nothing had happened. It seems so long ago now, here in the night.”

Neither of us ever forgot the subtle delight of that stolen walk. A spell of glamour was over us. The breezes whispered strange secrets of elf-haunted glens, and the hollows where the ferns grew were brimmed with mystery and romance. Ghostlike scents crept out of the meadows to meet us, and

the fir wood before we came to the church was a living sweetness of Junebells growing in abundance.

Junebells have another and more scientific name, of course. But who could desire a better name than Junebells? They are so perfect in their way that they seem to epitomize the very scent and charm of the forest, as if the old wood's daintiest thoughts had materialized in blossom; and not all the roses by Bendameer's stream are as fragrant as a shallow sheet of Junebells under the boughs of fir.

There were fireflies abroad that night, too, increasing the gramarye of it. There is certainly something a little supernatural about fireflies. Nobody pretends to understand them. They are akin to the tribes of fairy, survivals of the elder time when the woods and hills swarmed with the little green folk. It is still very easy to believe in fairies when you see those goblin lanterns glimmering among the fir tassels.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said the Story Girl in rapture. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I'm glad I left my necklace. And I am glad you are with me, Bev. The others wouldn't understand so well. I like you because I don't have to talk to you all the time. It's so nice to walk with someone you don't have to talk to. Here is the graveyard. Are you frightened to pass it, Bev?"

"No, I don't think I'm frightened," I answered slowly, "but I have a queer feeling."

"So have I. But it isn't fear. I don't know what it is. I feel as if something was reaching out of the graveyard to hold me — something that wanted life — I don't like it — let's hurry. But isn't it strange to think of all the dead people in there who were once alive like you and me. I don't feel as if I could EVER die. Do you?"

"No, but everybody must. Of course we go on living afterwards, just the same. Don't let's talk of such things here," I said hurriedly.

When we reached the school I contrived to open a window. We scrambled in, lighted a lamp and found the missing necklace. The Story Girl stood on

the platform and gave an imitation of the catastrophe of the evening that made me shout with laughter. We prowled around for sheer delight over being there at an unearthly hour when everybody supposed we were sound asleep in our beds. It was with regret that we left, and we walked home as slowly as we could to prolong the adventure.

“Let’s never tell anyone,” said the Story Girl, as we reached home. “Let’s just have it as a secret between us for ever and ever — something that nobody else knows a thing about but you and me.”

“We’d better keep it a secret from Aunt Janet anyhow,” I whispered, laughing. “She’d think we were both crazy.”

“It’s real jolly to be crazy once in a while,” said the Story Girl.

CHAPTER XX.

EXTRACTS FROM “OUR MAGAZINE”

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EDITORIAL

As will be seen there is no Honour Roll in this number. Even Felicity has thought all the beautiful thoughts that can be thought and cannot think any more. Peter has never got drunk but, under existing circumstances, that is not greatly to his credit. As for our written resolutions they have silently disappeared from our chamber walls and the place that once knew them knows them no more for ever. (PETER, PERPLEXEDLY: “Seems to me I’ve heard something like that before.”) It is very sad but we will all make some new resolutions next year and maybe it will be easier to keep those.

THE STORY OF THE LOCKET THAT WAS BAKED

This was a story my Aunt Jane told me about her granma when she was a little girl. Its funny to think of baking a locket, but it wasn’t to eat. She was my great granma but Ill call her granma for short. It happened when she was ten years old. Of course she wasent anybodys granma then. Her father and mother and her were living in a new settlement called Brinsley. Their nearest naybor was a mile away. One day her Aunt Hannah from Charlottetown came and wanted her ma to go visiting with her. At first granma’s ma thought she couldnt go because it was baking day and granma’s pa was away. But granma wasent afraid to stay alone and she knew how to bake the bread so she made her ma go and her Aunt Hannah took off the handsome gold locket and chain she was waring round her neck and hung it on granmas and told her she could ware it all day. Granma was awful pleased for she had never had any jewelry. She did all the chores and then was needing the loaves when she looked up and saw a tramp coming in and he was an awful villenus looking tramp. He didnt even pass the time of day but just set down on a chair. Poor granma was

awful frightened and she turned her back on him and went on needing the loaf cold and trembling — that is, granma was trembling not the loaf. She was worried about the locket. She didn't know how she could hide it for to get anywhere she would have to turn round and pass him.

All of a sudden she thought she would hide it in the bread. She put her hand up and pulled it hard and quick and broke the fastening and needed it right into the loaf. Then she put the loaf in the pan and set it in the oven.

The tramp hadn't seen her do it and then he asked for something to eat. Granma got him up a meal and when he'd eaten it he began prowling about the kitchen looking into everything and opening the cupboard doors. Then he went into granma's mas room and turned the bureau drawers and trunk inside out and threw the things in them all about. All he found was a purse with a dollar in it and he swore about it and took it and went away. When granma was sure he was really gone she broke down and cried. She forgot all about the bread and it burned as black as coal. When she smelled it burning granma ran and pulled it out. She was awful scared the locket was spoiled but she sawed open the loaf and it was there safe and sound. When her Aunt Hannah came back she said granma deserved the locket because she had saved it so clever and she gave it to her and granma always wore it and was very proud of it. And granma used to say that was the only loaf of bread she ever spoiled in her life.

PETER CRAIG.

(FELICITY: "Those stories are all very well but they are only true stories. It's easy enough to write true stories. I thought Peter was appointed fiction editor, but he has never written any fiction since the paper started. That's not MY idea of a fiction editor. He ought to make up stories out of his own head." PETER, SPUNKILY: "I can do it, too, and I will next time. And it ain't easier to write true stories. It's harder, 'cause you have to stick to facts." FELICITY: "I don't believe you could make up a story." PETER: "I'll show you!")

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

It's my turn to write it but I'm SO NERVOUS. My worst adventure happened TWO YEARS AGO. It was an awful one. I had a striped ribbon, striped brown and yellow and I LOST IT. I was very sorry for it was a handsome ribbon and all the girls in school were jealous of it. (FELICITY: "I wasn't. I didn't think it one bit pretty." CECILY: "Hush!") I hunted everywhere but I couldn't find it. Next day was Sunday and I was running into the house by the front door and I saw SOMETHING LYING ON THE STEP and I thought it was my ribbon and I made a grab at it as I passed. But, oh, it was A SNAKE! Oh, I can never describe how I felt when I felt that awful thing WRIGGLING IN MY HAND. I let it go and SCREAMED AND SCREAMED, and ma was cross at me for yelling on Sunday and made me read seven chapters in the Bible but I didn't mind that much after what I had come through. I would rather DIE than have SUCH AN EXPERIENCE again.

SARA RAY.

TO FELICITY ON HER BERTHDAY

Oh maiden fair with golden hair

And brow of purest white,

Id fight for you I'd die for you

Let me be your faithful knite.

This is your berthday blessed day

You are thirteen years old today

May you be happy and fair as you are now

Until your hair is gray.

I gaze into your shining eyes,

They are so blue and bright.

Id fight for you Id die for you

Let me be your faithful knite.

A FRIEND.

(DAN: "Great snakes, who got that up? I'll bet it was Peter." FELICITY, WITH DIGNITY: "Well, it's more than YOU could do. YOU couldn't write poetry to save your life." PETER, ASIDE TO BEVERLEY: "She seems quite pleased. I'm glad I wrote it, but it was awful hard work.")

PERSONALS

Patrick Grayfur, Esq., caused his friends great anxiety recently by a prolonged absence from home. When found he was very thin but is now as fat and conceited as ever.

On Wednesday, June 20th, Miss Olivia King was united in the bonds of holy matrimony to Dr. Robert Seton of Halifax. Miss Sara Stanley was bridesmaid, and Mr. Andrew Seton attended the groom. The young couple received many handsome presents. Rev. Mr. Marwood tied the nuptial knot. After the ceremony a substantial repast was served in Mrs. Alex King's well-known style and the happy couple left for their new home in Nova Scotia. Their many friends join in wishing them a very happy and prosperous journey through life.

A precious one from us is gone,

A voice we loved is stilled.

A place is vacant in our home

That never can be filled.

(THE STORY GIRL: “Goodness, that sounds as if somebody had died. I’ve seen that verse on a tombstone. WHO wrote that notice?” FELICITY, WHO WROTE IT: “I think it is just as appropriate to a wedding as to a funeral!”)

Our school concert came off on the evening of June 29th and was a great success. We made ten dollars for the library.

We regret to chronicle that Miss Sara Ray met with a misfortune while taking some violent exercise with a wasps’ nest recently. The moral is that it is better not to monkey with a wasps’ nest, new or old.

Mrs. C. B. Hawkins of Baywater is keeping house for Uncle Roger. She is a very large woman. Uncle Roger says he has to spend too much time walking round her, but otherwise she is an excellent housekeeper.

It is reported that the school is haunted. A mysterious light was seen there at two o’clock one night recently.

(THE STORY GIRL AND I EXCHANGE KNOWING SMILES BEHIND THE OTHERS’ BACKS.)

Dan and Felicity had a fight last Tuesday — not with fists but with tongues. Dan came off best — as usual. (FELICITY LAUGHS SARCASTICALLY.)

Mr. Newton Craig of Markdale returned home recently after a somewhat prolonged visit in foreign parts. We are glad to welcome Mr. Craig back to our midst.

Billy Robinson was hurt last week. A cow kicked him. I suppose it is wicked of us to feel glad but we all do feel glad because of the way he cheated us with the magic seed last summer.

On April 1st Uncle Roger sent Mr. Peter Craig to the manse to borrow the biography of Adam’s grandfather. Mr. Marwood told Peter he didn’t think Adam had any grandfather and advised him to go home and look at the almanac. (PETER, SOURLY: “Your Uncle Roger thought he was pretty

smart.” FELICITY, SEVERELY: “Uncle Roger IS smart. It was so easy to fool you.”)

A pair of blue birds have built a nest in a hole in the sides of the well, just under the ferns. We can see the eggs when we look down. They are so cunning.

Felix sat down on a tack one day in May. Felix thinks housecleaning is great foolishness.

ADS.

LOST — STOLEN — OR STRAYED — A HEART. Finder will be rewarded by returning same to Cyrus E. Brisk, Desk 7, Carlisle School.

LOST OR STOLEN. A piece of brown hair about three inches long and one inch thick. Finder will kindly return to Miss Cecily King, Desk 15, Carlisle School.

(CECILY: “Cyrus keeps my hair in his Bible for a bookmark, so Flossie tells me. He says he means to keep it always for a remembrance though he has given up hope.” DAN: “I’ll steal it out of his Bible in Sunday School.” CECILY, BLUSHING: “Oh, let him keep it if it is any comfort to him. Besides, it isn’t right to steal.” DAN: “He stole it.” CECILY: “But Mr. Marwood says two wrongs never make a right.”)

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Aunt Olivia’s wedding cake was said to be the best one of its kind ever tasted in Carlisle. Me and mother made it.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: — It is not advisable to curl your hair with mucilage if you can get anything else. Quince juice is better. (CECILY, BITTERLY: “I suppose I’ll never hear the last of that mucilage.” DAN: “Ask her who used tooth-powder to raise biscuits?”)

We had rhubarb pies for the first time this spring last week. They were fine but hard on the cream.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

PATIENT SUFFERER: — What will I do when a young man steals a lock of my hair? Ans.: — Grow some more.

No, F-l-x, a little caterpillar is not called a kittenpillar. (FELIX, ENRAGED: “I never asked that! Dan just makes that etiquette column up from beginning to end!” FELICITY: “I don’t see what that kind of a question has to do with etiquette anyhow.”)

Yes, P-t-r, it is quite proper to treat a lady friend to ice cream twice if you can afford it.

No, F-l-c-t-y, it is not ladylike to chew tobacco. Better stick to spruce gum.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Frilled muslin aprons will be much worn this summer. It is no longer fashionable to trim them with knitted lace. One pocket is considered smart.

Clamshells are fashionable keepsakes. You write your name and the date inside one and your friend writes hers in the other and you exchange.

CECILY KING.

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

MR. PERKINS:—”Peter, name the large islands of the world.”

PETER:—”The Island, the British Isles and Australia.” (PETER, DEFIANTLY: “Well, Mr. Perkins said he guessed I was right, so you needn’t laugh.”)

This is a true joke and really happened. It's about Mr. Samuel Clask again. He was once leading a prayer meeting and he looked through the window and saw the constable driving up and guessed he was after him because he was always in debt. So in a great hurry he called on Brother Casey to lead in prayer and while Brother Casey was praying with his eyes shut and everybody else had their heads bowed Mr. Clask got out of the window and got away before the constable got in because he didn't like to come in till the prayer was finished.

Uncle Roger says it was a smart trick on Mr. Clask's part, but I don't think there was much religion about it.

FELIX KING.

CHAPTER XXI.

PEG BOWEN COMES TO CHURCH

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When those of us who are still left of that band of children who played long years ago in the old orchard and walked the golden road together in joyous companionship, foregather now and again in our busy lives and talk over the events of those many merry moons — there are some of our adventures that gleam out more vividly in memory than the others, and are oftener discussed. The time we bought God's picture from Jerry Cowan — the time Dan ate the poison berries — the time we heard the ghostly bell ring — the bewitchment of Paddy — the visit of the Governor's wife — and the night we were lost in the storm — all awaken reminiscent jest and laughter; but none more than the recollection of the Sunday Peg Bowen came to church and sat in our pew. Though goodness knows, as Felicity would say, we did not think it any matter for laughter at the time — far from it.

It was one Sunday evening in July. Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet, having been out to the morning service, did not attend in the evening, and we small fry walked together down the long hill road, wearing Sunday attire and trying, more or less successfully, to wear Sunday faces also. Those walks to church, through the golden completeness of the summer evenings, were always very pleasant to us, and we never hurried, though, on the other hand, we were very careful not to be late.

This particular evening was particularly beautiful. It was cool after a hot day, and wheat fields all about us were ripening to their harvestry. The wind gossiped with the grasses along our way, and over them the buttercups danced, goldenly-glad. Waves of sinuous shadow went over the ripe hayfields, and plundering bees sang a freebooting lilt in wayside gardens.

“The world is so lovely tonight,” said the Story Girl. “I just hate the thought of going into the church and shutting all the sunlight and music outside. I wish we could have the service outside in summer.”

“I don’t think that would be very religious,” said Felicity.

“I’d feel ever so much more religious outside than in,” retorted the Story Girl.

“If the service was outside we’d have to sit in the graveyard and that wouldn’t be very cheerful,” said Felix.

“Besides, the music isn’t shut out,” added Felicity. “The choir is inside.”

“‘Music has charms to soothe a savage breast,’” quoted Peter, who was getting into the habit of adorning his conversation with similar gems.

“That’s in one of Shakespeare’s plays. I’m reading them now, since I got through with the Bible. They’re great.”

“I don’t see when you get time to read them,” said Felicity.

“Oh, I read them Sunday afternoons when I’m home.”

“I don’t believe they’re fit to read on Sundays,” exclaimed Felicity.

“Mother says Valeria Montague’s stories ain’t.”

“But Shakespeare’s different from Valeria,” protested Peter.

“I don’t see in what way. He wrote a lot of things that weren’t true, just like Valeria, and he wrote swear words too. Valeria never does that. Her characters all talk in a very refined fashion.”

“Well, I always skip the swear words,” said Peter. “And Mr. Marwood said once that the Bible and Shakespeare would furnish any library well. So you see he put them together, but I’m sure that he would never say that the Bible and Valeria would make a library.”

“Well, all I know is, I shall never read Shakespeare on Sunday,” said Felicity loftily.

“I wonder what kind of a preacher young Mr. Davidson is,” speculated Cecily.

“Well, we’ll know when we hear him tonight,” said the Story Girl. “He ought to be good, for his uncle before him was a fine preacher, though a very absentminded man. But Uncle Roger says the supply in Mr. Marwood’s vacation never amounts to much. I know an awfully funny story about old Mr. Davidson. He used to be the minister in Baywater, you know, and he had a large family and his children were very mischievous. One day his wife was ironing and she ironed a great big nightcap with a frill round it. One of the children took it when she wasn’t looking and hid it in his father’s best beaver hat — the one he wore on Sundays. When Mr. Davidson went to church next Sunday he put the hat on without ever looking into the crown. He walked to church in a brown study and at the door he took off his hat. The nightcap just slipped down on his head, as if it had been put on, and the frill stood out around his face and the string hung down his back. But he never noticed it, because his thoughts were far away, and he walked up the church aisle and into the pulpit, like that. One of his elders had to tiptoe up and tell him what he had on his head. He plucked it off in a dazed fashion, held it up, and looked at it. ‘Bless me, it is Sally’s nightcap!’ he exclaimed mildly. ‘I do not know how I could have got it on.’ Then he just stuffed it into his pocket calmly and went on with the service, and the long strings of the nightcap hung down out of his pocket all the time.”

“It seems to me,” said Peter, amid the laughter with which we greeted the tale, “that a funny story is funnier when it is about a minister than it is about any other man. I wonder why.”

“Sometimes I don’t think it is right to tell funny stories about ministers,” said Felicity. “It certainly isn’t respectful.”

“A good story is a good story — no matter who it’s about,” said the Story Girl with ungrammatical relish.

There was as yet no one in the church when we reached it, so we took our accustomed ramble through the graveyard surrounding it. The Story Girl had brought flowers for her mother’s grave as usual, and while she

arranged them on it the rest of us read for the hundredth time the epitaph on Great-Grandfather King's tombstone, which had been composed by Great-Grandmother King. That epitaph was quite famous among the little family traditions that entwine every household with mingled mirth and sorrow, smiles and tears. It had a perennial fascination for us and we read it over every Sunday. Cut deeply in the upright slab of red Island sandstone, the epitaph ran as follows: —

SWEET DEPARTED SPIRIT

Do receive the vows a grateful widow pays,

Each future day and night shall hear her speak her Isaac's praise.

Though thy beloved form must in the grave decay

Yet from her heart thy memory no time, no change shall steal away.

Do thou from mansions of eternal bliss

Remember thy distressed relict.

Look on her with an angel's love —

Soothe her sad life and cheer her end

Through this world's dangers and its griefs.

Then meet her with thy well-known smiles and welcome

At the last great day.

“Well, I can't make out what the old lady was driving at,” said Dan.

“That’s a nice way to speak of your great-grandmother,” said Felicity severely.

“How does The Family Guide say you ought to speak of your great-grandma, sweet one?” asked Dan.

“There is one thing about it that puzzles me,” remarked Cecily. “She calls herself a GRATEFUL widow. Now, what was she grateful for?”

“Because she was rid of him at last,” said graceless Dan.

“Oh, it couldn’t have been that,” protested Cecily seriously. “I’ve always heard that Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother were very much attached to each other.”

“Maybe, then, it means she was grateful that she’d had him as long as she did,” suggested Peter.

“She was grateful to him because he had been so kind to her in life, I think,” said Felicity.

“What is a ‘distressed relict’?” asked Felix.

“‘Relict’ is a word I hate,” said the Story Girl. “It sounds so much like relic. Relict means just the same as widow, only a man can be a relict, too.”

“Great-Grandmother seemed to run short of rhymes at the last of the epitaph,” commented Dan.

“Finding rhymes isn’t as easy as you might think,” avowed Peter, out of his own experience.

“I think Grandmother King intended the last of the epitaph to be in blank verse,” said Felicity with dignity.

There was still only a sprinkling of people in the church when we went in and took our places in the old-fashioned, square King pew. We had just got

comfortably settled when Felicity said in an agitated whisper, “Here is Peg Bowen!”

We all stared at Peg, who was pacing composedly up the aisle. We might be excused for so doing, for seldom were the decorous aisles of Carlisle church invaded by such a figure. Peg was dressed in her usual short drugget skirt, rather worn and frayed around the bottom, and a waist of brilliant turkey red calico. She wore no hat, and her grizzled black hair streamed in elf locks over her shoulders. Face, arms and feet were bare — and face, arms and feet were liberally powdered with FLOUR. Certainly no one who saw Peg that night could ever forget the apparition.

Peg’s black eyes, in which shone a more than usually wild and fitful light, roved scrutinizingly over the church, then settled on our pew.

“She’s coming here,” whispered Felicity in horror. “Can’t we spread out and make her think the pew is full?”

But the manoeuvre was too late. The only result was that Felicity and the Story Girl in moving over left a vacant space between them and Peg promptly plumped down in it.

“Well, I’m here,” she remarked aloud. “I did say once I’d never darken the door of Carlisle church again, but what that boy there” — nodding at Peter — “said last winter set me thinking, and I concluded maybe I’d better come once in a while, to be on the safe side.”

Those poor girls were in an agony. Everybody in the church was looking at our pew and smiling. We all felt that we were terribly disgraced; but we could do nothing. Peg was enjoying herself hugely, beyond all doubt. From where she sat she could see the whole church, including pulpit and gallery, and her black eyes darted over it with restless glances.

“Bless me, there’s Sam Kinnaird,” she exclaimed, still aloud. “He’s the man that dunned Jacob Marr for four cents on the church steps one Sunday. I heard him. ‘I think, Jacob, you owe me four cents on that cow you bought last fall. Rec’llect you couldn’t make the change?’ Well, you know,

‘twould a-made a cat laugh. The Kinnairds were all mighty close, I can tell you. That’s how they got rich.”

What Sam Kinnaird felt or thought during this speech, which everyone in the church must have heard, I know not. Gossip had it that he changed colour. We wretched occupants of the King pew were concerned only with our own outraged feelings.

“And there’s Melita Ross,” went on Peg. “She’s got the same bonnet on she had last time I was in Carlisle church six years ago. Some folks has the knack of making things last. But look at the style Mrs. Elmer Brewer wears, will yez? Yez wouldn’t think her mother died in the poorhouse, would yez, now?”

Poor Mrs. Brewer! From the tip of her smart kid shoes to the dainty cluster of ostrich tips in her bonnet — she was most immaculately and handsomely arrayed; but I venture to think she could have taken small pleasure in her fashionable attire that evening. Some of the unregenerate, including Dan, were shaking with suppressed laughter, but most of the people looked as if they were afraid to smile, lest their turn should come next.

“There’s old Stephen Grant coming in,” exclaimed Peg viciously, shaking her floury fist at him, “and looking as if butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth. He may be an elder, but he’s a scoundrel just the same. He set fire to his house to get the insurance and then blamed ME for doing it. But I got even with him for it. Oh, yes! He knows that, and so do I! He, he!”

Peg chuckled quite fiendishly and Stephen Grant tried to look as if nothing had been said.

“Oh, will the minister never come?” moaned Felicity in my ear. “Surely she’ll have to stop then.”

But the minister did not come and Peg had no intention of stopping.

“There’s Maria Dean.” she resumed. “I haven’t seen Maria for years. I never call there for she never seems to have anything to eat in the house.

She was a Clayton and the Claytons never could cook. Maria sorter looks as if she'd shrunk in the wash, now, don't she? And there's Douglas Nicholson. His brother put rat poison in the family pancakes. Nice little trick that, wasn't it? They say it was by mistake. I hope it WAS a mistake. His wife is all rigged out in silk. Yez wouldn't think to look at her she was married in cotton — and mighty thankful to get married in anything, it's my opinion. There's Timothy Patterson. He's the meanest man alive — meaner'n Sam Kinnaird even. Timothy pays his children five cents apiece to go without their suppers, and then steals the cents out of their pockets after they've gone to bed. It's a fact. And when his old father died he wouldn't let his wife put his best shirt on him. He said his second best was plenty good to be buried in. That's another fact."

"I can't stand much more of this," wailed Felicity.

"See here, Miss Bowen, you really oughtn't to talk like that about people," expostulated Peter in a low tone, goaded thereto, despite his awe of Peg, by Felicity's anguish.

"Bless you, boy," said Peg good-humouredly, "the only difference between me and other folks is that I say these things out loud and they just think them. If I told yez all the things I know about the people in this congregation you'd be amazed. Have a peppermint?"

To our horror Peg produced a handful of peppermint lozenges from the pocket of her skirt and offered us one each. We did not dare refuse but we each held our lozenge very gingerly in our hands.

"Eat them," commanded Peg rather fiercely.

"Mother doesn't allow us to eat candy in church," faltered Felicity.

"Well, I've seen just as fine ladies as your ma give their children lozenges in church," said Peg loftily. She put a peppermint in her own mouth and sucked it with gusto. We were relieved, for she did not talk during the process; but our relief was of short duration. A bevy of three very smartly dressed young ladies, sweeping past our pew, started Peg off again.

“Yez needn’t be so stuck up,” she said, loudly and derisively. “Yez was all of yez rocked in a flour barrel. And there’s old Henry Frewen, still above ground. I called my parrot after him because their noses were exactly alike. Look at Caroline Marr, will yez? That’s a woman who’d like pretty well to get married, And there’s Alexander Marr. He’s a real Christian, anyhow, and so’s his dog. I can always size up what a man’s religion amounts to by the kind of dog he keeps. Alexander Marr is a good man.”

It was a relief to hear Peg speak well of somebody; but that was the only exception she made.

“Look at Dave Fraser strutting in,” she went on. “That man has thanked God so often that he isn’t like other people that it’s come to be true. He isn’t! And there’s Susan Frewen. She’s jealous of everybody. She’s even jealous of Old Man Rogers because he’s buried in the best spot in the graveyard. Seth Erskine has the same look he was born with. They say the Lord made everybody but I believe the devil made all the Erskines.”

“She’s getting worse all the time. What WILL she say next?” whispered poor Felicity.

But her martyrdom was over at last. The minister appeared in the pulpit and Peg subsided into silence. She folded her bare, floury arms over her breast and fastened her black eyes on the young preacher. Her behaviour for the next half-hour was decorum itself, save that when the minister prayed that we might all be charitable in judgment Peg ejaculated “Amen” several times, loudly and forcibly, somewhat to the discomfiture of the Young man, to whom Peg was a stranger. He opened his eyes, glanced at our pew in a startled way, then collected himself and went on.

Peg listened to the sermon, silently and motionlessly, until Mr. Davidson was half through. Then she suddenly got on her feet.

“This is too dull for me,” she exclaimed. “I want something more exciting.”

Mr. Davidson stopped short and Peg marched down the aisle in the midst of complete silence. Half way down the aisle she turned around and faced

the minister.

“There are so many hypocrites in this church that it isn’t fit for decent people to come to,” she said. “Rather than be such hypocrites as most of you are it would be better for you to go miles into the woods and commit suicide.”

Wheeling about, she strode to the door. Then she turned for a Parthian shot.

“I’ve felt kind of worried for God sometimes, seeing He has so much to attend to,” she said, “but I see I needn’t be, so long’s there’s plenty of ministers to tell Him what to do.”

With that Peg shook the dust of Carlisle church from her feet. Poor Mr. Davidson resumed his discourse. Old Elder Bayley, whose attention an earthquake could not have distracted from the sermon, afterwards declared that it was an excellent and edifying exhortation, but I doubt if anyone else in Carlisle church tasted it much or gained much good therefrom. Certainly we of the King household did not. We could not even remember the text when we reached home. Felicity was comfortless.

“Mr. Davidson would be sure to think she belonged to our family when she was in our pew,” she said bitterly. “Oh, I feel as if I could never get over such a mortification! Peter, I do wish you wouldn’t go telling people they ought to go to church. It’s all your fault that this happened.”

“Never mind, it will be a good story to tell sometime,” remarked the Story Girl with relish.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE YANKEE STORM

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In an August orchard six children and a grownup were sitting around the pulpit stone. The grownup was Miss Reade, who had been up to give the girls their music lesson and had consented to stay to tea, much to the rapture of the said girls, who continued to worship her with unabated and romantic ardour. To us, over the golden grasses, came the Story Girl, carrying in her hand a single large poppy, like a blood-red chalice filled with the wine of August wizardry. She proffered it to Miss Reade and, as the latter took it into her singularly slender, beautiful hand, I saw a ring on her third finger. I noticed it, because I had heard the girls say that Miss Reade never wore rings, not liking them. It was not a new ring; it was handsome, but of an old-fashioned design and setting, with a glint of diamonds about a central sapphire. Later on, when Miss Reade had gone, I asked the Story Girl if she had noticed the ring. She nodded, but seemed disinclined to say more about it.

“Look here, Sara,” I said, “there’s something about that ring — something you know.”

“I told you once there was a story growing but you would have to wait until it was fully grown,” she answered.

“Is Miss Reade going to marry anybody — anybody we know?” I persisted.

“Curiosity killed a cat,” observed the Story Girl coolly. “Miss Reade hasn’t told me that she was going to marry anybody. You will find out all that is good for you to know in due time.”

When the Story Girl put on grownup airs I did not like her so well, and I dropped the subject with a dignity that seemed to amuse her mightily.

She had been away for a week, visiting cousins in Markdale, and she had come home with a new treasure-trove of stories, most of which she had heard from the old sailors of Markdale Harbour. She had promised that morning to tell us of “the most tragic event that had ever been known on the north shore,” and we now reminded her of her promise.

“Some call it the ‘Yankee Storm,’ and others the ‘American Gale,’” she began, sitting down by Miss Reade and beaming, because the latter put her arm around her waist. “It happened nearly forty years ago, in October of 1851. Old Mr. Coles at the Harbour told me all about it. He was a young man then and he says he can never forget that dreadful time. You know in those days hundreds of American fishing schooners used to come down to the Gulf every summer to fish mackerel. On one beautiful Saturday night in this October of 1851, more than one hundred of these vessels could be counted from Markdale Capes. By Monday night more than seventy of them had been destroyed. Those which had escaped were mostly those which went into harbour Saturday night, to keep Sunday. Mr. Coles says the rest stayed outside and fished all day Sunday, same as through the week, and HE says the storm was a judgment on them for doing it. But he admits that even some of them got into harbour later on and escaped, so it’s hard to know what to think. But it is certain that on Sunday night there came up a sudden and terrible storm — the worst, Mr. Coles says, that has ever been known on the north shore. It lasted for two days and scores of vessels were driven ashore and completely wrecked. The crews of most of the vessels that went ashore on the sand beaches were saved, but those that struck on the rocks went to pieces and all hands were lost. For weeks after the storm the north shore was strewn with the bodies of drowned men. Think of it! Many of them were unknown and unrecognizable, and they were buried in Markdale graveyard. Mr. Coles says the schoolmaster who was in Markdale then wrote a poem on the storm and Mr. Coles recited the first two verses to me.

“‘Here are the fishers’ hillside graves,

The church beside, the woods around,
Below, the hollow moaning waves
Where the poor fishermen were drowned.
“‘A sudden tempest the blue welkin tore,
The seamen tossed and torn apart
Rolled with the seaweed to the shore
While landsmen gazed with aching heart.’

“Mr. Coles couldn’t remember any more of it. But the saddest of all the stories of the Yankee Storm was the one about the Franklin Dexter. The Franklin Dexter went ashore on the Markdale Capes and all on board perished, the Captain and three of his brothers among them. These four young men were the sons of an old man who lived in Portland, Maine, and when he heard what had happened he came right down to the Island to see if he could find their bodies. They had all come ashore and had been buried in Markdale graveyard; but he was determined to take them up and carry them home for burial. He said he had promised their mother to take her boys home to her and he must do it. So they were taken up and put on board a sailing vessel at Markdale Harbour to be taken back to Maine, while the father himself went home on a passenger steamer. The name of the sailing vessel was the Seth Hall, and the captain’s name was Seth Hall, too. Captain Hall was a dreadfully profane man and used to swear bloodcurdling oaths. On the night he sailed out of Markdale Harbour the old sailors warned him that a storm was brewing and that it would catch him if he did not wait until it was over. The captain had become very impatient because of several delays he had already met with, and he was in a furious temper. He swore a wicked oath that he would sail out of Markdale Harbour that night and ‘God Almighty Himself shouldn’t catch him.’ He did sail out of the harbour; and the storm did catch him, and the Seth Hall went down with all hands, the dead and the living finding a

watery grave together. So the poor old mother up in Maine never had her boys brought back to her after all. Mr. Coles says it seems as if it were foreordained that they should not rest in a grave, but should lie beneath the waves until the day when the sea gives up its dead.”

““They sleep as well beneath that purple tide

As others under turf,””

quoted Miss Reade softly. “I am very thankful,” she added, “that I am not one of those whose dear ones ‘go down to the sea in ships.’ It seems to me that they have treble their share of this world’s heartache.”

“Uncle Stephen was a sailor and he was drowned,” said Felicity, “and they say it broke Grandmother King’s heart. I don’t see why people can’t be contented on dry land.”

Cecily’s tears had been dropping on the autograph quilt square she was faithfully embroidering. She had been diligently collecting names for it ever since the preceding autumn and had a goodly number; but Kitty Marr had one more and this was certainly a fly in Cecily’s ointment.

“Besides, one I’ve got isn’t paid for — Peg Bowen’s,” she lamented, “and I don’t suppose it ever will be, for I’ll never dare to ask her for it.”

“I wouldn’t put it on at all,” said Felicity.

“Oh, I don’t dare not to. She’d be sure to find out I didn’t and then she’d be very angry. I wish I could get just one more name and then I’d be contented. But I don’t know of a single person who hasn’t been asked already.”

“Except Mr. Campbell,” said Dan.

“Oh, of course nobody would ask Mr. Campbell. We all know it would be of no use. He doesn’t believe in missions at all — in fact, he says he detests the very mention of missions — and he never gives one cent to them.”

“All the same, I think he ought to be asked, so that he wouldn’t have the excuse that nobody DID ask him,” declared Dan.

“Do you really think so, Dan?” asked Cecily earnestly.

“Sure,” said Dan, solemnly. Dan liked to tease even Cecily a wee bit now and then.

Cecily relapsed into anxious thought, and care sat visibly on her brow for the rest of the day. Next morning she came to me and said:

“Bev, would you like to go for a walk with me this afternoon?”

“Of course,” I replied. “Any particular where?”

“I’m going to see Mr. Campbell and ask him for his name for my square,” said Cecily resolutely. “I don’t suppose it will do any good. He wouldn’t give anything to the library last summer, you remember, till the Story Girl told him that story about his grandmother. She won’t go with me this time — I don’t know why. I can’t tell a story and I’m frightened to death just to think of going to him. But I believe it is my duty; and besides I would love to get as many names on my square as Kitty Marr has. So if you’ll go with me we’ll go this afternoon. I simply COULDN’T go alone.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MISSIONARY HEROINE

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Accordingly, that afternoon we bearded the lion in his den. The road we took was a beautiful one, for we went “cross lots,” and we enjoyed it, in spite of the fact that we did not expect the interview with Mr. Campbell to be a very pleasant one. To be sure, he had been quite civil on the occasion of our last call upon him, but the Story Girl had been with us then and had beguiled him into good-humour and generosity by the magic of her voice and personality. We had no such ally now, and Mr. Campbell was known to be virulently opposed to missions in any shape or form.

“I don’t know whether it would have been any better if I could have put on my good clothes,” said Cecily, with a rueful glance at her print dress, which, though neat and clean, was undeniably faded and RATHER short and tight. “The Story Girl said it would, and I wanted to, but mother wouldn’t let me. She said it was all nonsense, and Mr. Campbell would never notice what I had on.”

“It’s my opinion that Mr. Campbell notices a good deal more than you’d think for,” I said sagely.

“Well, I wish our call was over,” sighed Cecily. “I can’t tell you how I dread it.”

“Now, see here, Sis,” I said cheerfully, “let’s not think about it till we get there. It’ll only spoil our walk and do no good. Let’s just forget it and enjoy ourselves.”

“I’ll try,” agreed Cecily, “but it’s ever so much easier to preach than to practise.”

Our way lay first over a hill top, gallantly plumed with golden rod, where cloud shadows drifted over us like a gypsying crew. Carlisle, in all its ripely tinted length and breadth, lay below us, basking in the August sunshine, that spilled over the brim of the valley to the far-off Markdale Harbour, cupped in its harvest-golden hills.

Then came a little valley overgrown with the pale purple bloom of thistles and elusively haunted with their perfume. You say that thistles have no perfume? Go you to a brook hollow where they grow some late summer twilight at dewfall; and on the still air that rises suddenly to meet you will come a waft of faint, aromatic fragrance, wondrously sweet and evasive, the distillation of that despised thistle bloom.

Beyond this the path wound through a forest of fir, where a wood wind wove its murmurous spell and a wood brook dimpled pellucidly among the shadows — the dear, companionable, elfin shadows — that lurked under the low growing boughs. Along the edges of that winding path grew banks of velvet green moss, starred with clusters of pigeon berries. Pigeon berries are not to be eaten. They are woolly, tasteless things. But they are to be looked at in their glowing scarlet. They are the jewels with which the forest of conebearers loves to deck its brown breast. Cecily gathered some and pinned them on hers, but they did not become her. I thought how witching the Story Girl's brown curls would have looked twined with those brilliant clusters. Perhaps Cecily was thinking of it, too, for she presently said,

“Bev, don't you think the Story Girl is changing somehow?”

“There are times — just times — when she seems to belong more among the grownups than among us,” I said, reluctantly, “especially when she puts on her bridesmaid dress.”

“Well, she's the oldest of us, and when you come to think of it, she's fifteen, — that's almost grownup,” sighed Cecily. Then she added, with sudden vehemence, “I hate the thought of any of us growing up. Felicity says she just longs to be grownup, but I don't, not a bit. I wish I could just stay a little girl for ever — and have you and Felix and all the others for

playmates right along. I don't know how it is — but whenever I think of being grownup I seem to feel tired.”

Something about Cecily's speech — or the wistful look that had crept into her sweet brown eyes — made me feel vaguely uncomfortable; I was glad that we were at the end of our journey, with Mr. Campbell's big house before us, and his dog sitting gravely at the veranda steps.

“Oh, dear,” said Cecily, with a shiver, “I'd been hoping that dog wouldn't be around.”

“He never bites,” I assured her.

“Perhaps he doesn't, but he always looks as if he was going to,” rejoined Cecily.

The dog continued to look, and, as we edged gingerly past him and up the veranda steps, he turned his head and kept on looking. What with Mr. Campbell before us and the dog behind, Cecily was trembling with nervousness; but perhaps it was as well that the dour brute was there, else I verily believe she would have turned and fled shamelessly when we heard steps in the hall.

It was Mr. Campbell's housekeeper who came to the door, however; she ushered us pleasantly into the sitting-room where Mr. Campbell was reading. He laid down his book with a slight frown and said nothing at all in response to our timid “good afternoon.” But after we had sat for a few minutes in wretched silence, wishing ourselves a thousand miles away, he said, with a chuckle,

“Well, is it the school library again?”

Cecily had remarked as we were coming that what she dreaded most of all was introducing the subject; but Mr. Campbell had given her a splendid opening, and she plunged wildly in at once, rattling her explanation off nervously with trembling voice and flushed cheeks.

“No, it’s our Mission Band autograph quilt, Mr. Campbell. There are to be as many squares in it as there are members in the Band. Each one has a square and is collecting names for it. If you want to have your name on the quilt you pay five cents, and if you want to have it right in the round spot in the middle of the square you must pay ten cents. Then when we have got all the names we can we will embroider them on the squares. The money is to go to the little girl our Band is supporting in Korea. I heard that nobody had asked you, so I thought perhaps you would give me your name for my square.”

Mr. Campbell drew his black brows together in a scowl.

“Stuff and nonsense!” he exclaimed angrily. “I don’t believe in Foreign Missions — don’t believe in them at all. I never give a cent to them.”

“Five cents isn’t a very large sum,” said Cecily earnestly.

Mr. Campbell’s scowl disappeared and he laughed.

“It wouldn’t break me,” he admitted, “but it’s the principle of the thing. And as for that Mission Band of yours, if it wasn’t for the fun you get out of it, catch one of you belonging. You don’t really care a rap more for the heathen than I do.”

“Oh, we do,” protested Cecily. “We do think of all the poor little children in Korea, and we like to think we are helping them, if it’s ever so little. We ARE in earnest, Mr. Campbell — indeed we are.”

“Don’t believe it — don’t believe a word of it,” said Mr. Campbell impolitely. “You’ll do things that are nice and interesting. You’ll get up concerts, and chase people about for autographs and give money your parents give you and that doesn’t cost you either time or labour. But you wouldn’t do anything you disliked for the heathen children — you wouldn’t make any real sacrifice for them — catch you!”

“Indeed we would,” cried Cecily, forgetting her timidity in her zeal. “I just wish I had a chance to prove it to you.”

“You do, eh? Come, now, I’ll take you at your word. I’ll test you. Tomorrow is Communion Sunday and the church will be full of folks and they’ll all have their best clothes on. If you go to church tomorrow in the very costume you have on at present, without telling anyone why you do so, until it is all over, I’ll give you — why, I vow I’ll give you five dollars for that quilt of yours.”

Poor Cecily! To go to church in a faded print dress, with a shabby little old sun-hat and worn shoes! It was very cruel of Mr. Campbell.

“I — I don’t think mother would let me,” she faltered.

Her tormentor smiled grimly.

“It’s not hard to find some excuse,” he said sarcastically.

Cecily crimsoned and sat up facing Mr. Campbell spunkily.

“It’s NOT an excuse,” she said. “If mother will let me go to church like this I’ll go. But I’ll have to tell HER why, Mr. Campbell, because I’m certain she’d never let me if I didn’t.”

“Oh, you can tell all your own family,” said Mr. Campbell, “but remember, none of them must tell it outside until Sunday is over. If they do, I’ll be sure to find it out and then our bargain is off. If I see you in church tomorrow, dressed as you are now, I’ll give you my name and five dollars. But I won’t see you. You’ll shrink when you’ve had time to think it over.”

“I sha’n’t,” said Cecily resolutely.

“Well, we’ll see. And now come out to the barn with me. I’ve got the prettiest little drove of calves out there you ever saw. I want you to see them.”

Mr. Campbell took us all over his barns and was very affable. He had beautiful horses, cows and sheep, and I enjoyed seeing them. I don’t think Cecily did, however. She was very quiet and even Mr. Campbell’s handsome new span of dappled grays failed to arouse any enthusiasm in

her. She was already in bitter anticipation living over the martyrdom of the morrow. On the way home she asked me seriously if I thought Mr. Campbell would go to heaven when he died.

“Of course he will,” I said. “Isn’t he a member of the church?”

“Oh, yes, but I can’t imagine him fitting into heaven. You know he isn’t really fond of anything but live stock.”

“He’s fond of teasing people, I guess,” I responded. “Are you really going to church tomorrow in that dress, Sis?”

“If mother’ll let me I’ll have to,” said poor Cecily. “I won’t let Mr. Campbell triumph over me. And I DO want to have as many names as Kitty has. And I DO want to help the poor little Korean children. But it will be simply dreadful. I don’t know whether I hope mother will or not.”

I did not believe she would, but Aunt Janet sometimes could be depended on for the unexpected. She laughed and told Cecily she could please herself. Felicity was in a rage over it, and declared SHE wouldn’t go to church if Cecily went in such a rig. Dan sarcastically inquired if all she went to church for was to show off her fine clothes and look at other people’s; then they quarrelled and didn’t speak to each other for two days, much to Cecily’s distress.

I suspect poor Sis wished devoutly that it might rain the next day; but it was gloriously fine. We were all waiting in the orchard for the Story Girl who had not begun to dress for church until Cecily and Felicity were ready. Felicity was her prettiest in flower-trimmed hat, crisp muslin, floating ribbons and trim black slippers. Poor Cecily stood beside her mute and pale, in her faded school garb and heavy coppertoed boots. But her face, if pale, was very determined. Cecily, having put her hand to the plough, was not of those who turn back.

“You do look just awful,” said Felicity. “I don’t care — I’m going to sit in Uncle James’ pew. I WON’T sit with you. There will be so many strangers there, and all the Markdale people, and what will they think of you? Some of them will never know the reason, either.”

“I wish the Story Girl would hurry,” was all poor Cecily said. “We’re going to be late. It wouldn’t have been quite so hard if I could have got there before anyone and slipped quietly into our pew.”

“Here she comes at last,” said Dan. “Why — what’s she got on?”

The Story Girl joined us with a quizzical smile on her face. Dan whistled. Cecily’s pale cheeks flushed with understanding and gratitude. The Story Girl wore her school print dress and hat also, and was gloveless and heavy shod.

“You’re not going to have to go through this all alone, Cecily,” she said.

“Oh, it won’t be half so hard now,” said Cecily, with a long breath of relief.

I fancy it was hard enough even then. The Story Girl did not care a whit, but Cecily rather squirmed under the curious glances that were cast at her. She afterwards told me that she really did not think she could have endured it if she had been alone.

Mr. Campbell met us under the elms in the churchyard, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Well, you did it, Miss,” he said to Cecily, “but you should have been alone. That was what I meant. I suppose you think you’ve cheated me nicely.”

“No, she doesn’t,” spoke up the Story Girl undauntedly. “She was all dressed and ready to come before she knew I was going to dress the same way. So she kept her bargain faithfully, Mr. Campbell, and I think you were cruel to make her do it.”

“You do, eh? Well, well, I hope you’ll forgive me. I didn’t think she’d do it — I was sure feminine vanity would win the day over missionary zeal. It seems it didn’t — though how much was pure missionary zeal and how much just plain King spunk I’m doubtful. I’ll keep my promise, Miss. You

shall have your five dollars, and mind you put my name in the round space. No five-cent corners for me.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TANTALIZING REVELATION

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“I shall have something to tell you in the orchard this evening,” said the Story Girl at breakfast one morning. Her eyes were very bright and excited. She looked as if she had not slept a great deal. She had spent the previous evening with Miss Reade and had not returned until the rest of us were in bed. Miss Reade had finished giving music lessons and was going home in a few days. Cecily and Felicity were in despair over this and mourned as those without comfort. But the Story Girl, who had been even more devoted to Miss Reade than either of them, had not, as I noticed, expressed any regret and seemed to be very cheerful over the whole matter.

“Why can’t you tell it now?” asked Felicity.

“Because the evening is the nicest time to tell things in. I only mentioned it now so that you would have something interesting to look forward to all day.”

“Is it about Miss Reade?” asked Cecily.

“Never mind.”

“I’ll bet she’s going to be married,” I exclaimed, remembering the ring.

“Is she?” cried Felicity and Cecily together.

The Story Girl threw an annoyed glance at me. She did not like to have her dramatic announcements forestalled.

“I don’t say that it is about Miss Reade or that it isn’t. You must just wait till the evening.”

“I wonder what it is,” speculated Cecily, as the Story Girl left the room.

“I don’t believe it’s much of anything,” said Felicity, beginning to clear away the breakfast dishes. “The Story Girl always likes to make so much out of so little. Anyhow, I don’t believe Miss Reade is going to be married. She hasn’t any beaux around here and Mrs. Armstrong says she’s sure she doesn’t correspond with anybody. Besides, if she was she wouldn’t be likely to tell the Story Girl.”

“Oh, she might. They’re such friends, you know,” said Cecily.

“Miss Reade is no better friends with her than she is with me and you,” retorted Felicity.

“No, but sometimes it seems to me that she’s a different kind of friend with the Story Girl than she is with me and you,” reflected Cecily. “I can’t just explain what I mean.”

“No wonder. Such nonsense,” sniffed Felicity. “It’s only some girl’s secret, anyway,” said Dan, loftily. “I don’t feel much interest in it.”

But he was on hand with the rest of us that evening, interest or no interest, in Uncle Stephen’s Walk, where the ripening apples were beginning to glow like jewels among the boughs.

“Now, are you going to tell us your news?” asked Felicity impatiently.

“Miss Reade IS going to be married,” said the Story Girl. “She told me so last night. She is going to be married in a fortnight’s time.”

“Who to?” exclaimed the girls.

“To” — the Story Girl threw a defiant glance at me as if to say, “You can’t spoil the surprise of THIS, anyway,” — “to” — the Awkward Man.”

For a few moments amazement literally held us dumb.

“You’re not in earnest, Sara Stanley?” gasped Felicity at last.

“Indeed I am. I thought you’d be astonished. But I wasn’t. I’ve suspected it all summer, from little things I’ve noticed. Don’t you remember that evening last spring when I went a piece with Miss Reade and told you when I came back that a story was growing? I guessed it from the way the Awkward Man looked at her when I stopped to speak to him over his garden fence.”

“But — the Awkward Man!” said Felicity helplessly. “It doesn’t seem possible. Did Miss Reade tell you HERSELF?”

“Yes.”

“I suppose it must be true then. But how did it ever come about? He’s SO shy and awkward. How did he ever manage to get up enough spunk to ask her to marry him?”

“Maybe she asked him,” suggested Dan.

The Story Girl looked as if she might tell if she would.

“I believe that WAS the way of it,” I said, to draw her on.

“Not exactly,” she said reluctantly. “I know all about it but I can’t tell you. I guessed part from things I’ve seen — and Miss Reade told me a good deal — and the Awkward Man himself told me his side of it as we came home last night. I met him just as I left Mr. Armstrong’s and we were together as far as his house. It was dark and he just talked on as if he were talking to himself — I think he forgot I was there at all, once he got started. He has never been shy or awkward with me, but he never talked as he did last night.”

“You might tell us what he said,” urged Cecily. “We’d never tell.”

The Story Girl shook her head.

“No, I can’t. You wouldn’t understand. Besides, I couldn’t tell it just right. It’s one of the things that are hardest to tell. I’d spoil it if I told it — now.

Perhaps some day I'll be able to tell it properly. It's very beautiful — but it might sound very ridiculous if it wasn't told just exactly the right way."

"I don't know what you mean, and I don't believe you know yourself," said Felicity pettishly. "All that I can make out is that Miss Reade is going to marry Jasper Dale, and I don't like the idea one bit. She is so beautiful and sweet. I thought she'd marry some dashing young man. Jasper Dale must be nearly twenty years older than her — and he's so queer and shy — and such a hermit."

"Miss Reade is perfectly happy," said the Story Girl. "She thinks the Awkward Man is lovely — and so he is. You don't know him, but I do."

"Well, you needn't put on such airs about it," sniffed Felicity.

"I am not putting on any airs. But it's true. Miss Reade and I are the only people in Carlisle who really know the Awkward Man. Nobody else ever got behind his shyness to find out just what sort of a man he is."

"When are they to be married?" asked Felicity.

"In a fortnight's time. And then they are coming right back to live at Golden Milestone. Won't it be lovely to have Miss Reade always so near us?"

"I wonder what she'll think about the mystery of Golden Milestone," remarked Felicity.

Golden Milestone was the beautiful name the Awkward Man had given his home; and there was a mystery about it, as readers of the first volume of these chronicles will recall.

"She knows all about the mystery and thinks it perfectly lovely — and so do I," said the Story Girl.

"Do YOU know the secret of the locked room?" cried Cecily.

"Yes, the Awkward Man told me all about it last night. I told you I'd find out the mystery some time."

“And what is it?”

“I can’t tell you that either.”

“I think you’re hateful and mean,” exclaimed Felicity. “It hasn’t anything to do with Miss Reade, so I think you might tell us.”

“It has something to do with Miss Reade. It’s all about her.”

“Well, I don’t see how that can be when the Awkward Man never saw or heard of Miss Reade until she came to Carlisle in the spring,” said Felicity incredulously, “and he’s had that locked room for years.”

“I can’t explain it to you — but it’s just as I’ve said,” responded the Story Girl.

“Well, it’s a very queer thing,” retorted Felicity.

“The name in the books in the room was Alice — and Miss Reade’s name is Alice,” marvelled Cecily. “Did he know her before she came here?”

“Mrs. Griggs says that room has been locked for ten years. Ten years ago Miss Reade was just a little girl of ten. SHE couldn’t be the Alice of the books,” argued Felicity.

“I wonder if she’ll wear the blue silk dress,” said Sara Ray.

“And what will she do about the picture, if it isn’t hers?” added Cecily.

“The picture couldn’t be hers, or Mrs. Griggs would have known her for the same when she came to Carlisle,” said Felix.

“I’m going to stop wondering about it,” exclaimed Felicity crossly, aggravated by the amused smile with which the Story Girl was listening to the various speculations. “I think Sara is just as mean as mean when she won’t tell us.”

“I can’t,” repeated the Story Girl patiently.

“You said one time you had an idea who ‘Alice’ was,” I said. “Was your idea anything like the truth?”

“Yes, I guessed pretty nearly right.”

“Do you suppose they’ll keep the room locked after they are married?” asked Cecily.

“Oh, no. I can tell you that much. It is to be Miss Reade’s own particular sitting room.”

“Why, then, perhaps we’ll see it some time ourselves, when we go to see Miss Reade,” cried Cecily.

“I’d be frightened to go into it,” confessed Sara Ray. “I hate things with mysteries. They always make me nervous.”

“I love them. They’re so exciting,” said the Story Girl.

“Just think, this will be the second wedding of people we know,” reflected Cecily. “Isn’t that interesting?”

“I only hope the next thing won’t be a funeral,” remarked Sara Ray gloomily. “There were three lighted lamps on our kitchen table last night, and Judy Pineau says that’s a sure sign of a funeral.”

“Well, there are funerals going on all the time,” said Dan.

“But it means the funeral of somebody you know. I don’t believe in it — MUCH — but Judy says she’s seen it come true time and again. I hope if it does it won’t be anybody we know very well. But I hope it’ll be somebody I know a LITTLE, because then I might get to the funeral. I’d just love to go to a funeral.”

“That’s a dreadful thing to say,” commented Felicity in a shocked tone.

Sara Ray looked bewildered.

“I don’t see what is dreadful in it,” she protested.

“People don’t go to funerals for the fun of it,” said Felicity severely. “And you just as good as said you hoped somebody you knew would die so you’d get to the funeral.”

“No, no, I didn’t. I didn’t mean that AT ALL, Felicity. I don’t want anybody to die; but what I meant was, if anybody I knew HAD to die there might be a chance to go to the funeral. I’ve never been to a single funeral yet, and it must be so interesting.”

“Well, don’t mix up talk about funerals with talk about weddings,” said Felicity. “It isn’t lucky. I think Miss Reade is simply throwing herself away, but I hope she’ll be happy. And I hope the Awkward Man will manage to get married without making some awful blunder, but it’s more than I expect.”

“The ceremony is to be very private,” said the Story Girl.

“I’d like to see them the day they appear out in church,” chuckled Dan. “How’ll he ever manage to bring her in and show her into the pew? I’ll bet he’ll go in first — or tramp on her dress — or fall over his feet.”

“Maybe he won’t go to church at all the first Sunday and she’ll have to go alone,” said Peter. “That happened in Markdale. A man was too bashful to go to church the first time after getting married, and his wife went alone till he got used to the idea.”

“They may do things like that in Markdale but that is not the way people behave in Carlisle,” said Felicity loftily.

Seeing the Story Girl slipping away with a disapproving face I joined her.

“What is the matter, Sara?” I asked.

“I hate to hear them talking like that about Miss Reade and Mr. Dale,” she answered vehemently. “It’s really all so beautiful — but they make it seem silly and absurd, somehow.”

“You might tell me all about it, Sara,” I insinuated. “I wouldn’t tell — and I’d understand.”

“Yes, I think you would,” she said thoughtfully. “But I can’t tell it even to you because I can’t tell it well enough yet. I’ve a feeling that there’s only one way to tell it — and I don’t know the way yet. Some day I’ll know it — and then I’ll tell you, Bev.”

Long, long after she kept her word. Forty years later I wrote to her, across the leagues of land and sea that divided us, and told her that Jasper Dale was dead; and I reminded her of her old promise and asked its fulfilment. In reply she sent me the written love story of Jasper Dale and Alice Reade. Now, when Alice sleeps under the whispering elms of the old Carlisle churchyard, beside the husband of her youth, that story may be given, in all its old-time sweetness, to the world.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LOVE STORY OF THE AWKWARD MAN

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(Written by the Story Girl)

Jasper Dale lived alone in the old homestead which he had named Golden Milestone. In Carlisle this giving one's farm a name was looked upon as a piece of affectation; but if a place must be named why not give it a sensible name with some meaning to it? Why Golden Milestone, when Pinewood or Hillslope or, if you wanted to be very fanciful, Ivy Lodge, might be had for the taking?

He had lived alone at Golden Milestone since his mother's death; he had been twenty then and he was close upon forty now, though he did not look it. But neither could it be said that he looked young; he had never at any time looked young with common youth; there had always been something in his appearance that stamped him as different from the ordinary run of men, and, apart from his shyness, built up an intangible, invisible barrier between him and his kind. He had lived all his life in Carlisle; and all the Carlisle people knew of or about him — although they thought they knew everything — was that he was painfully, abnormally shy. He never went anywhere except to church; he never took part in Carlisle's simple social life; even with most men he was distant and reserved; as for women, he never spoke to or looked at them; if one spoke to him, even if she were a matronly old mother in Israel, he was at once in an agony of painful blushes. He had no friends in the sense of companions; to all outward appearance his life was solitary and devoid of any human interest.

He had no housekeeper; but his old house, furnished as it had been in his mother's lifetime, was cleanly and daintily kept. The quaint rooms were as free from dust and disorder as a woman could have had them. This was known, because Jasper Dale occasionally had his hired man's wife, Mrs.

Griggs, in to scrub for him. On the morning she was expected he betook himself to woods and fields, returning only at nightfall. During his absence Mrs. Griggs was frankly wont to explore the house from cellar to attic, and her report of its condition was always the same—"neat as wax." To be sure, there was one room that was always locked against her, the west gable, looking out on the garden and the hill of pines beyond. But Mrs. Griggs knew that in the lifetime of Jasper Dale's mother it had been unfurnished. She supposed it still remained so, and felt no especial curiosity concerning it, though she always tried the door.

Jasper Dale had a good farm, well cultivated; he had a large garden where he worked most of his spare time in summer; it was supposed that he read a great deal, since the postmistress declared that he was always getting books and magazines by mail. He seemed well contented with his existence and people let him alone, since that was the greatest kindness they could do him. It was un-supposable that he would ever marry; nobody ever had supposed it.

"Jasper Dale never so much as THOUGHT about a woman," Carlisle oracles declared. Oracles, however, are not always to be trusted.

One day Mrs. Griggs went away from the Dale place with a very curious story, which she diligently spread far and wide. It made a good deal of talk, but people, although they listened eagerly, and wondered and questioned, were rather incredulous about it. They thought Mrs. Griggs must be drawing considerably upon her imagination; there were not lacking those who declared that she had invented the whole account, since her reputation for strict veracity was not wholly unquestioned.

Mrs. Griggs's story was as follows: —

One day she found the door of the west gable unlocked. She went in, expecting to see bare walls and a collection of odds and ends. Instead she found herself in a finely furnished room. Delicate lace curtains hung before the small, square, broad-silled windows. The walls were adorned with pictures in much finer taste than Mrs. Griggs could appreciate. There was a bookcase between the windows filled with choicely bound books. Beside it stood a little table with a very dainty workbasket on it. By the

basket Mrs. Griggs saw a pair of tiny scissors and a silver thimble. A wicker rocker, comfortable with silk cushions, was near it. Above the bookcase a woman's picture hung — a water-colour, if Mrs. Griggs had but known it — representing a pale, very sweet face, with large, dark eyes and a wistful expression under loose masses of black, lustrous hair. Just beneath the picture, on the top shelf of the bookcase, was a vaseful of flowers. Another vaseful stood on the table beside the basket.

All this was astonishing enough. But what puzzled Mrs. Griggs completely was the fact that a woman's dress was hanging over a chair before the mirror — a pale blue, silken affair. And on the floor beside it were two little blue satin slippers!

Good Mrs. Griggs did not leave the room until she had thoroughly explored it, even to shaking out the blue dress and discovering it to be a tea-gown — wrapper, she called it. But she found nothing to throw any light on the mystery. The fact that the simple name "Alice" was written on the fly-leaves of all the books only deepened it, for it was a name unknown in the Dale family. In this puzzled state she was obliged to depart, nor did she ever find the door unlocked again; and, discovering that people thought she was romancing when she talked about the mysterious west gable at Golden Milestone, she indignantly held her peace concerning the whole affair.

But Mrs. Griggs had told no more than the simple truth. Jasper Dale, under all his shyness and aloofness, possessed a nature full of delicate romance and poesy, which, denied expression in the common ways of life, bloomed out in the realm of fancy and imagination. Left alone, just when the boy's nature was deepening into the man's, he turned to this ideal kingdom for all he believed the real world could never give him. Love — a strange, almost mystical love — played its part here for him. He shadowed forth to himself the vision of a woman, loving and beloved; he cherished it until it became almost as real to him as his own personality and he gave this dream woman the name he liked best — Alice. In fancy he walked and talked with her, spoke words of love to her, and heard words of love in return. When he came from work at the close of day she met him at his threshold in the twilight — a strange, fair, starry shape, as elusive and

spiritual as a blossom reflected in a pool by moonlight — with welcome on her lips and in her eyes.

One day, when he was in Charlottetown on business, he had been struck by a picture in the window of a store. It was strangely like the woman of his dream love. He went in, awkward and embarrassed, and bought it. When he took it home he did not know where to put it. It was out of place among the dim old engravings of bewigged portraits and conventional landscapes on the walls of Golden Milestone. As he pondered the matter in his garden that evening he had an inspiration. The sunset, flaming on the windows of the west gable, kindled them into burning rose. Amid the splendour he fancied Alice's fair face peeping archly down at him from the room. The inspiration came then. It should be her room; he would fit it up for her; and her picture should hang there.

He was all summer carrying out his plan. Nobody must know or suspect, so he must go slowly and secretly. One by one the furnishings were purchased and brought home under cover of darkness. He arranged them with his own hands. He bought the books he thought she would like best and wrote her name in them; he got the little feminine knick-knacks of basket and thimble. Finally he saw in a store a pale blue tea-gown and the satin slippers. He had always fancied her as dressed in blue. He bought them and took them home to her room. Thereafter it was sacred to her; he always knocked on its door before he entered; he kept it sweet with fresh flowers; he sat there in the purple summer evenings and talked aloud to her or read his favourite books to her. In his fancy she sat opposite to him in her rocker, clad in the trailing blue gown, with her head leaning on one slender hand, as white as a twilight star.

But Carlisle people knew nothing of this — would have thought him tinged with mild lunacy if they had known. To them, he was just the shy, simple farmer he appeared. They never knew or guessed at the real Jasper Dale.

One spring Alice Reade came to teach music in Carlisle. Her pupils worshipped her, but the grown people thought she was rather too distant and reserved. They had been used to merry, jolly girls who joined eagerly in the social life of the place. Alice Reade held herself aloof from it — not

disdainfully, but as one to whom these things were of small importance. She was very fond of books and solitary rambles; she was not at all shy but she was as sensitive as a flower; and after a time Carlisle people were content to let her live her own life and no longer resented her unlikeness to themselves.

She boarded with the Armstrongs, who lived beyond Golden Milestone around the hill of pines. Until the snow disappeared she went out to the main road by the long Armstrong lane; but when spring came she was wont to take a shorter way, down the pine hill, across the brook, past Jasper Dale's garden, and out through his lane. And one day, as she went by, Jasper Dale was working in his garden.

He was on his knees in a corner, setting out a bunch of roots — an unsightly little tangle of rainbow possibilities. It was a still spring morning; the world was green with young leaves; a little wind blew down from the pines and lost itself willingly among the budding delights of the garden. The grass opened eyes of blue violets. The sky was high and cloudless, turquoise-blue, shading off into milkiness on the far horizons. Birds were singing along the brook valley. Rollicking robins were whistling joyously in the pines. Jasper Dale's heart was filled to overflowing with a realization of all the virgin loveliness around him; the feeling in his soul had the sacredness of a prayer. At this moment he looked up and saw Alice Reade.

She was standing outside the garden fence, in the shadow of a great pine tree, looking not at him, for she was unaware of his presence, but at the virginal bloom of the plum trees in a far corner, with all her delight in it outblossoming freely in her face. For a moment Jasper Dale believed that his dream love had taken visible form before him. She was like — so like; not in feature, perhaps, but in grace and colouring — the grace of a slender, lissome form and the colouring of cloudy hair and wistful, dark gray eyes, and curving red mouth; and more than all, she was like her in expression — in the subtle revelation of personality exhaling from her like perfume from a flower. It was as if his own had come to him at last and his whole soul suddenly leaped out to meet and welcome her.

Then her eyes fell upon him and the spell was broken. Jasper remained kneeling mutely there, shy man once more, crimson with blushes, a strange, almost pitiful creature in his abject confusion. A little smile flickered about the delicate corners of her mouth, but she turned and walked swiftly away down the lane.

Jasper looked after her with a new, painful sense of loss and loveliness. It had been agony to feel her conscious eyes upon him, but he realized now that there had been a strange sweetness in it, too. It was still greater pain to watch her going from him.

He thought she must be the new music teacher but he did not even know her name. She had been dressed in blue, too — a pale, dainty blue; but that was of course; he had known she must wear it; and he was sure her name must be Alice. When, later on, he discovered that it was, he felt no surprise.

He carried some mayflowers up to the west gable and put them under the picture. But the charm had gone out of the tribute; and looking at the picture, he thought how scant was the justice it did her. Her face was so much sweeter, her eyes so much softer, her hair so much more lustrous. The soul of his love had gone from the room and from the picture and from his dreams. When he tried to think of the Alice he loved he saw, not the shadowy spirit occupant of the west gable, but the young girl who had stood under the pine, beautiful with the beauty of moonlight, of starshine on still water, of white, wind-swayed flowers growing in silent, shadowy places. He did not then realize what this meant: had he realized it he would have suffered bitterly; as it was he felt only a vague discomfort — a curious sense of loss and gain commingled.

He saw her again that afternoon on her way home. She did not pause by the garden but walked swiftly past. Thereafter, every day for a week he watched unseen to see her pass his home. Once a little child was with her, clinging to her hand. No child had ever before had any part in the shy man's dream life. But that night in the twilight the vision of the rocking-chair was a girl in a blue print dress, with a little, golden-haired shape at her knee — a shape that lisped and prattled and called her "mother;" and both of them were his.

It was the next day that he failed for the first time to put flowers in the west gable. Instead, he cut a loose handful of daffodils and, looking furtively about him as if committing a crime, he laid them across the footpath under the pine. She must pass that way; her feet would crush them if she failed to see them. Then he slipped back into his garden, half exultant, half repentant. From a safe retreat he saw her pass by and stoop to lift his flowers. Thereafter he put some in the same place every day.

When Alice Reade saw the flowers she knew at once who had put them there, and divined that they were for her. She lifted them tenderly in much surprise and pleasure. She had heard all about Jasper Dale and his shyness; but before she had heard about him she had seen him in church and liked him. She thought his face and his dark blue eyes beautiful; she even liked the long brown hair that Carlisle people laughed at. That he was quite different from other people she had understood at once, but she thought the difference in his favour. Perhaps her sensitive nature divined and responded to the beauty in his. At least, in her eyes Jasper Dale was never a ridiculous figure.

When she heard the story of the west gable, which most people disbelieved, she believed it, although she did not understand it. It invested the shy man with interest and romance. She felt that she would have liked, out of no impertinent curiosity, to solve the mystery; she believed that it contained the key to his character.

Thereafter, every day she found flowers under the pine tree; she wished to see Jasper to thank him, unaware that he watched her daily from the screen of shrubbery in his garden; but it was some time before she found the opportunity. One evening she passed when he, not expecting her, was leaning against his garden fence with a book in his hand. She stopped under the pine.

“Mr. Dale,” she said softly, “I want to thank you for your flowers.”

Jasper, startled, wished that he might sink into the ground. His anguish of embarrassment made her smile a little. He could not speak, so she went on gently.

“It has been so good of you. They have given me so much pleasure — I wish you could know how much.”

“It was nothing — nothing,” stammered Jasper. His book had fallen on the ground at her feet, and she picked it up and held it out to him.

“So you like Ruskin,” she said. “I do, too. But I haven’t read this.”

“If you — would care — to read it — you may have it,” Jasper contrived to say.

She carried the book away with her. He did not again hide when she passed, and when she brought the book back they talked a little about it over the fence. He lent her others, and got some from her in return; they fell into the habit of discussing them. Jasper did not find it hard to talk to her now; it seemed as if he were talking to his dream Alice, and it came strangely natural to him. He did not talk volubly, but Alice thought what he did say was worth while. His words lingered in her memory and made music. She always found his flowers under the pine, and she always wore some of them, but she did not know if he noticed this or not.

One evening Jasper walked shyly with her from his gate up the pine hill. After that he always walked that far with her. She would have missed him much if he had failed to do so; yet it did not occur to her that she was learning to love him. She would have laughed with girlish scorn at the idea. She liked him very much; she thought his nature beautiful in its simplicity and purity; in spite of his shyness she felt more delightfully at home in his society than in that of any other person she had ever met. He was one of those rare souls whose friendship is at once a pleasure and a benediction, showering light from their own crystal clearness into all the dark corners in the souls of others, until, for the time being at least, they reflected his own nobility. But she never thought of love. Like other girls she had her dreams of a possible Prince Charming, young and handsome and debonair. It never occurred to her that he might be found in the shy, dreamy recluse of Golden Milestone.

In August came a day of gold and blue. Alice Reade, coming through the trees, with the wind blowing her little dark lovelocks tricksily about under

her wide blue hat, found a fragrant heap of mignonette under the pine. She lifted it and buried her face in it, drinking in the wholesome, modest perfume.

She had hoped Jasper would be in his garden, since she wished to ask him for a book she greatly desired to read. But she saw him sitting on the rustic seat at the further side. His back was towards her, and he was partially screened by a copse of lilacs.

Alice, blushing slightly, unlatched the garden gate, and went down the path. She had never been in the garden before, and she found her heart beating in a strange fashion.

He did not hear her footsteps, and she was close behind him when she heard his voice, and realized that he was talking to himself, in a low, dreamy tone. As the meaning of his words dawned on her consciousness she started and grew crimson. She could not move or speak; as one in a dream she stood and listened to the shy man's reverie, guiltless of any thought of eavesdropping.

"How much I love you, Alice," Jasper Dale was saying, unafraid, with no shyness in voice or manner. "I wonder what you would say if you knew. You would laugh at me — sweet as you are, you would laugh in mockery. I can never tell you. I can only dream of telling you. In my dream you are standing here by me, dear. I can see you very plainly, my sweet lady, so tall and gracious, with your dark hair and your maiden eyes. I can dream that I tell you my love; that — maddest, sweetest dream of all — that you love me in return. Everything is possible in dreams, you know, dear. My dreams are all I have, so I go far in them, even to dreaming that you are my wife. I dream how I shall fix up my dull old house for you. One room will need nothing more — it is your room, dear, and has been ready for you a long time — long before that day I saw you under the pine. Your books and your chair and your picture are there, dear — only the picture is not half lovely enough. But the other rooms of the house must be made to bloom out freshly for you. What a delight it is thus to dream of what I would do for you! Then I would bring you home, dear, and lead you through my garden and into my house as its mistress. I would see you standing beside me in the old mirror at the end of the hall — a bride, in

your pale blue dress, with a blush on your face. I would lead you through all the rooms made ready for your coming, and then to your own. I would see you sitting in your own chair and all my dreams would find rich fulfilment in that royal moment. Oh, Alice, we would have a beautiful life together! It's sweet to make believe about it. You will sing to me in the twilight, and we will gather early flowers together in the spring days. When I come home from work, tired, you will put your arms about me and lay your head on my shoulder. I will stroke it — so — that bonny, glossy head of yours. Alice, my Alice — all mine in my dream — never to be mine in real life — how I love you!”

The Alice behind him could bear no more. She gave a little choking cry that betrayed her presence. Jasper Dale sprang up and gazed upon her. He saw her standing there, amid the languorous shadows of August, pale with feeling, wide-eyed, trembling.

For a moment shyness wrung him. Then every trace of it was banished by a sudden, strange, fierce anger that swept over him. He felt outraged and hurt to the death; he felt as if he had been cheated out of something incalculably precious — as if sacrilege had been done to his most holy sanctuary of emotion. White, tense with his anger, he looked at her and spoke, his lips as pale as if his fiery words scathed them.

“How dare you? You have spied on me — you have crept in and listened! How dare you? Do you know what you have done, girl? You have destroyed all that made life worth while to me. My dream is dead. It could not live when it was betrayed. And it was all I had. Oh, laugh at me — mock me! I know that I am ridiculous! What of it? It never could have hurt you! Why must you creep in like this to hear me and put me to shame? Oh, I love you — I will say it, laugh as you will. Is it such a strange thing that I should have a heart like other men? This will make sport for you! I, who love you better than my life, better than any other man in the world can love you, will be a jest to you all your life. I love you — and yet I think I could hate you — you have destroyed my dream — you have done me deadly wrong.”

“Jasper! Jasper!” cried Alice, finding her voice. His anger hurt her with a pain she could not endure. It was unbearable that Jasper should be angry

with her. In that moment she realized that she loved him — that the words he had spoken when unconscious of her presence were the sweetest she had ever heard, or ever could hear. Nothing mattered at all, save that he loved her and was angry with her.

“Don’t say such dreadful things to me,” she stammered, “I did not mean to listen. I could not help it. I shall never laugh at you. Oh, Jasper” — she looked bravely at him and the fine soul of her shone through the flesh like an illuminating lamp—”I am glad that you love me! and I am glad I chanced to overhear you, since you would never have had the courage to tell me otherwise. Glad — glad! Do you understand, Jasper?”

Jasper looked at her with the eyes of one who, looking through pain, sees rapture beyond.

“Is it possible?” he said, wonderingly. “Alice — I am so much older than you — and they call me the Awkward Man — they say I am unlike other people” —

“You ARE unlike other people,” she said softly, “and that is why I love you. I know now that I must have loved you ever since I saw you.”

“I loved you long before I saw you,” said Jasper.

He came close to her and drew her into his arms, tenderly and reverently, all his shyness and awkwardness swallowed up in the grace of his great happiness. In the old garden he kissed her lips and Alice entered into her own.

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCLE BLAIR COMES HOME

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It happened that the Story Girl and I both got up very early on the morning of the Awkward Man's wedding day. Uncle Alec was going to Charlottetown that day, and I, awakened at daybreak by the sounds in the kitchen beneath us, remembered that I had forgotten to ask him to bring me a certain schoolbook I wanted. So I hurriedly dressed and hastened down to tell him before he went. I was joined on the stairs by the Story Girl, who said she had wakened and, not feeling like going to sleep again, thought she might as well get up.

"I had such a funny dream last night," she said. "I dreamed that I heard a voice calling me from away down in Uncle Stephen's Walk—'Sara, Sara, Sara,' it kept calling. I didn't know whose it was, and yet it seemed like a voice I knew. I wakened up while it was calling, and it seemed so real I could hardly believe it was a dream. It was bright moonlight, and I felt just like getting up and going out to the orchard. But I knew that would be silly and of course I didn't go. But I kept on wanting to and I couldn't sleep any more. Wasn't it queer?"

When Uncle Alec had gone I proposed a saunter to the farther end of the orchard, where I had left a book the preceding evening. A young mom was walking rosily on the hills as we passed down Uncle Stephen's Walk, with Paddy trotting before us. High overhead was the spiritlike blue of paling skies; the east was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings; just above it was one milk-white star of morning, like a pearl on a silver sea. A light wind of dawn was weaving an orient spell.

"It's lovely to be up as early as this, isn't it?" said the Story Girl. "The world seems so different just at sunrise, doesn't it? It makes me feel just like getting up to see the sun rise every morning of my life after this. But I

know I won't. I'll likely sleep later than ever tomorrow morning. But I wish I could."

"The Awkward Man and Miss Reade are going to have a lovely day for their wedding," I said.

"Yes, and I'm so glad. Beautiful Alice deserves everything good. Why, Bev — why, Bev! Who is that in the hammock?"

I looked. The hammock was swung under the two end trees of the Walk. In it a man was lying, asleep, his head pillowed on his overcoat. He was sleeping easily, lightly, and wholesomely. He had a pointed brown beard and thick wavy brown hair. His cheeks were a dusky red and the lashes of his closed eyes were as long and dark and silken as a girl's. He wore a light gray suit, and on the slender white hand that hung down over the hammock's edge was a spark of diamond fire.

It seemed to me that I knew his face, although assuredly I had never seen him before. While I groped among vague speculations the Story Girl gave a queer, choked little cry. The next moment she had sprung over the intervening space, dropped on her knees by the hammock, and flung her arms about the man's neck.

"Father! Father!" she cried, while I stood, rooted to the ground in my amazement.

The sleeper stirred and opened two large, exceedingly brilliant hazel eyes. For a moment he gazed rather blankly at the brown-curled young lady who was embracing him. Then a most delightful smile broke over his face; he sprang up and caught her to his heart.

"Sara — Sara — my little Sara! To think didn't know you at first glance! But you are almost a woman. And when I saw you last you were just a little girl of eight. My own little Sara!"

"Father — father — sometimes I've wondered if you were ever coming back to me," I heard the Story Girl say, as I turned and scuttled up the Walk, realizing that I was not wanted there just then and would be little

missed. Various emotions and speculations possessed my mind in my retreat; but chiefly did I feel a sense of triumph in being the bearer of exciting news.

“Aunt Janet, Uncle Blair is here,” I announced breathlessly at the kitchen door.

Aunt Janet, who was kneading her bread, turned round and lifted floury hands. Felicity and Cecily, who were just entering the kitchen, rosy from slumber, stopped still and stared at me.

“Uncle who?” exclaimed Aunt Janet.

“Uncle Blair — the Story Girl’s father, you know. He’s here.”

“WHERE?”

“Down in the orchard. He was asleep in the hammock. We found him there.”

“Dear me!” said Aunt Janet, sitting down helplessly. “If that isn’t like Blair! Of course he couldn’t come like anybody else. I wonder,” she added in a tone unheard by anyone else save myself, “I wonder if he has come to take the child away.”

My elation went out like a snuffed candle. I had never thought of this. If Uncle Blair took the Story Girl away would not life become rather savourless on the hill farm? I turned and followed Felicity and Cecily out in a very subdued mood.

Uncle Blair and the Story Girl were just coming out of the orchard. His arm was about her and hers was on his shoulder. Laughter and tears were contending in her eyes. Only once before — when Peter had come back from the Valley of the Shadow — had I seen the Story Girl cry. Emotion had to go very deep with her ere it touched the source of tears. I had always known that she loved her father passionately, though she rarely talked of him, understanding that her uncles and aunts were not wholeheartedly his friends.

But Aunt Janet's welcome was cordial enough, though a trifle flustered. Whatever thrifty, hardworking farmer folk might think of gay, Bohemian Blair Stanley in his absence, in his presence even they liked him, by the grace of some winsome, lovable quality in the soul of him. He had "a way with him" — revealed even in the manner with which he caught staid Aunt Janet in his arms, swung her matronly form around as though she had been a slim schoolgirl, and kissed her rosy cheek.

"Sister o' mine, are you never going to grow old?" he said. "Here you are at forty-five with the roses of sixteen — and not a gray hair, I'll wager."

"Blair, Blair, it is you who are always young," laughed Aunt Janet, not ill pleased. "Where in the world did you come from? And what is this I hear of your sleeping all night in the hammock?"

"I've been painting in the Lake District all summer, as you know," answered Uncle Blair, "and one day I just got homesick to see my little girl. So I sailed for Montreal without further delay. I got here at eleven last night — the stationmaster's son drove me down. Nice boy. The old house was in darkness and I thought it would be a shame to rouse you all out of bed after a hard day's work. So I decided that I would spend the night in the orchard. It was moonlight, you know, and moonlight in an old orchard is one of the few things left over from the Golden Age."

"It was very foolish of you," said practical Aunt Janet. "These September nights are real chilly. You might have caught your death of cold — or a bad dose of rheumatism."

"So I might. No doubt it was foolish of me," agreed Uncle Blair gaily. "It must have been the fault, of the moonlight. Moonlight, you know, Sister Janet, has an intoxicating quality. It is a fine, airy, silver wine, such as fairies may drink at their revels, unharmed of it; but when a mere mortal sips of it, it mounts straightway to his brain, to the undoing of his daylight common sense. However, I have got neither cold nor rheumatism, as a sensible person would have done had he ever been lured into doing such a nonsensical thing; there is a special Providence for us foolish folk. I enjoyed my night in the orchard; for a time I was companioned by sweet old memories; and then I fell asleep listening to the murmurs of the wind

in those old trees yonder. And I had a beautiful dream, Janet. I dreamed that the old orchard blossomed again, as it did that spring eighteen years ago. I dreamed that its sunshine was the sunshine of spring, not autumn. There was newness of life in my dream, Janet, and the sweetness of forgotten words.”

“Wasn’t it strange about MY dream?” whispered the Story Girl to me.

“Well, you’d better come in and have some breakfast,” said Aunt Janet. “These are my little girls — Felicity and Cecily.”

“I remember them as two most adorable tots,” said Uncle Blair, shaking hands. “They haven’t changed quite so much as my own baby-child. Why, she’s a woman, Janet — she’s a woman.”

“She’s child enough still,” said Aunt Janet hastily.

The Story Girl shook her long brown curls.

“I’m fifteen,” she said. “And you ought to see me in my long dress, father.”

“We must not be separated any longer, dear heart,” I heard Uncle Blair say tenderly. I hoped that he meant he would stay in Canada — not that he would take the Story Girl away.

Apart from this we had a gay day with Uncle Blair. He evidently liked our society better than that of the grownups, for he was a child himself at heart, gay, irresponsible, always acting on the impulse of the moment. We all found him a delightful companion. There was no school that day, as Mr. Perkins was absent, attending a meeting of the Teachers’ Convention, so we spent most of its golden hours in the orchard with Uncle Blair, listening to his fascinating accounts of foreign wanderings. He also drew all our pictures for us, and this was especially delightful, for the day of the camera was only just dawning and none of us had ever had even our photographs taken. Sara Ray’s pleasure was, as usual, quite spoiled by wondering what her mother would say of it, for Mrs. Ray had, so it appeared, some very peculiar prejudices against the taking or making of

any kind of picture whatsoever, owing to an exceedingly strict interpretation of the second commandment. Dan suggested that she need not tell her mother anything about it; but Sara shook her head.

“I’ll have to tell her. I’ve made it a rule to tell ma everything I do ever since the Judgment Day.”

“Besides,” added Cecily seriously, “the Family Guide says one ought to tell one’s mother everything.”

“It’s pretty hard sometimes, though,” sighed Sara. “Ma scolds so much when I do tell her things, that it sort of discourages me. But when I think of how dreadful I felt the time of the Judgment Day over deceiving her in some things it nerves me up. I’d do almost anything rather than feel like that the next time the Judgment Day comes.”

“Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell a story,” said Uncle Blair. “What do you mean by speaking of the Judgment Day in the past tense?”

The Story Girl told him the tale of that dreadful Sunday in the preceding summer and we all laughed with him at ourselves.

“All the same,” muttered Peter, “I don’t want to have another experience like that. I hope I’ll be dead the next time the Judgment Day comes.”

“But you’ll be raised up for it,” said Felix.

“Oh, that’ll be all right. I won’t mind that. I won’t know anything about it till it really happens. It’s the expecting it that’s the worst.”

“I don’t think you ought to talk of such things,” said Felicity.

When evening came we all went to Golden Milestone. We knew the Awkward Man and his bride were expected home at sunset, and we meant to scatter flowers on the path by which she must enter her new home. It was the Story Girl’s idea, but I don’t think Aunt Janet would have let us go if Uncle Blair had not pleaded for us. He asked to be taken along, too, and

we agreed, if he would stand out of sight when the newly married pair came home.

“You see, father, the Awkward Man won’t mind us, because we’re only children and he knows us well,” explained the Story Girl, “but if he sees you, a stranger, it might confuse him and we might spoil the homecoming, and that would be such a pity.”

So we went to Golden Milestone, laden with all the flowery spoil we could plunder from both gardens. It was a clear amber-tinted September evening and far away, over Markdale Harbour, a great round red moon was rising as we waited. Uncle Blair was hidden behind the windblown tassels of the pines at the gate, but he and the Story Girl kept waving their hands at each other and calling out gay, mirthful jests.

“Do you really feel acquainted with your father?” whispered Sara Ray wonderingly. “It’s long since you saw him.”

“If I hadn’t seen him for a hundred years it wouldn’t make any difference that way,” laughed the Story Girl.

“S-s-h-s-s-h — they’re coming,” whispered Felicity excitedly.

And then they came — Beautiful Alice blushing and lovely, in the prettiest of pretty blue dresses, and the Awkward Man, so fervently happy that he quite forgot to be awkward. He lifted her out of the buggy gallantly and led her forward to us, smiling. We retreated before them, scattering our flowers lavishly on the path, and Alice Dale walked to the very doorstep of her new home over a carpet of blossoms. On the step they both paused and turned towards us, and we shyly did the proper thing in the way of congratulations and good wishes.

“It was so sweet of you to do this,” said the smiling bride.

“It was lovely to be able to do it for you, dearest,” whispered the Story Girl, “and oh, Miss Reade — Mrs. Dale, I mean — we all hope you’ll be so, so happy for ever.”

“I am sure I shall,” said Alice Dale, turning to her husband. He looked down into her eyes — and we were quite forgotten by both of them. We saw it, and slipped away, while Jasper Dale drew his wife into their home and shut the world out.

We scampered joyously away through the moonlit dusk. Uncle Blair joined us at the gate and the Story Girl asked him what he thought of the bride.

“When she dies white violets will grow out of her dust,” he answered.

“Uncle Blair says even queerer things than the Story Girl,” Felicity whispered to me.

And so that beautiful day went away from us, slipping through our fingers as we tried to hold it. It hooded itself in shadows and fared forth on the road that is lighted by the white stars of evening. It had been a gift of Paradise. Its hours had all been fair and beloved. From dawn flush to fall of night there had been naught to mar it. It took with it its smiles and laughter. But it left the boon of memory.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

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“I am going away with father when he goes. He is going to spend the winter in Paris, and I am to go to school there.”

The Story Girl told us this one day in the orchard. There was a little elation in her tone, but more regret. The news was not a great surprise to us. We had felt it in the air ever since Uncle Blair’s arrival. Aunt Janet had been very unwilling to let the Story Girl go. But Uncle Blair was inexorable. It was time, he said, that she should go to a better school than the little country one in Carlisle; and besides, he did not want her to grow into womanhood a stranger to him. So it was finally decided that she was to go.

“Just think, you are going to Europe,” said Sara Ray in an awe-struck tone. “Won’t that be splendid!”

“I suppose I’ll like it after a while,” said the Story Girl slowly, “but I know I’ll be dreadfully homesick at first. Of course, it will be lovely to be with father, but oh, I’ll miss the rest of you so much!”

“Just think how WE’LL miss YOU,” sighed Cecily. “It will be so lonesome here this winter, with you and Peter both gone. Oh, dear, I do wish things didn’t have to change.”

Felicity said nothing. She kept looking down at the grass on which she sat, absently pulling at the slender blades. Presently we saw two big tears roll down over her cheeks. The Story Girl looked surprised.

“Are you crying because I’m going away, Felicity?” she asked.

“Of course I am,” answered Felicity, with a big sob. “Do you think I’ve no f-f-eeling?”

“I didn’t think you’d care much,” said the Story Girl frankly. “You’ve never seemed to like me very much.”

“I d-don’t wear my h-heart on my sleeve,” said poor Felicity, with an attempt at dignity. “I think you m-might stay. Your father would let you s-stay if you c-coaxed him.”

“Well, you see I’d have to go some time,” sighed the Story Girl, “and the longer it was put off the harder it would be. But I do feel dreadfully about it. I can’t even take poor Paddy. I’ll have to leave him behind, and oh, I want you all to promise to be kind to him for my sake.”

We all solemnly assured her that we would.

“I’ll g-give him cream every m-morning and n-night,” sobbed Felicity, “but I’ll never be able to look at him without crying. He’ll make me think of you.”

“Well, I’m not going right away,” said the Story Girl, more cheerfully. “Not till the last of October. So we have over a month yet to have a good time in. Let’s all just determine to make it a splendid month for the last. We won’t think about my going at all till we have to, and we won’t have any quarrels among us, and we’ll just enjoy ourselves all we possibly can. So don’t cry any more, Felicity. I’m awfully glad you do like me and am sorry I’m going away, but let’s all forget it for a month.”

Felicity sighed, and tucked away her damp handkerchief.

“It isn’t so easy for me to forget things, but I’ll try,” she said disconsolately, “and if you want any more cooking lessons before you go I’ll be real glad to teach you anything I know.”

This was a high plane of self-sacrifice for Felicity to attain. But the Story Girl shook her head.

“No, I’m not going to bother my head about cooking lessons this last month. It’s too vexing.”

“Do you remember the time you made the pudding—” began Peter, and suddenly stopped.

“Out of sawdust?” finished the Story Girl cheerfully. “You needn’t be afraid to mention it to me after this. I don’t mind any more. I begin to see the fun of it now. I should think I do remember it — and the time I baked the bread before it was raised enough.”

“People have made worse mistakes than that,” said Felicity kindly.

“Such as using tooth-powd—” but here Dan stopped abruptly, remembering the Story Girl’s plea for a beautiful month. Felicity coloured, but said nothing — did not even LOOK anything.

“We HAVE had lots of fun together one way or another,” said Cecily, retrospectively.

“Just think how much we’ve laughed this last year or so,” said the Story Girl. “We’ve had good times together; but I think we’ll have lots more splendid years ahead.”

“Eden is always behind us — Paradise always before,” said Uncle Blair, coming up in time to hear her. He said it with a sigh that was immediately lost in one of his delightful smiles.

“I like Uncle Blair so much better than I expected to,” Felicity confided to me. “Mother says he’s a rolling stone, but there really is something very nice about him, although he says a great many things I don’t understand. I suppose the Story Girl will have a very gay time in Paris.”

“She’s going to school and she’ll have to study hard,” I said.

“She says she’s going to study for the stage,” said Felicity. “Uncle Roger thinks it is all right, and says she’ll be very famous some day. But mother thinks it’s dreadful, and so do I.”

“Aunt Julia is a concert singer,” I said.

“Oh, that’s very different. But I hope poor Sara will get on all right,” sighed Felicity. “You never know what may happen to a person in those foreign countries. And everybody says Paris is such a wicked place. But we must hope for the best,” she concluded in a resigned tone.

That evening the Story Girl and I drove the cows to pasture after milking, and when we came home we sought out Uncle Blair in the orchard. He was sauntering up and down Uncle Stephen’s Walk, his hands clasped behind him and his beautiful, youthful face uplifted to the western sky where waves of night were breaking on a dim primrose shore of sunset.

“See that star over there in the southwest?” he said, as we joined him. “The one just above that pine? An evening star shining over a dark pine tree is the whitest thing in the universe — because it is LIVING whiteness — whiteness possessing a soul. How full this old orchard is of twilight! Do you know, I have been trysting here with ghosts.”

“The Family Ghost?” I asked, very stupidly.

“No, not the Family Ghost. I never saw beautiful, brokenhearted Emily yet. Your mother saw her once, Sara — that was a strange thing,” he added absently, as if to himself.

“Did mother really see her?” whispered the Story Girl.

“Well, she always believed she did. Who knows?”

“Do you think there are such things as ghosts, Uncle Blair?” I asked curiously.

“I never saw any, Beverley.”

“But you said you were trysting with ghosts here this evening,” said the Story Girl.

“Oh, yes — the ghosts of the old years. I love this orchard because of its many ghosts. We are good comrades, those ghosts and I; we walk and talk

— we even laugh together — sorrowful laughter that has sorrow’s own sweetness. And always there comes to me one dear phantom and wanders hand in hand with me — a lost lady of the old years.”

“My mother?” said the Story Girl very softly.

“Yes, your mother. Here, in her old haunts, it is impossible for me to believe that she can be dead — that her LAUGHTER can be dead. She was the gayest, sweetest thing — and so young — only three years older than you, Sara. Yonder old house had been glad because of her for eighteen years when I met her first.”

“I wish I could remember her,” said the Story Girl, with a little sigh. “I haven’t even a picture of her. Why didn’t you paint one, father?”

“She would never let me. She had some queer, funny, half-playful, half-earnest superstition about it. But I always meant to when she would become willing to let me. And then — she died. Her twin brother Felix died the same day. There was something strange about that, too. I was holding her in my arms and she was looking up at me; suddenly she looked past me and gave a little start. ‘Felix!’ she said. For a moment she trembled and then she smiled and looked up at me again a little beseechingly. ‘Felix has come for me, dear,’ she said. ‘We were always together before you came — you must not mind — you must be glad I do not have to go alone.’ Well, who knows? But she left me, Sara — she left me.”

There was that in Uncle Blair’s voice that kept us silent for a time. Then the Story Girl said, still very softly:

“What did mother look like, father? I don’t look the least little bit like her, do I?”

“No, I wish you did, you brown thing. Your mother’s face was as white as a wood-lily, with only a faint dream of rose in her cheeks. She had the eyes of one who always had a song in her heart — blue as a mist, those eyes were. She had dark lashes, and a little red mouth that quivered when she was very sad or very happy like a crimson rose too rudely shaken by the

wind. She was as slim and lithe as a young, white-stemmed birch tree. How I loved her! How happy we were! But he who accepts human love must bind it to his soul with pain, and she is not lost to me. Nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember it.”

Uncle Blair looked up at the evening star. We saw that he had forgotten us, and we slipped away, hand in hand, leaving him alone in the memory-haunted shadows of the old orchard.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PATH TO ARCADY

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October that year gathered up all the spilled sunshine of the summer and clad herself in it as in a garment. The Story Girl had asked us to try to make the last month together beautiful, and Nature seconded our efforts, giving us that most beautiful of beautiful things — a gracious and perfect moon of falling leaves. There was not in all that vanished October one day that did not come in with auroral splendour and go out attended by a fair galaxy of evening stars — not a day when there were not golden lights in the wide pastures and purple hazes in the ripened distances. Never was anything so gorgeous as the maple trees that year. Maples are trees that have primeval fire in their souls. It glows out a little in their early youth, before the leaves open, in the redness and rosy-yellowness of their blossoms, but in summer it is carefully hidden under a demure, silver-lined greenness. Then when autumn comes, the maples give up trying to be sober and flame out in all the barbaric splendour and gorgeousness of their real nature, making of the hills things out of an Arabian Nights dream in the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid.

You may never know what scarlet and crimson really are until you see them in their perfection on an October hillside, under the unfathomable blue of an autumn sky. All the glow and radiance and joy at earth's heart seem to have broken loose in a splendid determination to express itself for once before the frost of winter chills her beating pulses. It is the year's carnival ere the dull Lenten days of leafless valleys and penitential mists come.

The time of apple-picking had come around once more and we worked joyously. Uncle Blair picked apples with us, and between him and the Story Girl it was an October never to be forgotten.

“Will you go far afield for a walk with me to-day?” he said to her and me, one idle afternoon of opal skies, pied meadows and misty hills.

It was Saturday and Peter had gone home; Felix and Dan were helping Uncle Alec top turnips; Cecily and Felicity were making cookies for Sunday, so the Story Girl and I were alone in Uncle Stephen’s Walk.

We liked to be alone together that last month, to think the long, long thoughts of youth and talk about our futures. There had grown up between us that summer a bond of sympathy that did not exist between us and the others. We were older than they — the Story Girl was fifteen and I was nearly that; and all at once it seemed as if we were immeasurably older than the rest, and possessed of dreams and visions and forward-reaching hopes which they could not possibly share or understand. At times we were still children, still interested in childish things. But there came hours when we seemed to our two selves very grown up and old, and in those hours we talked our dreams and visions and hopes, vague and splendid, as all such are, over together, and so began to build up, out of the rainbow fragments of our childhood’s companionship, that rare and beautiful friendship which was to last all our lives, enriching and enstarring them. For there is no bond more lasting than that formed by the mutual confidences of that magic time when youth is slipping from the sheath of childhood and beginning to wonder what lies for it beyond those misty hills that bound the golden road.

“Where are you going?” asked the Story Girl.

“To ‘the woods that belt the gray hillside’ — ay, and overflow beyond it into many a valley purple-folded in immemorial peace,” answered Uncle Blair. “I have a fancy for one more ramble in Prince Edward Island woods before I leave Canada again. But I would not go alone. So come, you two gay youthful things to whom all life is yet fair and good, and we will seek the path to Arcady. There will be many little things along our way to make us glad. Joyful sounds will ‘come ringing down the wind;’ a wealth of gypsy gold will be ours for the gathering; we will learn the potent, unutterable charm of a dim spruce wood and the grace of flexile mountain ashes fringing a lonely glen; we will tryst with the folk of fur and feather;

we'll hearken to the music of gray old firs. Come, and you'll have a ramble and an afternoon that you will both remember all your lives."

We did have it; never has its remembrance faded; that idyllic afternoon of roving in the old Carlisle woods with the Story Girl and Uncle Blair gleams in my book of years, a page of living beauty. Yet it was but a few hours of simplest pleasure; we wandered pathlessly through the sylvan calm of those dear places which seemed that day to be full of a great friendliness; Uncle Blair sauntered along behind us, whistling softly; sometimes he talked to himself; we delighted in those brief reveries of his; Uncle Blair was the only man I have ever known who could, when he so willed, "talk like a book," and do it without seeming ridiculous; perhaps it was because he had the knack of choosing "fit audience, though few," and the proper time to appeal to that audience.

We went across the fields, intending to skirt the woods at the back of Uncle Alec's farm and find a lane that cut through Uncle Roger's woods; but before we came to it we stumbled on a sly, winding little path quite by accident — if, indeed, there can be such a thing as accident in the woods, where I am tempted to think we are led by the Good People along such of their fairy ways as they have a mind for us to walk in.

"Go to, let us explore this," said Uncle Blair. "It always drags terribly at my heart to go past a wood lane if I can make any excuse at all for traversing it: for it is the by-ways that lead to the heart of the woods and we must follow them if we would know the forest and be known of it. When we can really feel its wild heart beating against ours its subtle life will steal into our veins and make us its own for ever, so that no matter where we go or how wide we wander in the noisy ways of cities or over the lone ways of the sea, we shall yet be drawn back to the forest to find our most enduring kinship."

"I always feel so SATISFIED in the woods," said the Story Girl dreamily, as we turned in under the low-swinging fir boughs. "Trees seem such friendly things."

"They are the most friendly things in God's good creation," said Uncle Blair emphatically. "And it is so easy to live with them. To hold converse

with pines, to whisper secrets with the poplars, to listen to the tales of old romance that beeches have to tell, to walk in eloquent silence with self-contained firs, is to learn what real companionship is. Besides, trees are the same all over the world. A beech tree on the slopes of the Pyrenees is just what a beech tree here in these Carlisle woods is; and there used to be an old pine hereabouts whose twin brother I was well acquainted with in a dell among the Apennines. Listen to those squirrels, will you, chattering over yonder. Did you ever hear such a fuss over nothing? Squirrels are the gossips and busybodies of the woods; they haven't learned the fine reserve of its other denizens. But after all, there is a certain shrill friendliness in their greeting."

"They seem to be scolding us," I said, laughing.

"Oh, they are not half such scolds as they sound," answered Uncle Blair gaily. "If they would but 'tak a thought and mend' their shrew-like ways they would be dear, lovable creatures enough."

"If I had to be an animal I think I'd like to be a squirrel," said the Story Girl. "It must be next best thing to flying."

"Just see what a spring that fellow gave," laughed Uncle Blair. "And now listen to his song of triumph! I suppose that chasm he cleared seemed as wide and deep to him as Niagara Gorge would to us if we leaped over it. Well, the wood people are a happy folk and very well satisfied with themselves."

Those who have followed a dim, winding, balsamic path to the unexpected hollow where a wood-spring lies have found the rarest secret the forest can reveal. Such was our good fortune that day. At the end of our path we found it, under the pines, a crystal-clear thing with lips unkissed by so much as a stray sunbeam.

"It is easy to dream that this is one of the haunted springs of old romance," said Uncle Blair. "'Tis an enchanted spot this, I am very sure, and we should go softly, speaking low, lest we disturb the rest of a white, wet naiad, or break some spell that has cost long years of mystic weaving."

“It’s so easy to believe things in the woods,” said the Story Girl, shaping a cup from a bit of golden-brown birch bark and filling it at the spring.

“Drink a toast in that water, Sara,” said Uncle Blair. “There’s not a doubt that it has some potent quality of magic in it and the wish you wish over it will come true.”

The Story Girl lifted her golden-hued flagon to her red lips. Her hazel eyes laughed at us over the brim.

“Here’s to our futures,” she cried, “I wish that every day of our lives may be better than the one that went before.”

“An extravagant wish — a very wish of youth,” commented Uncle Blair, “and yet in spite of its extravagance, a wish that will come true if you are true to yourselves. In that case, every day WILL be better than all that went before — but there will be many days, dear lad and lass, when you will not believe it.”

We did not understand him, but we knew Uncle Blair never explained his meaning. When asked it he was wont to answer with a smile, “Some day you’ll grow to it. Wait for that.” So we addressed ourselves to follow the brook that stole away from the spring in its windings and doublings and tricky surprises.

“A brook,” quoth Uncle Blair, “is the most changeful, bewitching, lovable thing in the world. It is never in the same mind or mood two minutes. Here it is sighing and murmuring as if its heart were broken. But listen — yonder by the birches it is laughing as if it were enjoying some capital joke all by itself.”

It was indeed a changeful brook; here it would make a pool, dark and brooding and still, where we bent to look at our mirrored faces; then it grew communicative and gossiped shallowly over a broken pebble bed where there was a diamond dance of sunbeams and no troutling or minnow could glide through without being seen. Sometimes its banks were high and steep, hung with slender ashes and birches; again they were mere, low margins, green with delicate mosses, shelving out of the wood. Once it

came to a little precipice and flung itself over undauntedly in an indignation of foam, gathering itself up rather dizzily among the mossy stones below. It was some time before it got over its vexation; it went boiling and muttering along, fighting with the rotten logs that lie across it, and making far more fuss than was necessary over every root that interfered with it. We were getting tired of its ill-humour and talked of leaving it, when it suddenly grew sweet-tempered again, swooped around a curve — and presto, we were in fairyland.

It was a little dell far in the heart of the woods. A row of birches fringed the brook, and each birch seemed more exquisitely graceful and golden than her sisters. The woods receded from it on every hand, leaving it lying in a pool of amber sunshine. The yellow trees were mirrored in the placid stream, with now and then a leaf falling on the water, mayhap to drift away and be used, as Uncle Blair suggested, by some adventurous wood sprite who had it in mind to fare forth to some far-off, legendary region where all the brooks ran into the sea.

“Oh, what a lovely place!” I exclaimed, looking around me with delight.

“A spell of eternity is woven over it, surely,” murmured Uncle Blair.

“Winter may not touch it, or spring ever revisit it. It should be like this for ever.”

“Let us never come here again,” said the Story Girl softly, “never, no matter how often we may be in Carlisle. Then we will never see it changed or different. We can always remember it just as we see it now, and it will be like this for ever for us.”

“I’m going to sketch it,” said Uncle Blair.

While he sketched it the Story Girl and I sat on the banks of the brook and she told me the story of the Sighing Reed. It was a very simple little story, that of the slender brown reed which grew by the forest pool and always was sad and sighing because it could not utter music like the brook and the birds and the winds. All the bright, beautiful things around it mocked it and laughed at it for its folly. Who would ever look for music in it, a plain, brown, unbeautiful thing? But one day a youth came through the wood; he

was as beautiful as the spring; he cut the brown reed and fashioned it according to his liking; and then he put it to his lips and breathed on it; and, oh, the music that floated through the forest! It was so entrancing that everything — brooks and birds and winds — grew silent to listen to it. Never had anything so lovely been heard; it was the music that had for so long been shut up in the soul of the sighing reed and was set free at last through its pain and suffering.

I had heard the Story Girl tell many a more dramatic tale; but that one stands out for me in memory above them all, partly, perhaps, because of the spot in which she told it, partly because it was the last one I was to hear her tell for many years — the last one she was ever to tell me on the golden road.

When Uncle Blair had finished his sketch the shafts of sunshine were turning crimson and growing more and more remote; the early autumn twilight was falling over the woods. We left our dell, saying goodbye to it for ever, as the Story Girl had suggested, and we went slowly homeward through the fir woods, where a haunting, indescribable odour stole out to meet us.

“There is magic in the scent of dying fir,” Uncle Blair was saying aloud to himself, as if forgetting he was not quite alone. “It gets into our blood like some rare, subtly-compounded wine, and thrills us with unutterable sweetnesses, as of recollections from some other fairer life, lived in some happier star. Compared to it, all other scents seem heavy and earth-born, luring to the valleys instead of the heights. But the tang of the fir summons onward and upward to some ‘far-off, divine event’ — some spiritual peak of attainment whence we shall see with unfaltering, unclouded vision the spires of some aerial City Beautiful, or the fulfilment of some fair, fadeless land of promise.”

He was silent for a moment, then added in a lower tone,

“Felicity, you loved the scent of dying fir. If you were here tonight with me — Felicity — Felicity!”

Something in his voice made me suddenly sad. I was comforted when I felt the Story Girl slip her hand into mine. So we walked out of the woods into the autumn dusk.

We were in a little valley. Halfway up the opposite slope a brush fire was burning clearly and steadily in a maple grove. There was something indescribably alluring in that fire, glowing so redly against the dark background of forest and twilit hill.

“Let us go to it,” cried Uncle Blair, gaily, casting aside his sorrowful mood and catching our hands. “A wood fire at night has a fascination not to be resisted by those of mortal race. Hasten — we must not lose time.”

“Oh, it will burn a long time yet,” I gasped, for Uncle Blair was whisking us up the hill at a merciless rate.

“You can’t be sure. It may have been lighted by some good, honest farmer-man, bent on tidying up his sugar orchard, but it may also, for anything we know, have been kindled by no earthly woodman as a beacon or summons to the tribes of fairyland, and may vanish away if we tarry.”

It did not vanish and presently we found ourselves in the grove. It was very beautiful; the fire burned with a clear, steady glow and a soft crackle; the long arcades beneath the trees were illuminated with a rosy radiance, beyond which lurked companies of gray and purple shadows. Everything was very still and dreamy and remote.

“It is impossible that out there, just over the hill, lies a village of men, where tame household lamps are shining,” said Uncle Blair.

“I feel as if we must be thousands of miles away from everything we’ve ever known,” murmured the Story Girl.

“So you are!” said Uncle Blair emphatically. “You’re back in the youth of the race — back in the beguilement of the young world. Everything is in this hour — the beauty of classic myths, the primal charm of the silent and the open, the lure of mystery. Why, it’s a time and place when and where everything might come true — when the men in green might creep out to

join hands and dance around the fire, or dryads steal from their trees to warm their white limbs, grown chilly in October frosts, by the blaze. I wouldn't be much surprised if we should see something of the kind. Isn't that the flash of an ivory shoulder through yonder gloom? And didn't you see a queer little elfin face peering at us around that twisted gray trunk? But one can't be sure. Mortal eyesight is too slow and clumsy a thing to match against the flicker of a pixy-litten fire."

Hand in hand we wandered through that enchanted place, seeking the folk of elfland, "and heard their mystic voices calling, from fairy knoll and haunted hill." Not till the fire died down into ashes did we leave the grove. Then we found that the full moon was gleaming lustrously from a cloudless sky across the valley. Between us and her stretched up a tall pine, wondrously straight and slender and branchless to its very top, where it overflowed in a crest of dark boughs against the silvery splendour behind it. Beyond, the hill farms were lying in a suave, white radiance.

"Doesn't it seem a long, long time to you since we left home this afternoon?" asked the Story Girl. "And yet it is only a few hours."

Only a few hours — true; yet such hours were worth a cycle of common years untouched by the glory and the dream.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WE LOSE A FRIEND

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Our beautiful October was marred by one day of black tragedy — the day Paddy died. For Paddy, after seven years of as happy a life as ever a cat lived, died suddenly — of poison, as was supposed. Where he had wandered in the darkness to meet his doom we did not know, but in the frosty dawnlight he dragged himself home to die. We found him lying on the doorstep when we got up, and it did not need Aunt Janet's curt announcement, or Uncle Blair's reluctant shake of the head, to tell us that there was no chance of our pet recovering this time. We felt that nothing could be done. Lard and sulphur on his paws would be of no use, nor would any visit to Peg Bowen avail. We stood around in mournful silence; the Story Girl sat down on the step and took poor Paddy upon her lap.

"I s'pose there's no use even in praying now," said Cecily desperately.

"It wouldn't do any harm to try," sobbed Felicity.

"You needn't waste your prayers," said Dan mournfully, "Pat is beyond human aid. You can tell that by his eyes. Besides, I don't believe it was the praying cured him last time."

"No, it was Peg Bowen," declared Peter, "but she couldn't have bewitched him this time for she's been away for months, nobody knows where."

"If he could only TELL us where he feels the worst!" said Cecily piteously. "It's so dreadful to see him suffering and not be able to do a single thing to help him!"

"I don't think he's suffering much now," I said comfortingly.

The Story Girl said nothing. She passed and repassed her long brown hand gently over her pet's glossy fur. Pat lifted his head and essayed to creep a little nearer to his beloved mistress. The Story Girl drew his limp body close in her arms. There was a plaintive little mew — a long quiver — and Paddy's friendly soul had fared forth to wherever it is that good cats go.

"Well, he's gone," said Dan, turning his back abruptly to us.

"It doesn't seem as if it can be true," sobbed Cecily. "This time yesterday morning he was full of life."

"He drank two full saucers of cream," moaned Felicity, "and I saw him catch a mouse in the evening. Maybe it was the last one he ever caught."

"He did for many a mouse in his day," said Peter, anxious to pay his tribute to the departed.

"He was a cat — take him for all in all. We shall not look upon his like again," quoted Uncle Blair.

Felicity and Cecily and Sara Ray cried so much that Aunt Janet lost patience completely and told them sharply that they would have something to cry for some day — which did not seem to comfort them much. The Story Girl shed no tears, though the look in her eyes hurt more than weeping.

"After all, perhaps it's for the best," she said drearily. "I've been feeling so badly over having to go away and leave Paddy. No matter how kind you'd all be to him I know he'd miss me terribly. He wasn't like most cats who don't care who comes and goes as long as they get plenty to eat. Paddy wouldn't have been contented without me."

"Oh, no-o-o, oh, no-o-o," wailed Sara Ray lugubriously.

Felix shot a disgusted glance at her.

"I don't see what YOU are making such a fuss about," he said unfeelingly. "He wasn't your cat."

“But I l-l-oved him,” sobbed Sara, “and I always feel bad when my friends d-do.”

“I wish we could believe that cats went to heaven, like people,” sighed Cecily. “Do you really think it isn’t possible?”

Uncle Blair shook his head.

“I’m afraid not. I’d like to think cats have a chance for heaven, but I can’t. There’s nothing heavenly about cats, delightful creatures though they are.”

“Blair, I’m really surprised to hear the things you say to the children,” said Aunt Janet severely.

“Surely you wouldn’t prefer me to tell them that cats DO go to heaven,” protested Uncle Blair.

“I think it’s wicked to carry on about an animal as those children do,” answered Aunt Janet decidedly, “and you shouldn’t encourage them. Here now, children, stop making a fuss. Bury that cat and get off to your apple picking.”

We had to go to our work, but Paddy was not to be buried in any such offhand fashion as that. It was agreed that we should bury him in the orchard at sunset that evening, and Sara Ray, who had to go home, declared she would be back for it, and implored us to wait for her if she didn’t come exactly on time.

“I mayn’t be able to get away till after milking,” she sniffed, “but I don’t want to miss it. Even a cat’s funeral is better than none at all.”

“Horrid thing!” said Felicity, barely waiting until Sara was out of earshot.

We worked with heavy hearts that day; the girls cried bitterly most of the time and we boys whistled defiantly. But as evening drew on we began to feel a sneaking interest in the details of the funeral. As Dan said, the thing should be done properly, since Paddy was no common cat. The Story Girl selected the spot for the grave, in a little corner behind the cherry copse,

where early violets enskied the grass in spring, and we boys dug the grave, making it “soft and narrow,” as the heroine of the old ballad wanted hers made. Sara Ray, who managed to come in time after all, and Felicity stood and watched us, but Cecily and the Story Girl kept far aloof.

“This time last night you never thought you’d be digging Pat’s grave tonight,” sighed Felicity.

“We little k-know what a day will bring forth,” sobbed Sara. “I’ve heard the minister say that and it is true.”

“Of course it’s true. It’s in the Bible; but I don’t think you should repeat it in connection with a cat,” said Felicity dubiously.

When all was in readiness the Story Girl brought her pet through the orchard where he had so often frisked and prowled. No useless coffin enclosed his breast but he reposed in a neat cardboard box.

“I wonder if it would be right to say ‘ashes to ashes and dust to dust,’” said Peter.

“No, it wouldn’t,” averred Felicity. “It would be real wicked.”

“I think we ought to sing a hymn, anyway,” asseverated Sara Ray.

“Well, we might do that, if it isn’t a very religious one,” conceded Felicity.

“How would ‘Pull for the shore, sailor, pull for the shore,’ do?” asked Cecily. “That never seemed to me a very religious hymn.”

“But it doesn’t seem very appropriate to a funeral occasion either,” said Felicity.

“I think ‘Lead, kindly light,’ would be ever so much more suitable,” suggested Sara Ray, “and it is kind of soothing and melancholy too.”

“We are not going to sing anything,” said the Story Girl coldly. “Do you want to make the affair ridiculous? We will just fill up the grave quietly and put a flat stone over the top.”

“It isn’t much like my idea of a funeral,” muttered Sara Ray discontentedly.

“Never mind, we’re going to have a real obituary about him in Our Magazine,” whispered Cecily consolingly.

“And Peter is going to cut his name on top of the stone,” added Felicity. “Only we mustn’t let on to the grownups until it is done, because they might say it wasn’t right.”

We left the orchard, a sober little band, with the wind of the gray twilight blowing round us. Uncle Roger passed us at the gate.

“So the last sad obsequies are over?” he remarked with a grin.

And we hated Uncle Roger. But we loved Uncle Blair because he said quietly,

“And so you’ve buried your little comrade?”

So much may depend on the way a thing is said. But not even Uncle Blair’s sympathy could take the sting out of the fact that there was no Paddy to get the froth that night at milking time. Felicity cried bitterly all the time she was straining the milk. Many human beings have gone to their graves unattended by as much real regret as followed that one gray pussy cat to his.

CHAPTER XXX.

PROPHECIES

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“Here’s a letter for you from father,” said Felix, tossing it to me as he came through the orchard gate. We had been picking apples all day, but were taking a mid-afternoon rest around the well, with a cup of its sparkling cold water to refresh us.

I opened the letter rather indifferently, for father, with all his excellent and lovable traits, was but a poor correspondent; his letters were usually very brief and very unimportant.

This letter was brief enough, but it was freighted with a message of weighty import. I sat gazing stupidly at the sheet after I had read it until Felix exclaimed,

“Bev, what’s the matter with you? What’s in that letter?”

“Father is coming home,” I said dazedly. “He is to leave South America in a fortnight and will be here in November to take us back to Toronto.”

Everybody gasped. Sara Ray, of course, began to cry, which aggravated me unreasonably.

“Well,” said Felix, when he got his second wind, “I’ll be awful glad to see father again, but I tell you I don’t like the thought of leaving here.”

I felt exactly the same but, in view of Sara Ray’s tears, admit it I would not; so I sat in grum silence while the other tongues wagged.

“If I were not going away myself I’d feel just terrible,” said the Story Girl. “Even as it is I’m real sorry. I’d like to be able to think of you as all here

together when I'm gone, having good times and writing me about them."

"It'll be awfully dull when you fellows go," muttered Dan.

"I'm sure I don't know what we're ever going to do here this winter," said Felicity, with the calmness of despair.

"Thank goodness there are no more fathers to come back," breathed Cecily with a vicious earnestness that made us all laugh, even in the midst of our dismay.

We worked very half-heartedly the rest of the day, and it was not until we assembled in the orchard in the evening that our spirits recovered something like their wonted level. It was clear and slightly frosty; the sun had declined behind a birch on a distant hill and it seemed a tree with a blazing heart of fire. The great golden willow at the lane gate was laughter-shaken in the wind of evening. Even amid all the changes of our shifting world we could not be hopelessly low-spirited — except Sara Ray, who was often so, and Peter, who was rarely so. But Peter had been sorely vexed in spirit for several days. The time was approaching for the October issue of Our Magazine and he had no genuine fiction ready for it. He had taken so much to heart Felicity's taunt that his stories were all true that he had determined to have a really-truly false one in the next number. But the difficulty was to get anyone to write it. He had asked the Story Girl to do it, but she refused; then he appealed to me and I shirked. Finally Peter determined to write a story himself.

"It oughtn't to be any harder than writing a poem and I managed that," he said dolefully.

He worked at it in the evenings in the granary loft, and the rest of us forebore to question him concerning it, because he evidently disliked talking about his literary efforts. But this evening I had to ask him if he would soon have it ready, as I wanted to make up the paper.

"It's done," said Peter, with an air of gloomy triumph. "It don't amount to much, but anyhow I made it all out of my own head. Not one word of it was ever printed or told before, and nobody can say there was."

“Then I guess we have all the stuff in and I’ll have Our Magazine ready to read by tomorrow night,” I said.

“I s’pose it will be the last one we’ll have,” sighed Cecily. “We can’t carry it on after you all go, and it has been such fun.”

“Bev will be a real newspaper editor some day,” declared the Story Girl, on whom the spirit of prophecy suddenly descended that night.

She was swinging on the bough of an apple tree, with a crimson shawl wrapped about her head, and her eyes were bright with roguish fire.

“How do you know he will?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, I can tell futures,” answered the Story Girl mysteriously. “I know what’s going to happen to all of you. Shall I tell you?”

“Do, just for the fun of it,” I said. “Then some day we’ll know just how near you came to guessing right. Go on. What else about me?”

“You’ll write books, too, and travel all over the world,” continued the Story Girl. “Felix will be fat to the end of his life, and he will be a grandfather before he is fifty, and he will wear a long black beard.”

“I won’t,” cried Felix disgustedly. “I hate whiskers. Maybe I can’t help the grandfather part, but I CAN help having a beard.”

“You can’t. It’s written in the stars.”

“‘Tain’t. The stars can’t prevent me from shaving.”

“Won’t Grandpa Felix sound awful funny?” reflected Felicity.

“Peter will be a minister,” went on the Story Girl.

“Well, I might be something worse,” remarked Peter, in a not ungratified tone.

“Dan will be a farmer and will marry a girl whose name begins with K and he will have eleven children. And he’ll vote Grit.”

“I won’t,” cried scandalized Dan. “You don’t know a thing about it. Catch ME ever voting Grit! As for the rest of it — I don’t care. Farming’s well enough, though I’d rather be a sailor.”

“Don’t talk such nonsense,” protested Felicity sharply. “What on earth do you want to be a sailor for and be drowned?”

“All sailors aren’t drowned,” said Dan.

“Most of them are. Look at Uncle Stephen.”

“You ain’t sure he was drowned.”

“Well, he disappeared, and that is worse.”

“How do you know? Disappearing might be real easy.”

“It’s not very easy for your family.”

“Hush, let’s hear the rest of the predictions,” said Cecily.

“Felicity,” resumed the Story Girl gravely, “will marry a minister.”

Sara Ray giggled and Felicity blushed. Peter tried hard not to look too self-consciously delighted.

“She will be a perfect housekeeper and will teach a Sunday School class and be very happy all her life.”

“Will her husband be happy?” queried Dan solemnly.

“I guess he’ll be as happy as your wife,” retorted Felicity reddening.

“He’ll be the happiest man in the world,” declared Peter warmly.

“What about me?” asked Sara Ray.

The Story Girl looked rather puzzled. It was so hard to imagine Sara Ray as having any kind of future. Yet Sara was plainly anxious to have her fortune told and must be gratified.

“You’ll be married,” said the Story Girl recklessly, “and you’ll live to be nearly a hundred years old, and go to dozens of funerals and have a great many sick spells. You will learn not to cry after you are seventy; but your husband will never go to church.”

“I’m glad you warned me,” said Sara Ray solemnly, “because now I know I’ll make him promise before I marry him that he will go.”

“He won’t keep the promise,” said the Story Girl, shaking her head. “But it is getting cold and Cecily is coughing. Let us go in.”

“You haven’t told my fortune,” protested Cecily disappointedly.

The Story Girl looked very tenderly at Cecily — at the smooth little brown head, at the soft, shining eyes, at the cheeks that were often over-rosy after slight exertion, at the little sunburned hands that were always busy doing faithful work or quiet kindnesses. A very strange look came over the Story Girl’s face; her eyes grew sad and far-reaching, as if of a verity they pierced beyond the mists of hidden years.

“I couldn’t tell any fortune half good enough for you, dearest,” she said, slipping her arm round Cecily. “You deserve everything good and lovely. But you know I’ve only been in fun — of course I don’t know anything about what’s going to happen to us.”

“Perhaps you know more than you think for,” said Sara Ray, who seemed much pleased with her fortune and anxious to believe it, despite the husband who wouldn’t go to church.

“But I’d like to be told my fortune, even in fun,” persisted Cecily.

“Everybody you meet will love you as long as you live.” said the Story Girl. “There that’s the very nicest fortune I can tell you, and it will come true whether the others do or not, and now we must go in.”

We went, Cecily still a little disappointed. In later years I often wondered why the Story Girl refused to tell her fortune that night. Did some strange gleam of foreknowledge fall for a moment across her mirth-making? Did she realize in a flash of prescience that there was no earthly future for our sweet Cecily? Not for her were to be the lengthening shadows or the fading garland. The end was to come while the rainbow still sparkled on her wine of life, ere a single petal had fallen from her rose of joy. Long life was before all the others who trysted that night in the old homestead orchard; but Cecily's maiden feet were never to leave the golden road.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST NUMBER OF OUR MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

It is with heartfelt regret that we take up our pen to announce that this will be the last number of Our Magazine. We have edited ten numbers of it and it has been successful beyond our expectations. It has to be discontinued by reason of circumstances over which we have no control and not because we have lost interest in it. Everybody has done his or her best for Our Magazine. Prince Edward Island expected everyone to do his and her duty and everyone did it.

Mr. Dan King conducted the etiquette department in a way worthy of the Family Guide itself. He is especially entitled to commendation because he laboured under the disadvantage of having to furnish most of the questions as well as the answers. Miss Felicity King has edited our helpful household department very ably, and Miss Cecily King's fashion notes were always up to date. The personal column was well looked after by Miss Sara Stanley and the story page has been a marked success under the able management of Mr. Peter Craig, to whose original story in this issue, "The Battle of the Partridge Eggs," we would call especial attention. The Exciting Adventure series has also been very popular.

And now, in closing, we bid farewell to our staff and thank them one and all for their help and cooperation in the past year. We have enjoyed our work and we trust that they have too. We wish them all happiness and success in years to come, and we hope that the recollection of Our Magazine will not be held least dear among the memories of their childhood.

(SOBS FROM THE GIRLS): "INDEED IT WON'T!"

OBITUARY

On October eighteenth, Patrick Grayfur departed for that bourne whence no traveller returns. He was only a cat, but he had been our faithful friend for a long time and we aren't ashamed to be sorry for him. There are lots of people who are not as friendly and gentlemanly as Paddy was, and he was a great mouser. We buried all that was mortal of poor Pat in the orchard and we are never going to forget him. We have resolved that whenever the date of his death comes round we'll bow our heads and pronounce his name at the hour of his funeral. If we are anywhere where we can't say the name out loud we'll whisper it.

"Farewell, dearest Paddy, in all the years that are to be We'll cherish your memory faithfully." 1

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

My most exciting adventure was the day I fell off Uncle Roger's loft two years ago. I wasn't excited until it was all over because I hadn't time to be. The Story Girl and I were looking for eggs in the loft. It was filled with wheat straw nearly to the roof and it was an awful distance from us to the floor. And wheat straw is so slippery. I made a little spring and the straw slipped from under my feet and there I was going head first down from the loft. It seemed to me I was an awful long time falling, but the Story Girl says I couldn't have been more than three seconds. But I know that I thought five thoughts and there seemed to be quite a long time between them. The first thing I thought was, what has happened, because I really didn't know at first, it was so sudden. Then after a spell I thought the answer, I am falling off the loft. And then I thought, what will happen to me when I strike the floor, and after another little spell I thought, I'll be killed. And then I thought, well, I don't care. I really wasn't a bit frightened. I just was quite willing to be killed. If there hadn't been a big pile of chaff on the barn floor these words would never have been written. But there was and I fell on it and wasn't a bit hurt, only my hair and mouth and eyes and ears got all full of chaff. The strange part is that I wasn't a bit frightened when I thought I was going to be killed, but after all the danger was over I was awfully frightened and trembled so the Story Girl had to help me into the house.

FELICITY KING.

THE BATTLE OF THE PARTRIDGE EGGS

Once upon a time there lived about half a mile from a forrest a farmer and his wife and his sons and daughters and a grandddaughter. The farmer and his wife loved this little girl very much but she caused them great trouble by running away into the woods and they often spent haf days looking for her. One day she wondered further into the forrest than usual and she begun to be hungry. Then night closed in. She asked a fox where she could get something to eat. The fox told her he knew where there was a partridges nest and a bluejays nest full of eggs. So he led her to the nests and she took five eggs out of each. When the birds came home they missed the eggs and flew into a rage. The bluejay put on his topcoat and was going to the partridge for law when he met the partridge coming to him. They lit up a fire and commenced sining their deeds when they heard a tremendous howl close behind them. They jumped up and put out the fire and were immejutly attacked by five great wolves. The next day the little girl was rambelling through the woods when they saw her and took her prisoner. After she had confessed that she had stole the eggs they told her to raise an army. They would have to fight over the nests of eggs and whoever one would have the eggs. So the partridge raised a great army of all kinds of birds except robins and the little girl got all the robins and foxes and bees and wasps. And best of all the little girl had a gun and plenty of ammunishun. The leader of her army was a wolf. The result of the battle was that all the birds were killed except the partridge and the bluejay and they were taken prisoner and starved to death.

The little girl was then taken prisoner by a witch and cast into a dunjun full of snakes where she died from their bites and people who went through the forrest after that were taken prisoner by her ghost and cast into the same dunjun where they died. About a year after the wood turned into a gold castle and one morning everything had vanished except a piece of a tree.

PETER CRAIG.

(DAN, WITH A WHISTLE:—"Well, I guess nobody can say Peter can't write fiction after THAT."

SARA RAY, WIPING AWAY HER TEARS:—"It's a very interesting story, but it ends SO sadly."

FELIX:—"What made you call it The Battle of the Partridge Eggs when the bluejay had just as much to do with it?"

PETER, SHORTLY:—"Because it sounded better that way."

FELICITY:—"Did she eat the eggs raw?"

SARA RAY:—"Poor little thing, I suppose if you're starving you can't be very particular."

CECILY, SIGHING:—"I wish you'd let her go home safe, Peter, and not put her to such a cruel death."

BEVERLEY:—"I don't quite understand where the little girl got her gun and ammunition."

PETER, SUSPECTING THAT HE IS BEING MADE FUN OF:—"If you could write a better story, why didn't you? I give you the chance."

THE STORY GIRL, WITH A PRETERNATURALLY SOLEMN FACE:—"You shouldn't criticize Peter's story like that. It's a fairy tale, you know, and anything can happen in a fairy tale."

FELICITY:—"There isn't a word about fairies in it!"

CECILY:—"Besides, fairy tales always end nicely and this doesn't."

PETER, SULKILY:—"I wanted to punish her for running away from home."

DAN:—"Well, I guess you did it all right."

CECILY:—"Oh, well, it was very interesting, and that is all that is really necessary in a story.")

PERSONALS

Mr. Blair Stanley is visiting friends and relatives in Carlisle. He intends returning to Europe shortly. His daughter, Miss Sara, will accompany him.

Mr. Alan King is expected home from South America next month. His sons will return with him to Toronto. Beverley and Felix have made hosts of friends during their stay in Carlisle and will be much missed in social circles.

The Mission Band of Carlisle Presbyterian Church completed their missionary quilt last week. Miss Cecily King collected the largest sum on her square. Congratulations, Cecily.

Mr. Peter Craig will be residing in Markdale after October and will attend school there this winter. Peter is a good fellow and we all wish him success and prosperity.

Apple picking is almost ended. There was an unusually heavy crop this year. Potatoes, not so good.

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Apple pies are the order of the day.

Eggs are a very good price now. Uncle Roger says it isn't fair to have to pay as much for a dozen little eggs as a dozen big ones, but they go just as far.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

F-l-t-y. Is it considered good form to eat peppermints in church? Ans.; No, not if a witch gives them to you.

No, F-l-x, we would not call Treasure Island or the Pilgrim's Progress dime novels.

Yes, P-t-r, when you call on a young lady and her mother offers you a slice of bread and jam it is quite polite for you to accept it.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Necklaces of roseberries are very much worn now.

It is considered smart to wear your school hat tilted over your left eye.

Bangs are coming in. Em Frewen has them. She went to Summerside for a visit and came back with them. All the girls in school are going to bang their hair as soon as their mothers will let them. But I do not intend to bang mine.

CECILY KING.

(SARA RAY, DESPAIRINGLY:—"I know ma will never let ME have bangs.")

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

D-n. What are details? C-l-y. I am not sure, but I think they are things that are left over.

(CECILY, WONDERINGLY:—"I don't see why that was put among the funny paragraphs. Shouldn't it have gone in the General Information department?")

Old Mr. McIntyre's son on the Markdale Road had been very sick for several years and somebody was sympathizing with him because his son was going to die. "Oh," Mr. McIntyre said, quite easy, "he might as weel be awa'. He's only retarding buzziness."

FELIX KING.

GENERAL INFORMATION BUREAU

P-t-r. What kind of people live in uninhabited places?

Ans.: Cannibals, likely.

FELIX KING.

1 (return)

[The obituary was written by Mr. Felix King, but the two lines of poetry were composed by Miss Sara Ray.]

CHAPTER XXXII.

OUR LAST EVENING TOGETHER

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IT was the evening before the day on which the Story Girl and Uncle Blair were to leave us, and we were keeping our last tryst together in the orchard where we had spent so many happy hours. We had made a pilgrimage to all the old haunts — the hill field, the spruce wood, the dairy, Grandfather King's willow, the Pulpit Stone, Pat's grave, and Uncle Stephen's Walk; and now we foregathered in the sere grasses about the old well and feasted on the little jam turnovers Felicity had made that day specially for the occasion.

"I wonder if we'll ever all be together again," sighed Cecily.

"I wonder when I'll get jam turnovers like this again," said the Story Girl, trying to be gay but not making much of a success of it.

"If Paris wasn't so far away I could send you a box of nice things now and then," said Felicity forlornly, "but I suppose there's no use thinking of that. Dear knows what they'll give you to eat over there."

"Oh, the French have the reputation of being the best cooks in the world," rejoined the Story Girl, "but I know they can't beat your jam turnovers and plum puffs, Felicity. Many a time I'll be hankering after them."

"If we ever do meet again you'll be grown up," said Felicity gloomily.

"Well, you won't have stood still yourselves, you know."

"No, but that's just the worst of it. We'll all be different and everything will be changed."

“Just think,” said Cecily, “last New Year’s Eve we were wondering what would happen this year; and what a lot of things have happened that we never expected. Oh, dear!”

“If things never happened life would be pretty dull,” said the Story Girl briskly. “Oh, don’t look so dismal, all of you.”

“It’s hard to be cheerful when everybody’s going away,” sighed Cecily.

“Well, let’s pretend to be, anyway,” insisted the Story Girl. “Don’t let’s think of parting. Let’s think instead of how much we’ve laughed this last year or so. I’m sure I shall never forget this dear old place. We’ve had so many good times here.”

“And some bad times, too,” reminded Felix.

“Remember when Dan et the bad berries last summer?”

“And the time we were so scared over that bell ringing in the house,” grinned Peter.

“And the Judgment Day,” added Dan.

“And the time Paddy was bewitched,” suggested Sara Ray.

“And when Peter was dying of the measles,” said Felicity.

“And the time Jimmy Patterson was lost,” said Dan. “Gee-whiz, but that scared me out of a year’s growth.”

“Do you remember the time we took the magic seed,” grinned Peter.

“Weren’t we silly?” said Felicity. “I really can never look Billy Robinson in the face when I meet him. I’m always sure he’s laughing at me in his sleeve.”

“It’s Billy Robinson who ought to be ashamed when he meets you or any of us,” commented Cecily severely. “I’d rather be cheated than cheat other people.”

“Do you mind the time we bought God’s picture?” asked Peter.

“I wonder if it’s where we buried it yet,” speculated Felix.

“I put a stone over it, just as we did over Pat,” said Cecily.

“I wish I could forget what God looks like,” sighed Sara Ray. “I can’t forget it — and I can’t forget what the bad place is like either, ever since Peter preached that sermon on it.”

“When you get to be a real minister you’ll have to preach that sermon over again, Peter,” grinned Dan.

“My Aunt Jane used to say that people needed a sermon on that place once in a while,” retorted Peter seriously.

“Do you mind the night I et the cucumbers and milk to make me dream?” said Cecily.

And therewith we hunted out our old dream books to read them again, and, forgetful of coming partings, laughed over them till the old orchard echoed to our mirth. When we had finished we stood in a circle around the well and pledged “eternal friendship” in a cup of its unrivalled water.

Then we joined hands and sang “Auld Lang Syne.” Sara Ray cried bitterly in lieu of singing.

“Look here,” said the Story Girl, as we turned to leave the old orchard, “I want to ask a favour of you all. Don’t say goodbye to me tomorrow morning.”

“Why not?” demanded Felicity in astonishment.

“Because it’s such a hopeless sort of word. Don’t let’s SAY it at all. Just see me off with a wave of your hands. It won’t seem half so bad then. And don’t any of you cry if you can help it. I want to remember you all smiling.”

We went out of the old orchard where the autumn night wind was beginning to make its weird music in the russet boughs, and shut the little gate behind us. Our revels there were ended.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE STORY GIRL GOES

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The morning dawned, rosy and clear and frosty. Everybody was up early, for the travellers must leave in time to catch the nine o'clock train. The horse was harnessed and Uncle Alec was waiting by the door. Aunt Janet was crying, but everybody else was making a valiant effort not to. The Awkward Man and Mrs. Dale came to see the last of their favourite. Mrs. Dale had brought her a glorious sheaf of chrysanthemums, and the Awkward Man gave her, quite gracefully, another little, old, limp book from his library.

“Read it when you are sad or happy or lonely or discouraged or hopeful,” he said gravely.

“He has really improved very much since he got married,” whispered Felicity to me.

Sara Stanley wore a smart new travelling suit and a blue felt hat with a white feather. She looked so horribly grown up in it that we felt as if she were lost to us already.

Sara Ray had vowed tearfully the night before that she would be up in the morning to say farewell. But at this juncture Judy Pineau appeared to say that Sara, with her usual luck, had a sore throat, and that her mother consequently would not permit her to come. So Sara had written her parting words in a three-cornered pink note.

“My OWN DARLING FRIEND: — WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS my feelings over not being able to go up this morning to say goodbye to one I so FONDLY ADORE. When I think that I cannot SEE YOU AGAIN my heart is almost TOO FULL FOR UTTERANCE. But mother says I cannot

and I MUST OBEY. But I will be present IN SPIRIT. It just BREAKS MY HEART that you are going SO FAR AWAY. You have always been SO KIND to me and never hurt my feelings AS SOME DO and I shall miss you SO MUCH. But I earnestly HOPE AND PRAY that you will be HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS wherever YOUR LOT IS CAST and not be seasick on THE GREAT OCEAN. I hope you will find time AMONG YOUR MANY DUTIES to write me a letter ONCE IN A WHILE. I shall ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU and please remember me. I hope we WILL MEET AGAIN sometime, but if not may we meet in A FAR BETTER WORLD where there are no SAD PARTINGS. “Your true and loving friend,

“SARA RAY”

“Poor little Sara,” said the Story Girl, with a queer catch in her voice, as she slipped the tear-blotted note into her pocket. “She isn’t a bad little soul, and I’m sorry I couldn’t see her once more, though maybe it’s just as well for she’d have to cry and set us all off. I WON’T cry. Felicity, don’t you dare. Oh, you dear, darling people, I love you all so much and I’ll go on loving you always.”

“Mind you write us every week at the very least,” said Felicity, winking furiously.

“Blair, Blair, watch over the child well,” said Aunt Janet. “Remember, she has no mother.”

The Story Girl ran over to the buggy and climbed in. Uncle Blair followed her. Her arms were full of Mrs. Dale’s chrysanthemums, held close up to her face, and her beautiful eyes shone softly at us over them. No goodbyes were said, as she wished. We all smiled bravely and waved our hands as they drove out of the lane and down the moist red road into the shadows of the fir wood in the valley. But we still stood there, for we knew we should see the Story Girl once more. Beyond the fir wood was an open curve in the road and she had promised to wave a last farewell as they passed around it.

We watched the curve in silence, standing in a sorrowful little group in the sunshine of the autumn morning. The delight of the world had been ours on the golden road. It had enticed us with daisies and rewarded us with roses. Blossom and lyric had waited on our wishes. Thoughts, careless and sweet, had visited us. Laughter had been our comrade and fearless Hope our guide. But now the shadow of change was over it.

“There she is,” cried Felicity.

The Story Girl stood up and waved her chrysanthemums at us. We waved wildly back until the buggy had driven around the curve. Then we went slowly and silently back to the house. The Story Girl was gone.

KILMENY OF THE ORCHA RD (1910)

[Main TOC](#)

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TO MY COUSIN
Beatrice A. McIntyre

THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

“Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny’s face;
As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.

... ..

Such beauty bard may never declare,
For there was no pride nor passion there;

... ..

Her seymar was the lily flower,
And her cheek the moss-rose in the shower;
And her voice like the distant melodye
That floats along the twilight sea.”

— The Queen’s Wake

JAMES HOGG

CHAPTER I.

THE THOUGHTS OF YOUTH

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The sunshine of a day in early spring, honey pale and honey sweet, was showering over the red brick buildings of Queenslea College and the grounds about them, throwing through the bare, budding maples and elms, delicate, evasive etchings of gold and brown on the paths, and coaxing into life the daffodils that were peering greenly and perkily up under the windows of the co-eds' dressing-room.

A young April wind, as fresh and sweet as if it had been blowing over the fields of memory instead of through dingy streets, was purring in the treetops and whipping the loose tendrils of the ivy network which covered the front of the main building. It was a wind that sang of many things, but what it sang to each listener was only what was in that listener's heart. To the college students who had just been capped and diplomad by "Old Charlie," the grave president of Queenslea, in the presence of an admiring throng of parents and sisters, sweethearts and friends, it sang, perchance, of glad hope and shining success and high achievement. It sang of the dreams of youth that may never be quite fulfilled, but are well worth the dreaming for all that. God help the man who has never known such dreams — who, as he leaves his alma mater, is not already rich in aerial castles, the proprietor of many a spacious estate in Spain. He has missed his birthright.

The crowd streamed out of the entrance hall and scattered over the campus, fraying off into the many streets beyond. Eric Marshall and David Baker walked away together. The former had graduated in Arts that day at the head of his class; the latter had come to see the graduation, nearly bursting with pride in Eric's success.

Between these two was an old and tried and enduring friendship, although David was ten years older than Eric, as the mere tale of years goes, and a hundred years older in knowledge of the struggles and difficulties of life which age a man far more quickly and effectually than the passing of time.

Physically the two men bore no resemblance to one another, although they were second cousins. Eric Marshall, tall, broad-shouldered, sinewy, walking with a free, easy stride, which was somehow suggestive of reserve strength and power, was one of those men regarding whom less-favoured mortals are tempted seriously to wonder why all the gifts of fortune should be showered on one individual. He was not only clever and good to look upon, but he possessed that indefinable charm of personality which is quite independent of physical beauty or mental ability. He had steady, grayish-blue eyes, dark chestnut hair with a glint of gold in its waves when the sunlight struck it, and a chin that gave the world assurance of a chin. He was a rich man's son, with a clean young manhood behind him and splendid prospects before him. He was considered a practical sort of fellow, utterly guiltless of romantic dreams and visions of any sort.

"I am afraid Eric Marshall will never do one quixotic thing," said a Queenslea professor, who had a habit of uttering rather mysterious epigrams, "but if he ever does it will supply the one thing lacking in him."

David Baker was a short, stocky fellow with an ugly, irregular, charming face; his eyes were brown and keen and secretive; his mouth had a comical twist which became sarcastic, or teasing, or winning, as he willed. His voice was generally as soft and musical as a woman's; but some few who had seen David Baker righteously angry and heard the tones which then issued from his lips were in no hurry to have the experience repeated.

He was a doctor — a specialist in troubles of the throat and voice — and he was beginning to have a national reputation. He was on the staff of the Queenslea Medical College and it was whispered that before long he would be called to fill an important vacancy at McGill.

He had won his way to success through difficulties and drawbacks which would have daunted most men. In the year Eric was born David Baker was an errand boy in the big department store of Marshall & Company.

Thirteen years later he graduated with high honors from Queenslea Medical College. Mr. Marshall had given him all the help which David's sturdy pride could be induced to accept, and now he insisted on sending the young man abroad for a post-graduate course in London and Germany. David Baker had eventually repaid every cent Mr. Marshall had expended on him; but he never ceased to cherish a passionate gratitude to the kind and generous man; and he loved that man's son with a love surpassing that of brothers.

He had followed Eric's college course with keen, watchful interest. It was his wish that Eric should take up the study of law or medicine now that he was through Arts; and he was greatly disappointed that Eric should have finally made up his mind to go into business with his father.

"It's a clean waste of your talents," he grumbled, as they walked home from the college. "You'd win fame and distinction in law — that glib tongue of yours was meant for a lawyer and it is sheer flying in the face of Providence to devote it to commercial uses — a flat crossing of the purposes of destiny. Where is your ambition, man?"

"In the right place," answered Eric, with his ready laugh. "It is not your kind, perhaps, but there is room and need for all kinds in this lusty young country of ours. Yes, I am going into the business. In the first place, it has been father's cherished desire ever since I was born, and it would hurt him pretty badly if I backed out now. He wished me to take an Arts course because he believed that every man should have as liberal an education as he can afford to get, but now that I have had it he wants me in the firm."

"He wouldn't oppose you if he thought you really wanted to go in for something else."

"Not he. But I don't really want to — that's the point, David, man. You hate a business life so much yourself that you can't get it into your blessed noddle that another man might like it. There are many lawyers in the world — too many, perhaps — but there are never too many good honest men of business, ready to do clean big things for the betterment of humanity and the upbuilding of their country, to plan great enterprises and carry them through with brain and courage, to manage and control, to aim

high and strike one's aim. There, I'm waxing eloquent, so I'd better stop. But ambition, man! Why, I'm full of it — it's bubbling in every pore of me. I mean to make the department store of Marshall & Company famous from ocean to ocean. Father started in life as a poor boy from a Nova Scotian farm. He has built up a business that has a provincial reputation. I mean to carry it on. In five years it shall have a maritime reputation, in ten, a Canadian. I want to make the firm of Marshall & Company stand for something big in the commercial interests of Canada. Isn't that as honourable an ambition as trying to make black seem white in a court of law, or discovering some new disease with a harrowing name to torment poor creatures who might otherwise die peacefully in blissful ignorance of what ailed them?"

"When you begin to make poor jokes it is time to stop arguing with you," said David, with a shrug of his fat shoulders. "Go your own gait and dree your own weird. I'd as soon expect success in trying to storm the citadel single-handed as in trying to turn you from any course about which you had once made up your mind. Whew, this street takes it out of a fellow! What could have possessed our ancestors to run a town up the side of a hill? I'm not so slim and active as I was on MY graduation day ten years ago. By the way, what a lot of co-eds were in your class — twenty, if I counted right. When I graduated there were only two ladies in our class and they were the pioneers of their sex at Queenslea. They were well past their first youth, very grim and angular and serious; and they could never have been on speaking terms with a mirror in their best days. But mark you, they were excellent females — oh, very excellent. Times have changed with a vengeance, judging from the line-up of co-eds to-day. There was one girl there who can't be a day over eighteen — and she looked as if she were made out of gold and roseleaves and dewdrops."

"The oracle speaks in poetry," laughed Eric. "That was Florence Percival, who led the class in mathematics, as I'm a living man. By many she is considered the beauty of her class. I can't say that such is my opinion. I don't greatly care for that blonde, babyish style of loveliness — I prefer Agnes Champion. Did you notice her — the tall, dark girl with the ropes of hair and a sort of crimson, velvety bloom on her face, who took honours in philosophy?"

“I DID notice her,” said David emphatically, darting a keen side glance at his friend. “I noticed her most particularly and critically — for someone whispered her name behind me and coupled it with the exceedingly interesting information that Miss Campion was supposed to be the future Mrs. Eric Marshall. Whereupon I stared at her with all my eyes.”

“There is no truth in that report,” said Eric in a tone of annoyance. “Agnes and I are the best of friends and nothing more. I like and admire her more than any woman I know; but if the future Mrs. Eric Marshall exists in the flesh I haven’t met her yet. I haven’t even started out to look for her — and don’t intend to for some years to come. I have something else to think of,” he concluded, in a tone of contempt, for which anyone might have known he would be punished sometime if Cupid were not deaf as well as blind.

“You’ll meet the lady of the future some day,” said David dryly. “And in spite of your scorn I venture to predict that if fate doesn’t bring her before long you’ll very soon start out to look for her. A word of advice, oh, son of your mother. When you go courting take your common sense with you.”

“Do you think I shall be likely to leave it behind?” asked Eric amusedly.

“Well, I mistrust you,” said David, sagely wagging his head. “The Lowland Scotch part of you is all right, but there’s a Celtic streak in you, from that little Highland grandmother of yours, and when a man has that there’s never any knowing where it will break out, or what dance it will lead him, especially when it comes to this lovemaking business. You are just as likely as not to lose your head over some little fool or shrew for the sake of her outward favour and make yourself miserable for life. When you pick you a wife please remember that I shall reserve the right to pass a candid opinion on her.”

“Pass all the opinions you like, but it is MY opinion, and mine only, which will matter in the long run,” retorted Eric.

“Confound you, yes, you stubborn offshoot of a stubborn breed,” growled David, looking at him affectionately. “I know that, and that is why I’ll never feel at ease about you until I see you married to the right sort of a

girl. She's not hard to find. Nine out of ten girls in this country of ours are fit for kings' palaces. But the tenth always has to be reckoned with."

"You are as bad as Clever Alice in the fairy tale who worried over the future of her unborn children," protested Eric.

"Clever Alice has been very unjustly laughed at," said David gravely. "We doctors know that. Perhaps she overdid the worrying business a little, but she was perfectly right in principle. If people worried a little more about their unborn children — at least, to the extent of providing a proper heritage, physically, mentally, and morally, for them — and then stopped worrying about them after they ARE born, this world would be a very much pleasanter place to live in, and the human race would make more progress in a generation than it has done in recorded history."

"Oh, if you are going to mount your dearly beloved hobby of heredity I am not going to argue with you, David, man. But as for the matter of urging me to hasten and marry me a wife, why don't you" — It was on Eric's lips to say, "Why don't you get married to a girl of the right sort yourself and set me a good example?" But he checked himself. He knew that there was an old sorrow in David Baker's life which was not to be unduly jarred by the jests even of privileged friendship. He changed his question to, "Why don't you leave this on the knees of the gods where it properly belongs? I thought you were a firm believer in predestination, David."

"Well, so I am, to a certain extent," said David cautiously. "I believe, as an excellent old aunt of mine used to say, that what is to be will be and what isn't to be happens sometimes. And it is precisely such unchancy happenings that make the scheme of things go wrong. I dare say you think me an old foggy, Eric; but I know something more of the world than you do, and I believe, with Tennyson's Arthur, that 'there's no more subtle master under heaven than is the maiden passion for a maid.' I want to see you safely anchored to the love of some good woman as soon as may be, that's all. I'm rather sorry Miss Champion isn't your lady of the future. I liked her looks, that I did. She is good and strong and true — and has the eyes of a woman who could love in a way that would be worth while. Moreover, she's well-born, well-bred, and well-educated — three very indispensable

things when it comes to choosing a woman to fill your mother's place, friend of mine!"

"I agree with you," said Eric carelessly. "I could not marry any woman who did not fulfill those conditions. But, as I have said, I am not in love with Agnes Campion — and it wouldn't be of any use if I were. She is as good as engaged to Larry West. You remember West?"

"That thin, leggy fellow you chummed with so much your first two years in Queenslea? Yes, what has become of him?"

"He had to drop out after his second year for financial reasons. He is working his own way through college, you know. For the past two years he has been teaching school in some out-of-the-way place over in Prince Edward Island. He isn't any too well, poor fellow — never was very strong and has studied remorselessly. I haven't heard from him since February. He said then that he was afraid he wasn't going to be able to stick it out till the end of the school year. I hope Larry won't break down. He is a fine fellow and worthy even of Agnes Campion. Well, here we are. Coming in, David?"

"Not this afternoon — haven't got time. I must mosey up to the North End to see a man who has got a lovely throat. Nobody can find out what is the matter. He has puzzled all the doctors. He has puzzled me, but I'll find out what is wrong with him if he'll only live long enough."

CHAPTER II.

A LETTER OF DESTINY

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Eric, finding that his father had not yet returned from the college, went into the library and sat down to read a letter he had picked up from the hall table. It was from Larry West, and after the first few lines Eric's face lost the absent look it had worn and assumed an expression of interest.

"I am writing to ask a favour of you, Marshall," wrote West. "The fact is, I've fallen into the hands of the Philistines — that is to say, the doctors. I've not been feeling very fit all winter but I've held on, hoping to finish out the year.

"Last week my landlady — who is a saint in spectacles and calico — looked at me one morning at the breakfast table and said, VERY gently, 'You must go to town tomorrow, Master, and see a doctor about yourself.'

"I went and did not stand upon the order of my going. Mrs. Williamson is She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. She has an inconvenient habit of making you realize that she is exactly right, and that you would be all kinds of a fool if you didn't take her advice. You feel that what she thinks to-day you will think tomorrow.

"In Charlottetown I consulted a doctor. He punched and pounded me, and poked things at me and listened at the other end of them; and finally he said I must stop work 'immejutly and to onct' and hie me straightway to a climate not afflicted with the northeast winds of Prince Edward Island in the spring. I am not to be allowed to do any work until the fall. Such was his dictum and Mrs. Williamson enforces it.

"I shall teach this week out and then the spring vacation of three weeks begins. I want you to come over and take my place as pedagogue in the

Lindsay school for the last week in May and the month of June. The school year ends then and there will be plenty of teachers looking for the place, but just now I cannot get a suitable substitute. I have a couple of pupils who are preparing to try the Queen's Academy entrance examinations, and I don't like to leave them in the lurch or hand them over to the tender mercies of some third-class teacher who knows little Latin and less Greek. Come over and take the school till the end of the term, you petted son of luxury. It will do you a world of good to learn how rich a man feels when he is earning twenty-five dollars a month by his own unaided efforts!

"Seriously, Marshall, I hope you can come, for I don't know any other fellow I can ask. The work isn't hard, though you'll likely find it monotonous. Of course, this little north-shore farming settlement isn't a very lively place. The rising and setting of the sun are the most exciting events of the average day. But the people are very kind and hospitable; and Prince Edward Island in the month of June is such a thing as you don't often see except in happy dreams. There are some trout in the pond and you'll always find an old salt at the harbour ready and willing to take you out codfishing or lobstering.

"I'll bequeath you my boarding house. You'll find it comfortable and not further from the school than a good constitutional. Mrs. Williamson is the dearest soul alive; and she is one of those old-fashioned cooks who feed you on feasts of fat things and whose price is above rubies.

"Her husband, Robert, or Bob, as he is commonly called despite his sixty years, is quite a character in his way. He is an amusing old gossip, with a turn for racy comment and a finger in everybody's pie. He knows everything about everybody in Lindsay for three generations back.

"They have no living children, but Old Bob has a black cat which is his especial pride and darling. The name of this animal is Timothy and as such he must always be called and referred to. Never, as you value Robert's good opinion, let him hear you speaking of his pet as 'the cat,' or even as 'Tim.' You will never be forgiven and he will not consider you a fit person to have charge of the school.

“You shall have my room, a little place over the kitchen, with a ceiling that follows the slant of the roof down one side, against which you will bump your head times innumerable until you learn to remember that it is there, and a looking glass which will make one of your eyes as small as a pea and the other as big as an orange.

“But to compensate for these disadvantages the supply of towels is generous and unexceptionable; and there is a window whence you will daily behold an occidental view over Lindsay Harbour and the gulf beyond which is an unspeakable miracle of beauty. The sun is setting over it as I write and I see such a sea of glass mingled with fire as might have figured in the visions of the Patmian seer. A vessel is sailing away into the gold and crimson and pearl of the horizon; the big revolving light on the tip of the headland beyond the harbour has just been lighted and is winking and flashing like a beacon,

”O’er the foam
Of perilous seas in faerie lands forlorn.”

“Wire me if you can come; and if you can, report for duty on the twenty-third of May.”

Mr. Marshall, Senior, came in, just as Eric was thoughtfully folding up his letter. The former looked more like a benevolent old clergyman or philanthropist than the keen, shrewd, somewhat hard, although just and honest, man of business that he really was. He had a round, rosy face, fringed with white whiskers, a fine head of long white hair, and a pursed-up mouth. Only in his blue eyes was a twinkle that would have made any man who designed getting the better of him in a bargain think twice before he made the attempt.

It was easily seen that Eric must have inherited his personal beauty and distinction of form from his mother, whose picture hung on the dark wall between the windows. She had died while still young, when Eric was a boy of ten. During her lifetime she had been the object of the passionate devotion of both her husband and son; and the fine, strong, sweet face of the picture was a testimony that she had been worthy of their love and reverence. The same face, cast in a masculine mold, was repeated in Eric;

the chestnut hair grew off his forehead in the same way; his eyes were like hers, and in his grave moods they held a similar expression, half brooding, half tender, in their depths.

Mr. Marshall was very proud of his son's success in college, but he had no intention of letting him see it. He loved this boy of his, with the dead mother's eyes, better than anything on earth, and all his hopes and ambitions were bound up in him.

"Well, that fuss is over, thank goodness," he said testily, as he dropped into his favourite chair.

"Didn't you find the programme interesting?" asked Eric absently.

"Most of it was tommyrot," said his father. "The only things I liked were Charlie's Latin prayer and those pretty little girls trotting up to get their diplomas. Latin IS the language for praying in, I do believe, — at least, when a man has a voice like Old Charlie's. There was such a sonorous roll to the words that the mere sound of them made me feel like getting down on my marrow bones. And then those girls were as pretty as pinks, now weren't they? Agnes was the finest-looking of the lot in my opinion. I hope it's true that you're courting her, Eric?"

"Confound it, father," said Eric, half irritably, half laughingly, "have you and David Baker entered into a conspiracy to hound me into matrimony whether I will or no?"

"I've never said a word to David Baker on such a subject," protested Mr. Marshall.

"Well, you are just as bad as he is. He hectored me all the way home from the college on the subject. But why are you in such a hurry to have me married, dad?"

"Because I want a homemaker in this house as soon as may be. There has never been one since your mother died. I am tired of housekeepers. And I want to see your children at my knees before I die, Eric, and I'm an old man now."

“Well, your wish is natural, father,” said Eric gently, with a glance at his mother’s picture. “But I can’t rush out and marry somebody offhand, can I? And I fear it wouldn’t exactly do to advertise for a wife, even in these days of commercial enterprise.”

“Isn’t there ANYBODY you’re fond of?” queried Mr. Marshall, with the patient air of a man who overlooks the frivolous jests of youth.

“No. I never yet saw the woman who could make my heart beat any faster.”

“I don’t know what you young men are made of nowadays,” growled his father. “I was in love half a dozen times before I was your age.”

“You might have been ‘in love.’ But you never LOVED any woman until you met my mother. I know that, father. And it didn’t happen till you were pretty well on in life either.”

“You’re too hard to please. That’s what’s the matter, that’s what’s the matter!”

“Perhaps I am. When a man has had a mother like mine his standard of womanly sweetness is apt to be pitched pretty high. Let’s drop the subject, father. Here, I want you to read this letter — it’s from Larry.”

“Humph!” grunted Mr. Marshall, when he had finished with it. “So Larry’s knocked out at last — always thought he would be — always expected it. Sorry, too. He was a decent fellow. Well, are you going?”

“Yes, I think so, if you don’t object.”

“You’ll have a pretty monotonous time of it, judging from his account of Lindsay.”

“Probably. But I am not going over in search of excitement. I’m going to oblige Larry and have a look at the Island.”

“Well, it’s worth looking at, some parts of the year,” conceded Mr. Marshall. “When I’m on Prince Edward Island in the summer I always

understand an old Scotch Islander I met once in Winnipeg. He was always talking of 'the Island.' Somebody once asked him, 'What island do you mean?' He simply LOOKED at that ignorant man. Then he said, 'Why, Prince Edward Island, mon. WHAT OTHER ISLAND IS THERE?' Go if you'd like to. You need a rest after the grind of examinations before settling down to business. And mind you don't get into any mischief, young sir."

"Not much likelihood of that in a place like Lindsay, I fancy," laughed Eric.

"Probably the devil finds as much mischief for idle hands in Lindsay as anywhere else. The worst tragedy I ever heard of happened on a backwoods farm, fifteen miles from a railroad and five from a store. However, I expect your mother's son to behave himself in the fear of God and man. In all likelihood the worst thing that will happen to you over there will be that some misguided woman will put you to sleep in a spare room bed. And if that does happen may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER OF LINDSAY SCHOOL

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One evening, a month later, Eric Marshall came out of the old, whitewashed schoolhouse at Lindsay, and locked the door — which was carved over with initials innumerable, and built of double plank in order that it might withstand all the assaults and batteries to which it might be subjected.

Eric's pupils had gone home an hour before, but he had stayed to solve some algebra problems, and correct some Latin exercises for his advanced students.

The sun was slanting in warm yellow lines through the thick grove of maples to the west of the building, and the dim green air beneath them burst into golden bloom. A couple of sheep were nibbling the lush grass in a far corner of the playground; a cowbell, somewhere in the maple woods, tinkled faintly and musically, on the still crystal air, which, in spite of its blandness, still retained a touch of the wholesome austerity and poignancy of a Canadian spring. The whole world seemed to have fallen, for the time being, into a pleasant untroubled dream.

The scene was very peaceful and pastoral — almost too much so, the young man thought, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he stood in the worn steps and gazed about him. How was he going to put in a whole month here, he wondered, with a little smile at his own expense.

“Father would chuckle if he knew I was sick of it already,” he thought, as he walked across the playground to the long red road that ran past the school. “Well, one week is ended, at any rate. I’ve earned my own living for five whole days, and that is something I could never say before in all my twenty-four years of existence. It is an exhilarating thought. But

teaching the Lindsay district school is distinctly NOT exhilarating — at least in such a well-behaved school as this, where the pupils are so painfully good that I haven't even the traditional excitement of thrashing obstreperous bad boys. Everything seems to go by clock work in Lindsay educational institution. Larry must certainly have possessed a marked gift for organizing and drilling. I feel as if I were merely a big cog in an orderly machine that ran itself. However, I understand that there are some pupils who haven't shown up yet, and who, according to all reports, have not yet had the old Adam totally drilled out of them. They may make things more interesting. Also a few more compositions, such as John Reid's, would furnish some spice to professional life."

Eric's laughter wakened the echoes as he swung into the road down the long sloping hill. He had given his fourth grade pupils their own choice of subjects in the composition class that morning, and John Reid, a sober, matter-of-fact little urchin, with not the slightest embryonic development of a sense of humour, had, acting upon the whispered suggestion of a roguish deskmate, elected to write upon "Courting." His opening sentence made Eric's face twitch mutinously whenever he recalled it during the day. "Courting is a very pleasant thing which a great many people go too far with."

The distant hills and wooded uplands were tremulous and aerial in delicate springtime gauzes of pearl and purple. The young, green-leafed maples crowded thickly to the very edge of the road on either side, but beyond them were emerald fields basking in sunshine, over which cloud shadows rolled, broadened, and vanished. Far below the fields a calm ocean slept blue, and sighed in its sleep, with the murmur that rings for ever in the ear of those whose good fortune it is to have been born within the sound of it.

Now and then Eric met some callow, check-shirted, bare-legged lad on horseback, or a shrewd-faced farmer in a cart, who nodded and called out cheerily, "Howdy, Master?" A young girl, with a rosy, oval face, dimpled cheeks, and pretty dark eyes filled with shy coquetry, passed him, looking as if she would not be at all averse to a better acquaintance with the new teacher.

Half way down the hill Eric met a shambling, old gray horse drawing an express wagon which had seen better days. The driver was a woman: she appeared to be one of those drab-tinted individuals who can never have felt a rosy emotion in all their lives. She stopped her horse, and beckoned Eric over to her with the knobby handle of a faded and bony umbrella.

“Reckon you’re the new Master, ain’t you?” she asked.

Eric admitted that he was.

“Well, I’m glad to see you,” she said, offering him a hand in a much darned cotton glove that had once been black.

“I was right sorry to see Mr. West go, for he was a right good teacher, and as harmless, inoffensive a creetur as ever lived. But I always told him every time I laid eyes on him that he was in consumption, if ever a man was. YOU look real healthy — though you can’t always tell by looks, either. I had a brother complected like you, but he was killed in a railroad accident out west when he was real young.

“I’ve got a boy I’ll be sending to school to you next week. He’d oughter gone this week, but I had to keep him home to help me put the pertaters in; for his father won’t work and doesn’t work and can’t be made to work.

“Sandy — his full name is Edward Alexander — called after both his grandfathers — hates the idee of going to school worse ‘n pisen — always did. But go he shall, for I’m determined he’s got to have more larning hammered into his head yet. I reckon you’ll have trouble with him, Master, for he’s as stupid as an owl, and as stubborn as Solomon’s mule. But mind this, Master, I’ll back you up. You just lick Sandy good and plenty when he needs it, and send me a scrape of the pen home with him, and I’ll give him another dose.

“There’s people that always sides in with their young ones when there’s any rumpus kicked up in the school, but I don’t hold to that, and never did. You can depend on Rebecca Reid every time, Master.”

“Thank you. I am sure I can,” said Eric, in his most winning tones.

He kept his face straight until it was safe to relax, and Mrs. Reid drove on with a soft feeling in her leathery old heart, which had been so toughened by long endurance of poverty and toil, and a husband who wouldn't work and couldn't be made to work, that it was no longer a very susceptible organ where members of the opposite sex were concerned.

Mrs. Reid reflected that this young man had a way with him.

Eric already knew most of the Lindsay folks by sight; but at the foot of the hill he met two people, a man and a boy, whom he did not know. They were sitting in a shabby, old-fashioned wagon, and were watering their horse at the brook, which gurgled limpidly under the little plank bridge in the hollow.

Eric surveyed them with some curiosity. They did not look in the least like the ordinary run of Lindsay people. The boy, in particular, had a distinctly foreign appearance, in spite of the gingham shirt and homespun trousers, which seemed to be the regulation, work-a-day outfit for the Lindsay farmer lads. He had a lithe, supple body, with sloping shoulders, and a lean, satiny brown throat above his open shirt collar. His head was covered with thick, silky, black curls, and the hand that hung down by the side of the wagon was unusually long and slender. His face was richly, though somewhat heavily featured, olive tinted, save for the cheeks, which had a dusky crimson bloom. His mouth was as red and beguiling as a girl's, and his eyes were large, bold and black. All in all, he was a strikingly handsome fellow; but the expression of his face was sullen, and he somehow gave Eric the impression of a sinuous, feline creature basking in lazy grace, but ever ready for an unexpected spring.

The other occupant of the wagon was a man between sixty-five and seventy, with iron-gray hair, a long, full, gray beard, a harsh-featured face, and deep-set hazel eyes under bushy, bristling brows. He was evidently tall, with a spare, ungainly figure, and stooping shoulders. His mouth was close-lipped and relentless, and did not look as if it had ever smiled. Indeed, the idea of smiling could not be connected with this man — it was utterly incongruous. Yet there was nothing repellent about his face; and there was something in it that compelled Eric's attention.

He rather prided himself on being a student of physiognomy, and he felt quite sure that this man was no ordinary Lindsay farmer of the genial, garrulous type with which he was familiar.

Long after the old wagon, with its oddly assorted pair, had gone lumbering up the hill, Eric found himself thinking of the stern, heavy browed man and the black-eyed, red-lipped boy.

CHAPTER IV.

A TEA TABLE CONVERSATION

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The Williamson place, where Eric boarded, was on the crest of the succeeding hill. He liked it as well as Larry West had prophesied that he would. The Williamsons, as well as the rest of the Lindsay people, took it for granted that he was a poor college student working his way through as Larry West had been doing. Eric did not disturb this belief, although he said nothing to contribute to it.

The Williamsons were at tea in the kitchen when Eric went in. Mrs. Williamson was the “saint in spectacles and calico” which Larry West had termed her. Eric liked her greatly. She was a slight, gray-haired woman, with a thin, sweet, highbred face, deeply lined with the records of outlived pain. She talked little as a rule; but, in the pungent country phrase she never spoke but she said something. The one thing that constantly puzzled Eric was how such a woman ever came to marry Robert Williamson.

She smiled in a motherly fashion at Eric, as he hung his hat on the whitewashed wall and took his place at the table. Outside of the window behind him was a birch grove which, in the westering sun, was a tremulous splendour, with a sea of undergrowth wavered into golden billows by every passing wind.

Old Robert Williamson sat opposite him, on a bench. He was a small, lean old man, half lost in loose clothes that seemed far too large for him. When he spoke his voice was as thin and squeaky as he appeared to be himself.

The other end of the bench was occupied by Timothy, sleek and complacent, with a snowy breast and white paws. After old Robert had taken a mouthful of anything he gave a piece to Timothy, who ate it daintily and purred resonant gratitude.

“You see we’re busy waiting for you, Master,” said old Robert. “You’re late this evening. Keep any of the youngsters in? That’s a foolish way of punishing them, as hard on yourself as on them. One teacher we had four years ago used to lock them in and go home. Then he’d go back in an hour and let them out — if they were there. They weren’t always. Tom Ferguson kicked the panels out of the old door once and got out that way. We put a new door of double plank in that they couldn’t kick out.”

“I stayed in the schoolroom to do some work,” said Eric briefly.

“Well, you’ve missed Alexander Tracy. He was here to find out if you could play checkers, and, when I told him you could, he left word for you to go up and have a game some evening soon. Don’t beat him too often, even if you can. You’ll need to stand in with him, I tell you, Master, for he’s got a son that may brew trouble for you when he starts in to go to school. Seth Tracy’s a young imp, and he’d far sooner be in mischief than eat. He tries to run on every new teacher and he’s run two clean out of the school. But he met his match in Mr. West. William Tracy’s boys now — you won’t have a scrap of bother with THEM. They’re always good because their mother tells them every Sunday that they’ll go straight to hell if they don’t behave in school. It’s effective. Take some preserve, Master. You know we don’t help things here the way Mrs. Adam Scott does when she has boarders, ‘I s’pose you don’t want any of this — nor you — nor you?’ Mother, Aleck says old George Wright is having the time of his life. His wife has gone to Charlottetown to visit her sister and he is his own boss for the first time since he was married, forty years ago. He’s on a regular orgy, Aleck says. He smokes in the parlour and sits up till eleven o’clock reading dime novels.”

“Perhaps I met Mr. Tracy,” said Eric. “Is he a tall man, with gray hair and a dark, stern face?”

“No, he’s a round, jolly fellow, is Aleck, and he stopped growing pretty much before he’d ever begun. I reckon the man you mean is Thomas Gordon. I seen him driving down the road too. HE won’t be troubling you with invitations up, small fear of it. The Gordons ain’t sociable, to say the least of it. No, sir! Mother, pass the biscuits to the Master.”

“Who was the young fellow he had with him?” asked Eric curiously.

“Neil — Neil Gordon.”

“That is a Scotchy name for such a face and eyes. I should rather have expected Guiseppe or Angelo. The boy looks like an Italian.”

“Well, now, you know, Master, I reckon it’s likely he does, seeing that that’s exactly what he is. You’ve hit the nail square on the head. Italyun, yes, sir! Rather too much so, I’m thinking, for decent folks’ taste.”

“How has it happened that an Italian boy with a Scotch name is living in a place like Lindsay?”

“Well, Master, it was this way. About twenty-two years ago — WAS it twenty-two, Mother or twenty-four? Yes, it was twenty-two—’twas the same year our Jim was born and he’d have been twenty-two if he’d lived, poor little fellow. Well, Master, twenty-two years ago a couple of Italian pack peddlers came along and called at the Gordon place. The country was swarming with them then. I useter set the dog on one every day on an average.

“Well, these peddlers were man and wife, and the woman took sick up there at the Gordon place, and Janet Gordon took her in and nursed her. A baby was born the next day, and the woman died. Then the first thing anybody knew the father skipped clean out, pack and all, and was never seen or heard tell of afterwards. The Gordons were left with the fine youngster to their hands. Folks advised them to send him to the Orphan Asylum, and ‘twould have been the wisest plan, but the Gordons were never fond of taking advice. Old James Gordon was living then, Thomas and Janet’s father, and he said he would never turn a child out of his door. He was a masterful old man and liked to be boss. Folks used to say he had a grudge against the sun ‘cause it rose and set without his say so. Anyhow, they kept the baby. They called him Neil and had him baptized same as any Christian child. He’s always lived there. They did well enough by him. He was sent to school and taken to church and treated like one of themselves. Some folks think they made too much of him. It doesn’t always do with that kind, for ‘what’s bred in bone is mighty apt to come

out in flesh,' if 'taint kept down pretty well. Neil's smart and a great worker, they tell me. But folks hereabouts don't like him. They say he ain't to be trusted further'n you can see him, if as far. It's certain he's awful hot tempered, and one time when he was going to school he near about killed a boy he'd took a spite to — choked him till he was black in the face and Neil had to be dragged off."

"Well now, father, you know they teased him terrible," protested Mrs. Williamson. "The poor boy had a real hard time when he went to school, Master. The other children were always casting things up to him and calling him names."

"Oh, I daresay they tormented him a lot," admitted her husband. "He's a great hand at the fiddle and likes company. He goes to the harbour a good deal. But they say he takes sulky spells when he hasn't a word to throw to a dog. 'Twouldn't be any wonder, living with the Gordons. They're all as queer as Dick's hat-band."

"Father, you shouldn't talk so about your neighbours," said his wife rebukingly.

"Well now, Mother, you know they are, if you'd only speak up honest. But you're like old Aunt Nancy Scott, you never say anything uncharitable except in the way of business. You know the Gordons ain't like other people and never were and never will be. They're about the only queer folks we have in Lindsay, Master, except old Peter Cook, who keeps twenty-five cats. Lord, Master, think of it! What chanct would a poor mouse have? None of the rest of us are queer, leastwise, we hain't found it out if we are. But, then, we're mighty uninteresting, I'm bound to admit that."

"Where do the Gordons live?" asked Eric, who had grown used to holding fast to a given point of inquiry through all the bewildering mazes of old Robert's conversation.

"Away up yander, half a mile in from Radnor road, with a thick spruce wood atween them and all the rest of the world. They never go away anywheres, except to church — they never miss that — and nobody goes

there. There's just old Thomas, and his sister Janet, and a niece of theirs, and this here Neil we've been talking about. They're a queer, dour, cranky lot, and I WILL say it, Mother. There, give your old man a cup of tea and never mind the way his tongue runs on. Speaking of tea, do you know Mrs. Adam Palmer and Mrs. Jim Martin took tea together at Foster Reid's last Wednesday afternoon?"

"No, why, I thought they were on bad terms," said Mrs. Williamson, betraying a little feminine curiosity.

"So they are, so they are. But they both happened to visit Mrs. Foster the same afternoon and neither would leave because that would be knuckling down to the other. So they stuck it out, on opposite sides of the parlour. Mrs. Foster says she never spent such an uncomfortable afternoon in all her life before. She would talk a spell to one and then t'other. And they kept talking TO Mrs. Foster and AT each other. Mrs. Foster says she really thought she'd have to keep them all night, for neither would start to go home afore the other. Finally Jim Martin came in to look for his wife, 'cause he thought she must have got stuck in the marsh, and that solved the problem. Master, you ain't eating anything. Don't mind my stopping; I was at it half an hour afore you come, and anyway I'm in a hurry. My hired boy went home to-day. He heard the rooster crow at twelve last night and he's gone home to see which of his family is dead. He knows one of 'em is. He heard a rooster crow in the middle of the night onct afore and the next day he got word that his second cousin down at Souris was dead. Mother, if the Master don't want any more tea, ain't there some cream for Timothy?"

CHAPTER V.

A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

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Shortly before sunset that evening Eric went for a walk. When he did not go to the shore he liked to indulge in long tramps through the Lindsay fields and woods, in the mellowness of “the sweet ‘o the year.” Most of the Lindsay houses were built along the main road, which ran parallel to the shore, or about the stores at “The Corner.” The farms ran back from them into solitudes of woods and pasture lands.

Eric struck southwest from the Williamson homestead, in a direction he had not hitherto explored, and walked briskly along, enjoying the witchery of the season all about him in earth and air and sky. He felt it and loved it and yielded to it, as anyone of clean life and sane pulses must do.

The spruce wood in which he presently found himself was smitten through with arrows of ruby light from the setting sun. He went through it, walking up a long, purple aisle where the wood-floor was brown and elastic under his feet, and came out beyond it on a scene which surprised him.

No house was in sight, but he found himself looking into an orchard; an old orchard, evidently long neglected and forsaken. But an orchard dies hard; and this one, which must have been a very delightful spot once, was delightful still, none the less so for the air of gentle melancholy which seemed to pervade it, the melancholy which invests all places that have once been the scenes of joy and pleasure and young life, and are so no longer, places where hearts have throbbed, and pulses thrilled, and eyes brightened, and merry voices echoed. The ghosts of these things seem to linger in their old haunts through many empty years.

The orchard was large and long, enclosed in a tumbledown old fence of longers bleached to a silvery gray in the suns of many lost summers. At

regular intervals along the fence were tall, gnarled fir trees, and an evening wind, sweeter than that which blew over the beds of spice from Lebanon, was singing in their tops, an earth-old song with power to carry the soul back to the dawn of time.

Eastward, a thick fir wood grew, beginning with tiny treelets just feathering from the grass, and grading up therefrom to the tall veterans of the mid-grove, unbrokenly and evenly, giving the effect of a solid, sloping green wall, so beautifully compact that it looked as if it had been clipped into its velvet surface by art.

Most of the orchard was grown over lushly with grass; but at the end where Eric stood there was a square, treeless place which had evidently once served as a homestead garden. Old paths were still visible, bordered by stones and large pebbles. There were two clumps of lilac trees; one blossoming in royal purple, the other in white. Between them was a bed ablaze with the starry spikes of June lilies. Their penetrating, haunting fragrance distilled on the dewy air in every soft puff of wind. Along the fence rosebushes grew, but it was as yet too early in the season for roses.

Beyond was the orchard proper, three long rows of trees with green avenues between, each tree standing in a wonderful blow of pink and white.

The charm of the place took sudden possession of Eric as nothing had ever done before. He was not given to romantic fancies; but the orchard laid hold of him subtly and drew him to itself, and he was never to be quite his own man again. He went into it over one of the broken panels of fence, and so, unknowing, went forward to meet all that life held for him.

He walked the length of the orchard's middle avenue between long, sinuous boughs picked out with delicate, rose-hearted bloom. When he reached its southern boundary he flung himself down in a grassy corner of the fence where another lilac bush grew, with ferns and wild blue violets at its roots. From where he now was he got a glimpse of a house about a quarter of a mile away, its gray gable peering out from a dark spruce wood. It seemed a dull, gloomy, remote place, and he did not know who lived there.

He had a wide outlook to the west, over far hazy fields and misty blue intervals. The sun had just set, and the whole world of green meadows beyond swam in golden light. Across a long valley brimmed with shadow were uplands of sunset, and great sky lakes of saffron and rose where a soul might lose itself in colour. The air was very fragrant with the baptism of the dew, and the odours of a bed of wild mint upon which he had trampled. Robins were whistling, clear and sweet and sudden, in the woods all about him.

“This is a veritable ‘haunt of ancient peace,’” quoted Eric, looking around with delighted eyes. “I could fall asleep here, dream dreams and see visions. What a sky! Could anything be diviner than that fine crystal eastern blue, and those frail white clouds that look like woven lace? What a dizzying, intoxicating fragrance lilacs have! I wonder if perfume could set a man drunk. Those apple trees now — why, what is that?”

Eric started up and listened. Across the mellow stillness, mingled with the croon of the wind in the trees and the flute-like calls of the robins, came a strain of delicious music, so beautiful and fantastic that Eric held his breath in astonishment and delight. Was he dreaming? No, it was real music, the music of a violin played by some hand inspired with the very spirit of harmony. He had never heard anything like it; and, somehow, he felt quite sure that nothing exactly like it ever had been heard before; he believed that that wonderful music was coming straight from the soul of the unseen violinist, and translating itself into those most airy and delicate and exquisite sounds for the first time; the very soul of music, with all sense and earthliness refined away.

It was an elusive, haunting melody, strangely suited to the time and place; it had in it the sigh of the wind in the woods, the eerie whispering of the grasses at dewfall, the white thoughts of the June lilies, the rejoicing of the apple blossoms; all the soul of all the old laughter and song and tears and gladness and sobs the orchard had ever known in the lost years; and besides all this, there was in it a pitiful, plaintive cry as of some imprisoned thing calling for freedom and utterance.

At first Eric listened as a man spellbound, mutely and motionlessly, lost in wonderment. Then a very natural curiosity overcame him. Who in Lindsay

could play a violin like that? And who was playing so here, in this deserted old orchard, of all places in the world?

He rose and walked up the long white avenue, going as slowly and silently as possible, for he did not wish to interrupt the player. When he reached the open space of the garden he stopped short in new amazement and was again tempted into thinking he must certainly be dreaming.

Under the big branching white lilac tree was an old, sagging, wooden bench; and on this bench a girl was sitting, playing on an old brown violin. Her eyes were on the faraway horizon and she did not see Eric. For a few moments he stood there and looked at her. The pictures she made photographed itself on his vision to the finest detail, never to be blotted from his book of remembrance. To his latest day Eric Marshall will be able to recall vividly that scene as he saw it then — the velvet darkness of the spruce woods, the overarching sky of soft brilliance, the swaying lilac blossoms, and amid it all the girl on the old bench with the violin under her chin.

He had, in his twenty-four years of life, met hundreds of pretty women, scores of handsome women, a scant half dozen of really beautiful women. But he knew at once, beyond all possibility of question or doubt, that he had never seen or imagined anything so exquisite as this girl of the orchard. Her loveliness was so perfect that his breath almost went from him in his first delight of it.

Her face was oval, marked in every cameo-like line and feature with that expression of absolute, flawless purity, found in the angels and Madonnas of old paintings, a purity that held in it no faintest strain of earthliness. Her head was bare, and her thick, jet-black hair was parted above her forehead and hung in two heavy lustrous braids over her shoulders. Her eyes were of such a blue as Eric had never seen in eyes before, the tint of the sea in the still, calm light that follows after a fine sunset; they were as luminous as the stars that came out over Lindsay Harbour in the afterglow, and were fringed about with very long, soot-black lashes, and arched over by most delicately pencilled dark eyebrows. Her skin was as fine and purely tinted as the heart of a white rose. The collarless dress of pale blue print she wore revealed her smooth, slender throat; her sleeves were rolled

up above her elbows and the hand which guided the bow of her violin was perhaps the most beautiful thing about her, perfect in shape and texture, firm and white, with rosy-nailed taper fingers. One long, drooping plume of lilac blossom lightly touched her hair and cast a wavering shadow over the flowerlike face beneath it.

There was something very childlike about her, and yet at least eighteen sweet years must have gone to the making of her. She seemed to be playing half unconsciously, as if her thoughts were far away in some fair dreamland of the skies. But presently she looked away from “the bourne of sunset,” and her lovely eyes fell on Eric, standing motionless before her in the shadow of the apple tree.

The sudden change that swept over her was startling. She sprang to her feet, the music breaking in mid-strain and the bow slipping from her hand to the grass. Every hint of colour fled from her face and she trembled like one of the wind-stirred June lilies.

“I beg your pardon,” said Eric hastily. “I am sorry that I have alarmed you. But your music was so beautiful that I did not remember you were not aware of my presence here. Please forgive me.”

He stopped in dismay, for he suddenly realized that the expression on the girl’s face was one of terror — not merely the startled alarm of a shy, childlike creature who had thought herself alone, but absolute terror. It was betrayed in her blanched and quivering lips and in the widely distended blue eyes that stared back into his with the expression of some trapped wild thing.

It hurt him that any woman should look at him in such a fashion, at him who had always held womanhood in such reverence.

“Don’t look so frightened,” he said gently, thinking only of calming her fear, and speaking as he would to a child. “I will not hurt you. You are safe, quite safe.”

In his eagerness to reassure her he took an unconscious step forward. Instantly she turned, and, without a sound, fled across the orchard, through

a gap in the northern fence and along what seemed to be a lane bordering the fir wood beyond and arched over with wild cherry trees misty white in the gathering gloom. Before Eric could recover his wits she had vanished from his sight among the firs.

He stooped and picked up the violin bow, feeling slightly foolish and very much annoyed.

“Well, this is a most mysterious thing,” he said, somewhat impatiently. “Am I bewitched? Who was she? WHAT was she? Can it be possible that she is a Lindsay girl? And why in the name of all that’s provoking should she be so frightened at the mere sight of me? I have never thought I was a particularly hideous person, but certainly this adventure has not increased my vanity to any perceptible extent. Perhaps I have wandered into an enchanted orchard, and been outwardly transformed into an ogre. Now that I have come to think of it, there is something quite uncanny about the place. Anything might happen here. It is no common orchard for the production of marketable apples, that is plain to be seen. No, it’s a most unwholesome locality; and the sooner I make my escape from it the better.”

He glanced about it with a whimsical smile. The light was fading rapidly and the orchard was full of soft, creeping shadows and silences. It seemed to wink sleepy eyes of impish enjoyment at his perplexity. He laid the violin bow down on the old bench.

“Well, there is no use in my following her, and I have no right to do so even if it were of use. But I certainly wish she hadn’t fled in such evident terror. Eyes like hers were never meant to express anything but tenderness and trust. Why — why — WHY was she so frightened? And who — who — WHO — can she be?”

All the way home, over fields and pastures that were beginning to be moonlight silvered he pondered the mystery.

“Let me see,” he reflected. “Mr. Williamson was describing the Lindsay girls for my benefit the other evening. If I remember rightly he said that there were four handsome ones in the district. What were their names?”

Florrie Woods, Melissa Foster — no, Melissa Palmer — Emma Scott, and Jennie May Ferguson. Can she be one of them? No, it is a flagrant waste of time and gray matter supposing it. That girl couldn't be a Florrie or a Melissa or an Emma, while Jennie May is completely out of the question. Well, there is some bewitchment in the affair. Of that I'm convinced. So I'd better forget all about it."

But Eric found that it was impossible to forget all about it. The more he tried to forget, the more keenly and insistently he remembered. The girl's exquisite face haunted him and the mystery of her tantalized him.

True, he knew that, in all likelihood, he might easily solve the problem by asking the Williamsons about her. But somehow, to his own surprise, he found that he shrank from doing this. He felt that it was impossible to ask Robert Williamson and probably have the girl's name overflowed in a stream of petty gossip concerning her and all her antecedents and collaterals to the third and fourth generation. If he had to ask any one it should be Mrs. Williamson; but he meant to find out the secret for himself if it were at all possible.

He had planned to go to the harbour the next evening. One of the lobstermen had promised to take him out codfishing. But instead he wandered southwest over the fields again.

He found the orchard easily — he had half expected NOT to find it. It was still the same fragrant, grassy, wind-haunted spot. But it had no occupant and the violin bow was gone from the old bench.

"Perhaps she tiptoed back here for it by the light o' the moon," thought Eric, pleasing his fancy by the vision of a lithe, girlish figure stealing with a beating heart through mingled shadow and moonshine. "I wonder if she will possibly come this evening, or if I have frightened her away for ever. I'll hide me behind this spruce copse and wait."

Eric waited until dark, but no music sounded through the orchard and no one came to it. The keenness of his disappointment surprised him, nay more, it vexed him. What nonsense to be so worked up because a little girl he had seen for five minutes failed to appear! Where was his common

sense, his “gumption,” as old Robert Williamson would have said? Naturally a man liked to look at a pretty face. But was that any reason why he should feel as if life were flat, stale, and unprofitable simply because he could not look at it? He called himself a fool and went home in a petulant mood. Arriving there, he plunged fiercely into solving algebraical equations and working out geometry exercises, determined to put out of his head forthwith all vain imaginings of an enchanted orchard, white in the moonshine, with lilts of elfin music echoing down its long arcades.

The next day was Sunday and Eric went to church twice. The Williamson pew was one of the side ones at the top of the church and its occupants practically faced the congregation. Eric looked at every girl and woman in the audience, but he saw nothing of the face which, setting will power and common sense flatly at defiance, haunted his memory like a star.

Thomas Gordon was there, sitting alone in his long, empty pew near the top of the building; and Neil Gordon sang in the choir which occupied the front pew of the gallery. He had a powerful and melodious, though untrained voice, which dominated the singing and took the colour out of the weaker, more commonplace tones of the other singers. He was well-dressed in a suit of dark blue serge, with a white collar and tie. But Eric idly thought it did not become him so well as the working clothes in which he had first seen him. He was too obviously dressed up, and he looked coarser and more out of harmony with his surroundings.

For two days Eric refused to let himself think of the orchard. Monday evening he went codfishing, and Tuesday evening he went up to play checkers with Alexander Tracy. Alexander won all the games so easily that he never had any respect for Eric Marshall again.

“Played like a feller whose thoughts were wool gathering,” he complained to his wife. “He’ll never make a checker player — never in this world.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF KILMENY

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Wednesday evening Eric went to the orchard again; and again he was disappointed. He went home, determined to solve the mystery by open inquiry. Fortune favoured him, for he found Mrs. Williamson alone, sitting by the west window of her kitchen and knitting at a long gray sock. She hummed softly to herself as she knitted, and Timothy slept blackly at her feet. She looked at Eric with quiet affection in her large, candid eyes. She had liked Mr. West. But Eric had found his way into the inner chamber of her heart, by reason that his eyes were so like those of the little son she had buried in the Lindsay churchyard many years before.

“Mrs. Williamson,” said Eric, with an affectation of carelessness, “I chanced on an old deserted orchard back behind the woods over there last week, a charming bit of wilderness. Do you know whose it is?”

“I suppose it must be the old Connors orchard,” answered Mrs. Williamson after a moment’s reflection. “I had forgotten all about it. It must be all of thirty years since Mr. and Mrs. Connors moved away. Their house and barns were burned down and they sold the land to Thomas Gordon and went to live in town. They’re both dead now. Mr. Connors used to be very proud of his orchard. There weren’t many orchards in Lindsay then, though almost everybody has one now.”

“There was a young girl in it, playing on a violin,” said Eric, annoyed to find that it cost him an effort to speak of her, and that the blood mounted to his face as he did so. “She ran away in great alarm as soon as she saw me, although I do not think I did or said anything to frighten or vex her. I have no idea who she was. Do you know?”

Mrs. Williamson did not make an immediate reply. She laid down her knitting and gazed out of the window as if pondering seriously some question in her own mind. Finally she said, with an intonation of keen interest in her voice,

“I suppose it must have been Kilmeny Gordon, Master.”

“Kilmeny Gordon? Do you mean the niece of Thomas Gordon of whom your husband spoke?”

“Yes.”

“I can hardly believe that the girl I saw can be a member of Thomas Gordon’s family.”

“Well, if it wasn’t Kilmeny Gordon I don’t know who it could have been. There is no other house near that orchard and I’ve heard she plays the violin. If it was Kilmeny you’ve seen what very few people in Lindsay have ever seen, Master. And those few have never seen her close by. I have never laid eyes on her myself. It’s no wonder she ran away, poor girl. She isn’t used to seeing strangers.”

“I’m rather glad if that was the sole reason of her flight,” said Eric. “I admit I didn’t like to see any girl so frightened of me as she appeared to be. She was as white as paper, and so terrified that she never uttered a word, but fled like a deer to cover.”

“Well, she couldn’t have spoken a word in any case,” said Mrs. Williamson quietly. “Kilmeny Gordon is dumb.”

Eric sat in dismayed silence for a moment. That beautiful creature afflicted in such a fashion — why, it was horrible! Mingled with his dismay was a strange pang of personal regret and disappointment.

“It couldn’t have been Kilmeny Gordon, then,” he protested at last, remembering. “The girl I saw played on the violin exquisitely. I never heard anything like it. It is impossible that a deaf mute could play like that.”

“Oh, she isn’t deaf, Master,” responded Mrs. Williamson, looking at Eric keenly through her spectacles. She picked up her knitting and fell to work again. “That is the strange part of it, if anything about her can be stranger than another. She can hear as well as anybody and understands everything that is said to her. But she can’t speak a word and never could, at least, so they say. The truth is, nobody knows much about her. Janet and Thomas never speak of her, and Neil won’t either. He has been well questioned, too, you can depend on that; but he won’t ever say a word about Kilmeny and he gets mad if folks persist.”

“Why isn’t she to be spoken of?” queried Eric impatiently. “What is the mystery about her?”

“It’s a sad story, Master. I suppose the Gordons look on her existence as a sort of disgrace. For my own part, I think it’s terrible, the way she’s been brought up. But the Gordons are very strange people, Mr. Marshall. I kind of reprov’d father for saying so, you remember, but it is true. They have very strange ways. And you’ve really seen Kilmeny? What does she look like? I’ve heard that she was handsome. Is it true?”

“I thought her very beautiful,” said Eric rather curtly. “But HOW has she been brought up, Mrs. Williamson? And why?”

“Well, I might as well tell you the whole story, Master. Kilmeny is the niece of Thomas and Janet Gordon. Her mother was Margaret Gordon, their younger sister. Old James Gordon came out from Scotland. Janet and Thomas were born in the Old Country and were small children when they came here. They were never very sociable folks, but still they used to visit out some then, and people used to go there. They were kind and honest people, even if they were a little peculiar.

“Mrs. Gordon died a few years after they came out, and four years later James Gordon went home to Scotland and brought a new wife back with him. She was a great deal younger than he was and a very pretty woman, as my mother often told me. She was friendly and gay and liked social life. The Gordon place was a very different sort of place after she came there, and even Janet and Thomas got thawed out and softened down a good bit. They were real fond of their stepmother, I’ve heard. Then, six years after

she was married, the second Mrs. Gordon died too. She died when Margaret was born. They say James Gordon almost broke his heart over it.

“Janet brought Margaret up. She and Thomas just worshipped the child and so did their father. I knew Margaret Gordon well once. We were just the same age and we set together in school. We were always good friends until she turned against all the world.

“She was a strange girl in some ways even then, but I always liked her, though a great many people didn’t. She had some bitter enemies, but she had some devoted friends too. That was her way. She made folks either hate or love her. Those who did love her would have gone through fire and water for her.

“When she grew up she was very pretty — tall and splendid, like a queen, with great thick braids of black hair and red, red cheeks and lips. Everybody who saw her looked at her a second time. She was a little vain of her beauty, I think, Master. And she was proud, oh, she was very proud. She liked to be first in everything, and she couldn’t bear not to show to good advantage. She was dreadful determined, too. You couldn’t budge her an inch, Master, when she once had made up her mind on any point. But she was warmhearted and generous. She could sing like an angel and she was very clever. She could learn anything with just one look at it and she was terrible fond of reading.

“When I’m talking about her like this it all comes back to me, just what she was like and how she looked and spoke and acted, and little ways she had of moving her hands and head. I declare it almost seems as if she was right here in this room instead of being over there in the churchyard. I wish you’d light the lamp, Master. I feel kind of nervous.”

Eric rose and lighted the lamp, rather wondering at Mrs. Williamson’s unusual exhibition of nerves. She was generally so calm and composed.

“Thank you, Master. That’s better. I won’t be fancying now that Margaret Gordon’s here listening to what I’m saying. I had the feeling so strong a moment ago.

“I suppose you think I’m a long while getting to Kilmeny, but I’m coming to that. I didn’t mean to talk so much about Margaret, but somehow my thoughts got taken up with her.

“Well, Margaret passed the Board and went to Queen’s Academy and got a teacher’s license. She passed pretty well up when she came out, but Janet told me she cried all night after the pass list came out because there were some ahead of her.

“She went to teach school over at Radnor. It was there she met a man named Ronald Fraser. Margaret had never had a beau before. She could have had any young man in Lindsay if she had wanted him, but she wouldn’t look at one of them. They said it was because she thought nobody was good enough for her, but that wasn’t the way of it at all, Master. I knew, because Margaret and I used to talk of those matters, as girls do. She didn’t believe in going with anybody unless it was somebody she thought everything of. And there was nobody in Lindsay she cared that much for.

“This Ronald Fraser was a stranger from Nova Scotia and nobody knew much about him. He was a widower, although he was only a young man. He had set up storekeeping in Radnor and was doing well. He was real handsome and had taking ways women like. It was said that all the Radnor girls were in love with him, but I don’t think his worst enemy could have said he flirted with them. He never took any notice of them; but the very first time he saw Margaret Gordon he fell in love with her and she with him.

“They came over to church in Lindsay together the next Sunday and everybody said it would be a match. Margaret looked lovely that day, so gentle and womanly. She had been used to hold her head pretty high, but that day she held it drooping a little and her black eyes cast down. Ronald Fraser was very tall and fair, with blue eyes. They made as handsome a couple as I ever saw.

“But old James Gordon and Thomas and Janet didn’t much approve of him. I saw that plain enough one time I was there and he brought Margaret home from Radnor Friday night. I guess they wouldn’t have liked anybody,

though, who come after Margaret. They thought nobody was good enough for her.

“But Margaret coaxed them all round in time. She could do pretty near anything with them, they were so fond and proud of her. Her father held out the longest, but finally he give in and consented for her to marry Ronald Fraser.

“They had a big wedding, too — all the neighbours were asked. Margaret always liked to make a display. I was her bridesmaid, Master. I helped her dress and nothing would please her; she wanted to look that nice for Ronald’s sake. She was a handsome bride; dressed in white, with red roses in her hair and at her breast. She wouldn’t wear white flowers; she said they looked too much like funeral flowers. She looked like a picture. I can see her this minute, as plain as plain, just as she was that night, blushing and turning pale by turns, and looking at Ronald with her eyes of love. If ever a girl loved a man with all her heart Margaret Gordon did. It almost made me feel frightened. She gave him the worship it isn’t right to give anybody but God, Master, and I think that is always punished.

“They went to live at Radnor and for a little while everything went well. Margaret had a nice house, and was gay and happy. She dressed beautiful and entertained a good deal. Then — well, Ronald Fraser’s first wife turned up looking for him! She wasn’t dead after all.

“Oh, there was terrible scandal, Master. The talk and gossip was something dreadful. Every one you met had a different story, and it was hard to get at the truth. Some said Ronald Fraser had known all the time that his wife wasn’t dead, and had deceived Margaret. But I don’t think he did. He swore he didn’t. They hadn’t been very happy together, it seems. Her mother made trouble between them. Then she went to visit her mother in Montreal, and died in the hospital there, so the word came to Ronald. Perhaps he believed it a little too readily, but that he DID believe it I never had a doubt. Her story was that it was another woman of the same name. When she found out Ronald thought her dead she and her mother agreed to let him think so. But when she heard he had got married again she thought she’d better let him know the truth.

“It all sounded like a queer story and I suppose you couldn’t blame people for not believing it too readily. But I’ve always felt it was true. Margaret didn’t think so, though. She believed that Ronald Fraser had deceived her, knowing all the time that he couldn’t make her his lawful wife. She turned against him and hated him just as much as she had loved him before.

“Ronald Fraser went away with his real wife, and in less than a year word came of his death. They said he just died of a broken heart, nothing more nor less.

“Margaret came home to her father’s house. From the day that she went over its threshold, she never came out until she was carried out in her coffin three years ago. Not a soul outside of her own family ever saw her again. I went to see her, but Janet told me she wouldn’t see me. It was foolish of Margaret to act so. She hadn’t done anything real wrong; and everybody was sorry for her and would have helped her all they could. But I reckon pity cut her as deep as blame could have done, and deeper, because you see, Master, she was so proud she couldn’t bear it.

“They say her father was hard on her, too; and that was unjust if it was true. Janet and Thomas felt the disgrace, too. The people that had been in the habit of going to the Gordon place soon stopped going, for they could see they were not welcome.

“Old James Gordon died that winter. He never held his head up again after the scandal. He had been an elder in the church, but he handed in his resignation right away and nobody could persuade him to withdraw it.

“Kilmeny was born in the spring, but nobody ever saw her, except the minister who baptized her. She was never taken to church or sent to school. Of course, I suppose there wouldn’t have been any use in her going to school when she couldn’t speak, and it’s likely Margaret taught her all she could be taught herself. But it was dreadful that she was never taken to church, or let go among the children and young folks. And it was a real shame that nothing was ever done to find out why she couldn’t talk, or if she could be cured.

“Margaret Gordon died three years ago, and everybody in Lindsay went to the funeral. But they didn’t see her. The coffin lid was screwed down. And they didn’t see Kilmeny either. I would have loved to see HER for Margaret’s sake, but I didn’t want to see poor Margaret. I had never seen her since the night she was a bride, for I had left Lindsay on a visit just after that, and what I came home the scandal had just broken out. I remembered Margaret in all her pride and beauty, and I couldn’t have borne to look at her dead face and see the awful changes I knew must be there.

“It was thought perhaps Janet and Thomas would take Kilmeny out after her mother was gone, but they never did, so I suppose they must have agreed with Margaret about the way she had been brought up. I’ve often felt sorry for the poor girl, and I don’t think her people did right by her, even if she was mysteriously afflicted. She must have had a very sad, lonely life.

“That is the story, Master, and I’ve been a long time telling it, as I dare say you think. But the past just seemed to be living again for me as I talked. If you don’t want to be pestered with questions about Kilmeny Gordon, Master, you’d better not let on you’ve seen her.”

Eric was not likely to. He had heard all he wanted to know and more.

“So this girl is at to core of a tragedy,” he reflected, as he went to his room. “And she is dumb! The pity of it! Kilmeny! The name suits her. She is as lovely and innocent as the heroine of the old ballad. ‘And oh, Kilmeny was fair to see.’ But the next line is certainly not so appropriate, for her eyes were anything but ‘still and steadfast’ — after she had seen me, at all events.”

He tried to put her out of his thoughts, but he could not. The memory of her beautiful face drew him with a power he could not resist. The next evening he went again to the orchard.

CHAPTER VII.

A ROSE OF WOMANHOOD

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When he emerged from the spruce wood and entered the orchard his heart gave a sudden leap, and he felt that the blood rushed madly to his face. She was there, bending over the bed of June lilies in the centre of the garden plot. He could only see her profile, virginal and white.

He stopped, not wishing to startle her again. When she lifted her head he expected to see her shrink and flee, but she did not do so; she only grew a little paler and stood motionless, watching him intently.

Seeing this, he walked slowly towards her, and when he was so close to her that he could hear the nervous flutter of her breath over her parted, trembling lips, he said very gently,

“Do not be afraid of me. I am a friend, and I do not wish to disturb or annoy you in any way.”

She seemed to hesitate a moment. Then she lifted a little slate that hung at her belt, wrote something on it rapidly, and held it out to him. He read, in a small distinctive handwriting,

“I am not afraid of you now. Mother told me that all strange men were very wicked and dangerous, but I do not think you can be. I have thought a great deal about you, and I am sorry I ran away the other night.”

He realized her entire innocence and simplicity. Looking earnestly into her still troubled eyes he said,

“I would not do you any harm for the world. All men are not wicked, although it is too true that some are so. My name is Eric Marshall and I

am teaching in the Lindsay school. You, I think, are Kilmeny Gordon. I thought your music so very lovely the other evening that I have been wishing ever since that I might hear it again. Won't you play for me?"

The vague fear had all gone from her eyes by this time, and suddenly she smiled — a merry, girlish, wholly irresistible smile, which broke through the calm of her face like a gleam of sunlight rippling over a placid sea. Then she wrote, "I am very sorry that I cannot play this evening. I did not bring my violin with me. But I will bring it tomorrow evening and play for you if you would like to hear me. I should like to please you."

Again that note of innocent frankness! What a child she was — what a beautiful, ignorant child, utterly unskilled in the art of hiding her feelings! But why should she hide them? They were as pure and beautiful as herself. Eric smiled back at her with equal frankness.

"I should like it more than I can say, and I shall be sure to come tomorrow evening if it is fine. But if it is at all damp or unpleasant you must not come. In that case another evening will do. And now won't you give me some flowers?"

She nodded, with another little smile, and began to pick some of the June lilies, carefully selecting the most perfect among them. He watched her lithe, graceful motions with delight; every movement seemed poetry itself. She looked like a very incarnation of Spring — as if all the shimmer of young leaves and glow of young mornings and evanescent sweetness of young blossoms in a thousand springs had been embodied in her.

When she came to him, radiant, her hands full of the lilies, a couplet from a favourite poem darted into his head —

"A blossom vermeil white
That lightly breaks a faded flower sheath,
Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me."

The next moment he was angry with himself for his folly. She was, after all, nothing but a child — and a child set apart from her fellow creatures by her sad defect. He must not let himself think nonsense.

“Thank you. These June lilies are the sweetest flowers the spring brings us. Do you know that their real name is the white narcissus?” She looked pleased and interested.

“No, I did not know,” she wrote. “I have often read of the white narcissus and wondered what it was like. I never thought of it being the same as my dear June lilies. I am glad you told me. I love flowers very much. They are my very good friends.”

“You couldn’t help being friends with the lilies. Like always takes to like,” said Eric. “Come and sit down on the old bench — here, where you were sitting that night I frightened you so badly. I could not imagine who or what you were. Sometimes I thought I had dreamed you — only,” he added under his breath and unheard by her, “I could never have dreamed anything half so lovely.”

She sat down beside him on the old bench and looked unshrinkingly in his face. There was no boldness in her glance — nothing but the most perfect, childlike trust and confidence. If there had been any evil in his heart — any skulking thought, he was afraid to acknowledge — those eyes must have searched it out and shamed it. But he could meet them unafraid. Then she wrote,

“I was very much frightened. You must have thought me very silly, but I had never seen any man except Uncle Thomas and Neil and the egg peddler. And you are different from them — oh, very, very different. I was afraid to come back here the next evening. And yet, somehow, I wanted to come. I did not want you to think I did not know how to behave. I sent Neil back for my bow in the morning. I could not do without it. I cannot speak, you know. Are you sorry?”

“I am very sorry for your sake.”

“Yes, but what I mean is, would you like me better if I could speak like other people?”

“No, it does not make any difference in that way, Kilmeny. By the way, do you mind my calling you Kilmeny?”

She looked puzzled and wrote, “What else should you call me?
That is my name. Everybody calls me that.”

“But I am such a stranger to you that perhaps you would wish me to call you Miss Gordon.”

“Oh, no, I would not like that,” she wrote quickly, with a distressed look on her face. “Nobody ever calls me that. It would make me feel as if I were not myself but somebody else. And you do not seem like a stranger to me. Is there any reason why you should not call me Kilmeny?”

“No reason whatever, if you will allow me the privilege. You have a very lovely name — the very name you ought to have.”

“I am glad you like it. Do you know that I was called after my grandmother and she was called after a girl in a poem? Aunt Janet has never liked my name, although she liked my grandmother. But I am glad you like both my name and me. I was afraid you would not like me because I cannot speak.”

“You can speak through your music, Kilmeny.”

She looked pleased. “How well you understand,” she wrote. “Yes, I cannot speak or sing as other people can, but I can make my violin say things for me.”

“Do you compose your own music?” he asked. But he saw she did not understand him. “I mean, did any one ever teach you the music you played here that evening?”

“Oh, no. It just came as I thought. It has always been that way. When I was very little Neil taught me to hold the violin and the bow, and the rest all came of itself. My violin once belonged to Neil, but he gave it to me. Neil is very good and kind to me, but I like you better. Tell me about yourself.”

The wonder of her grew upon him with every passing moment. How lovely she was! What dear little ways and gestures she had — ways and gestures as artless and unstudied as they were effective. And how strangely little

her dumbness seemed to matter after all! She wrote so quickly and easily, her eyes and smile gave such expression to her mobile face, that voice was hardly missed.

They lingered in the orchard until the long, languid shadows of the trees crept to their feet. It was just after sunset and the distant hills were purple against the melting saffron of the sky in the west and the crystalline blue of the sky in the south. Eastward, just over the fir woods, were clouds, white and high heaped like snow mountains, and the westernmost of them shone with a rosy glow as of sunset on an Alpine height.

The higher worlds of air were still full of light — perfect, stainless light, unmarred of earth shadow; but down in the orchard and under the spruces the light had almost gone, giving place to a green, dewy dusk, made passionately sweet with the breath of the apple blossoms and mint, and the balsamic odours that rained down upon them from the firs.

Eric told her of his life, and the life in the great outer world, in which she was girlishly and eagerly interested. She asked him many questions about it — direct and incisive questions which showed that she had already formed decided opinions and views about it. Yet it was plain to be seen that she did not regard it as anything she might ever share herself. Hers was the dispassionate interest with which she might have listened to a tale of the land of fairy or of some great empire long passed away from earth.

Eric discovered that she had read a great deal of poetry and history, and a few books of biography and travel. She did not know what a novel meant and had never heard of one. Curiously enough, she was well informed regarding politics and current events, from the weekly paper for which her uncle subscribed.

“I never read the newspaper while mother was alive,” she wrote, “nor any poetry either. She taught me to read and write and I read the Bible all through many times and some of the histories. After mother died Aunt Janet gave me all her books. She had a great many. Most of them had been given to her as prizes when she was a girl at school, and some of them had been given to her by my father. Do you know the story of my father and mother?”

Eric nodded.

“Yes, Mrs. Williamson told me all about it. She was a friend of your mother.”

“I am glad you have heard it. It is so sad that I would not like to tell it, but you will understand everything better because you know. I never heard it until just before mother died. Then she told me all. I think she had thought father was to blame for the trouble; but before she died she told me she believed that she had been unjust to him and that he had not known. She said that when people were dying they saw things more clearly and she saw she had made a mistake about father. She said she had many more things she wanted to tell me, but she did not have time to tell them because she died that night. It was a long while before I had the heart to read her books. But when I did I thought them so beautiful. They were poetry and it was like music put into words.”

“I will bring you some books to read, if you would like them,” said Eric.

Her great blue eyes gleamed with interest and delight.

“Oh, thank you, I would like it very much. I have read mine over so often that I know them nearly all by heart. One cannot get tired of really beautiful things, but sometimes I feel that I would like some new books.”

“Are you never lonely, Kilmeny?”

“Oh, no, how could I be? There is always plenty for me to do, helping Aunt Janet about the house. I can do a great many things” — she glanced up at him with a pretty pride as her flying pencil traced the words. “I can cook and sew. Aunt Janet says I am a very good housekeeper, and she does not praise people very often or very much. And then, when I am not helping her, I have my dear, dear violin. That is all the company I want. But I like to read and hear of the big world so far away and the people who live there and the things that are done. It must be a very wonderful place.”

“Wouldn’t you like to go out into it and see its wonders and meet those people yourself?” he asked, smiling at her.

At once he saw that, in some way he could not understand, he had hurt her. She snatched her pencil and wrote, with such swiftness of motion and energy of expression that it almost seemed as if she had passionately exclaimed the words aloud,

“No, no, no. I do not want to go anywhere away from home. I do not want ever to see strangers or have them see me. I could not bear it.”

He thought that possibly the consciousness of her defect accounted for this. Yet she did not seem sensitive about her dumbness and made frequent casual references to it in her written remarks. Or perhaps it was the shadow on her birth. Yet she was so innocent that it seemed unlikely she could realize or understand the existence of such a shadow. Eric finally decided that it was merely the rather morbid shrinking of a sensitive child who had been brought up in an unwholesome and unnatural way. At last the lengthening shadows warned him that it was time to go.

“You won’t forget to come tomorrow evening and play for me,” he said, rising reluctantly. She answered by a quick little shake of her sleek, dark head, and a smile that was eloquent. He watched her as she walked across the orchard,

“With the moon’s beauty and the moon’s soft pace,”

and along the wild cherry lane. At the corner of the firs she paused and waved her hand to him before turning it.

When Eric reached home old Robert Williamson was having a lunch of bread and milk in the kitchen. He looked up, with a friendly grin, as Eric strode in, whistling.

“Been having a walk, Master?” he queried.

“Yes,” said Eric.

Unconsciously and involuntarily he infused so much triumph into the simple monosyllable that even old Robert felt it. Mrs. Williamson, who was cutting bread at the end of the table, laid down her knife and loaf, and

looked at the young man with a softly troubled expression in her eyes. She wondered if he had been back to the Connors orchard — and if he could have seen Kilmeny Gordon again.

“You didn’t discover a gold mine, I s’pose?” said old Robert dryly. “You look as if you might have.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE GATE OF EDEN

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When Eric went to the old Connors orchard the next evening he found Kilmeny waiting for him on the bench under the white lilac tree, with the violin in her lap. As soon as she saw him she caught it up and began to play an airy delicate little melody that sounded like the laughter of daisies.

When it was finished she dropped her bow, and looked up at him with flushed cheeks and questioning eyes.

“What did that say to you?” she wrote.

“It said something like this,” answered Eric, falling into her humour smilingly. “Welcome, my friend. It is a very beautiful evening. The sky is so blue and the apple blossoms so sweet. The wind and I have been here alone together and the wind is a good companion, but still I am glad to see you. It is an evening on which it is good to be alive and to wander in an orchard that is fine and white. Welcome, my friend.”

She clapped her hands, looking like a pleased child.

“You are very quick to understand,” she wrote. “That was just what I meant. Of course I did not think it in just those words, but that was the FEELING of it. I felt that I was so glad I was alive, and that the apple blossoms and the white lilacs and the trees and I were all pleased together to see you come. You are quicker than Neil. He is almost always puzzled to understand my music, and I am puzzled to understand his. Sometimes it frightens me. It seems as if there were something in it trying to take hold of me — something I do not like and want to run away from.”

Somehow Eric did not like her references to Neil. The idea of that handsome, low-born boy seeing Kilmeny every day, talking to her, sitting at the same table with her, dwelling under the same roof, meeting her in the hundred intimacies of daily life, was distasteful to him. He put the thought away from him, and flung himself down on the long grass at her feet.

“Now play for me, please,” he said. “I want to lie here and listen to you.”

“And look at you,” he might have added. He could not tell which was the greater pleasure. Her beauty, more wonderful than any pictured loveliness he had ever seen, delighted him. Every tint and curve and outline of her face was flawless. Her music enthralled him. This child, he told himself as he listened, had genius. But it was being wholly wasted. He found himself thinking resentfully of the people who were her guardians, and who were responsible for her strange life. They had done her a great and irremediable wrong. How dared they doom her to such an existence? If her defect of utterance had been attended to in time, who knew but that it might have been cured? Now it was probably too late. Nature had given her a royal birthright of beauty and talent, but their selfish and unpardonable neglect had made it of no account.

What divine music she lured out of the old violin — merry and sad, gay and sorrowful by turns, music such as the stars of morning might have made singing together, music that the fairies might have danced to in their revels among the green hills or on yellow sands, music that might have mourned over the grave of a dead hope. Then she drifted into a still sweeter strain. As he listened to it he realized that the whole soul and nature of the girl were revealing themselves to him through her music — the beauty and purity of her thoughts, her childhood dreams and her maiden reveries. There was no thought of concealment about her; she could not help the revelation she was unconscious of making.

At last she laid her violin aside and wrote,

“I have done my best to give you pleasure. It is your turn now. Do you remember a promise you made me last night? Have you kept it?”

He gave her the two books he had brought for her — a modern novel and a volume of poetry unknown to her. He had hesitated a little over the former; but the book was so fine and full of beauty that he thought it could not bruise the bloom of her innocence ever so slightly. He had no doubts about the poetry. It was the utterance of one of those great inspired souls whose passing tread has made the kingdom of their birth and labour a veritable Holy Land.

He read her some of the poems. Then he talked to her of his college days and friends. The minutes passed very swiftly. There was just then no world for him outside of that old orchard with its falling blossoms and its shadows and its crooning winds.

Once, when he told her the story of some college pranks wherein the endless feuds of freshmen and sophomores figured, she clapped her hands together according to her habit, and laughed aloud — a clear, musical, silvery peal. It fell on Eric's ear with a shock of surprise. He thought it strange that she could laugh like that when she could not speak. Wherein lay the defect that closed for her the gates of speech? Was it possible that it could be removed?

"Kilmeny," he said gravely after a moment's reflection, during which he had looked up as she sat with the ruddy sunlight falling through the lilac branches on her bare, silky head like a shower of red jewels, "do you mind if I ask you something about your inability to speak? Will it hurt you to talk of the matter with me?"

She shook her head.

"Oh, no," she wrote, "I do not mind at all. Of course I am sorry I cannot speak, but I am quite used to the thought and it never hurts me at all."

"Then, Kilmeny, tell me this. Do you know why it is that you are unable to speak, when all your other faculties are so perfect?"

"No, I do not know at all why I cannot speak. I asked mother once and she told me it was a judgment on her for a great sin she had committed, and

she looked so strangely that I was frightened, and I never spoke of it to her or anyone else again.”

“Were you ever taken to a doctor to have your tongue and organs of speech examined?”

“No. I remember when I was a very little girl that Uncle Thomas wanted to take me to a doctor in Charlottetown and see if anything could be done for me, but mother would not let him. She said it would be no use. And I do not think Uncle Thomas thought it would be, either.”

“You can laugh very naturally. Can you make any other sound?”

“Yes, sometimes. When I am pleased or frightened I have made little cries. But it is only when I am not thinking of it at all that I can do that. If I TRY to make a sound I cannot do it at all.”

This seemed to Eric more mysterious than ever.

“Do you ever try to speak — to utter words?” he persisted.

“Oh yes, very often. All the time I am saying the words in my head, just as I hear other people saying them, but I never can make my tongue say them. Do not look so sorry, my friend. I am very happy and I do not mind so very much not being able to speak — only sometimes when I have so many thoughts and it seems so slow to write them out, some of them get away from me. I must play to you again. You look too sober.”

She laughed again, picked up her violin, and played a tinkling, roguish little melody as if she were trying to tease him, looking at Eric over her violin with luminous eyes that dared him to be merry.

Eric smiled; but the puzzled look returned to his face many times that evening. He walked home in a brown study. Kilmeny’s case certainly seemed a strange one, and the more he thought of it the stranger it seemed.

“It strikes me as something very peculiar that she should be able to make sounds only when she is not thinking about it,” he reflected. “I wish David

Baker could examine her. But I suppose that is out of the question. That grim pair who have charge of her would never consent.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRAIGHT SIMPLICITY OF EVE

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For the next three weeks Eric Marshall seemed to himself to be living two lives, as distinct from each other as if he possessed a double personality. In one, he taught the Lindsay district school diligently and painstakingly; solved problems; argued on theology with Robert Williamson; called at the homes of his pupils and took tea in state with their parents; went to a rustic dance or two and played havoc, all unwittingly, with the hearts of the Lindsay maidens.

But this life was a dream of workaday. He only LIVED in the other, which was spent in an old orchard, grassy and overgrown, where the minutes seemed to lag for sheer love of the spot and the June winds made wild harping in the old spruces.

Here every evening he met Kilmeny; in that old orchard they garnered hours of quiet happiness together; together they went wandering in the fair fields of old romance; together they read many books and talked of many things; and, when they were tired of all else, Kilmeny played to him and the old orchard echoed with her lovely, fantastic melodies.

At every meeting her beauty came home afresh to him with the old thrill of glad surprise. In the intervals of absence it seemed to him that she could not possibly be as beautiful as he remembered her; and then when they met she seemed even more so. He learned to watch for the undisguised light of welcome that always leaped into her eyes at the sound of his footsteps. She was nearly always there before him and she always showed that she was glad to see him with the frank delight of a child watching for a dear comrade.

She was never in the same mood twice. Now she was grave, now gay, now stately, now pensive. But she was always charming. Thrawn and twisted the old Gordon stock might be, but it had at least this one offshoot of perfect grace and symmetry. Her mind and heart, utterly unspoiled of the world, were as beautiful as her face. All the ugliness of existence had passed her by, shrined in her double solitude of upbringing and muteness.

She was naturally quick and clever. Delightful little flashes of wit and humour sparkled out occasionally. She could be whimsical — even charmingly capricious. Sometimes innocent mischief glimmered out in the unfathomable deeps of her blue eyes. Sarcasm, even, was not unknown to her. Now and then she punctured some harmless bubble of a young man's conceit or masculine superiority with a biting little line of daintily written script.

She assimilated the ideas in the books they read, speedily, eagerly, and thoroughly, always seizing on the best and truest, and rejecting the false and spurious and weak with an unfailing intuition at which Eric marvelled. Hers was the spear of Ithuriel, trying out the dross of everything and leaving only the pure gold.

In manner and outlook she was still a child. Yet now and again she was as old as Eve. An expression would leap into her laughing face, a subtle meaning reveal itself in her smile, that held all the lore of womanhood and all the wisdom of the ages.

Her way of smiling enchanted him. The smile always began far down in her eyes and flowed outward to her face like a sparkling brook stealing out of shadow into sunshine.

He knew everything about her life. She told him her simple history freely. She often mentioned her uncle and aunt and seemed to regard them with deep affection. She rarely spoke of her mother. Eric came somehow to understand, less from what she said than from what she did not say, that Kilmeny, though she had loved her mother, had always been rather afraid of her. There had not been between them the natural beautiful confidence of mother and child.

Of Neil, she wrote frequently at first, and seemed very fond of him. Later she ceased to mention him. Perhaps — for she was marvellously quick to catch and interpret every fleeting change of expression in his voice and face — she discerned what Eric did not know himself — that his eyes clouded and grew moody at the mention of Neil's name.

Once she asked him naively,

“Are there many people like you out in the world?”

“Thousands of them,” said Eric, laughing.

She looked gravely at him. Then she gave her head a quick decided little shake.

“I do not think so,” she wrote. “I do not know much of the world, but I do not think there are many people like you in it.”

One evening, when the faraway hills and fields were scarfed in gauzy purples, and the intervalles were brimming with golden mists, Eric carried to the old orchard a little limp, worn volume that held a love story. It was the first thing of the kind he had ever read to her, for in the first novel he had lent her the love interest had been very slight and subordinate. This was a beautiful, passionate idyl exquisitely told.

He read it to her, lying in the grass at her feet; she listened with her hands clasped over her knee and her eyes cast down. It was not a long story; and when he had finished it he shut the book and looked up at her questioningly.

“Do you like it, Kilmeny?” he asked.

Very slowly she took her slate and wrote,

“Yes, I like it. But it hurt me, too. I did not know that a person could like anything that hurt her. I do not know why it hurt me. I felt as if I had lost something that I never had. That was a very silly feeling, was it not? But I did not understand the book very well, you see. It is about love and I do

not know anything about love. Mother told me once that love is a curse, and that I must pray that it would never enter into my life. She said it very earnestly, and so I believed her. But your book teaches that it is a blessing. It says that it is the most splendid and wonderful thing in life. Which am I to believe?"

"Love — real love — is never a curse, Kilmeny," said Eric gravely. "There is a false love which IS a curse. Perhaps your mother believed it was that which had entered her life and ruined it; and so she made the mistake. There is nothing in the world — or in heaven either, as I believe — so truly beautiful and wonderful and blessed as love."

"Have you ever loved?" asked Kilmeny, with the directness of phrasing necessitated by her mode of communication which was sometimes a little terrible. She asked the question simply and without embarrassment. She knew of no reason why love might not be discussed with Eric as other matters — music and books and travel — might be.

"No," said Eric — honestly, as he thought, "but every one has an ideal of love whom he hopes to meet some day—'the ideal woman of a young man's dream.' I suppose I have mine, in some sealed, secret chamber of my heart."

"I suppose your ideal woman would be beautiful, like the woman in your book?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure I could never care for an ugly woman," said Eric, laughing a little as he sat up. "Our ideals are always beautiful, whether they so translate themselves into realities or not. But the sun is going down. Time does certainly fly in this enchanted orchard. I believe you bewitch the moments away, Kilmeny. Your namesake of the poem was a somewhat uncanny maid, if I recollect aright, and thought as little of seven years in elfland as ordinary folk do of half an hour on upper earth. Some day I shall waken from a supposed hour's lingering here and find myself an old man with white hair and ragged coat, as in that fairy tale we read the other night. Will you let me give you this book? I should never commit the sacrilege of reading it in any other place than this. It is an old book, Kilmeny. A new book, savouring of the shop and marketplace, however

beautiful it might be, would not do for you. This was one of my mother's books. She read it and loved it. See — the faded rose leaves she placed in it one day are there still. I'll write your name in it — that quaint, pretty name of yours which always sounds as if it had been specially invented for you—'Kilmeny of the Orchard' — and the date of this perfect June day on which we read it together. Then when you look at it you will always remember me, and the white buds opening on that rosebush beside you, and the rush and murmur of the wind in the tops of those old spruces."

He held out the book to her, but, to his surprise, she shook her head, with a deeper flush on her face.

"Won't you take the book, Kilmeny? Why not?"

She took her pencil and wrote slowly, unlike her usual quick movement.

"Do not be offended with me. I shall not need anything to make me remember you because I can never forget you. But I would rather not take the book. I do not want to read it again. It is about love, and there is no use in my learning about love, even if it is all you say. Nobody will ever love me. I am too ugly."

"You! Ugly!" exclaimed Eric. He was on the point of going off into a peal of laughter at the idea when a glimpse of her half averted face sobered him. On it was a hurt, bitter look, such as he remembered seeing once before, when he had asked her if she would not like to see the world for herself.

"Kilmeny," he said in astonishment, "you don't really think yourself ugly, do you?"

She nodded, without looking at him, and then wrote,

"Oh, yes, I know that I am. I have known it for a long time. Mother told me that I was very ugly and that nobody would ever like to look at me. I am sorry. It hurts me much worse to know I am ugly than it does to know I cannot speak. I suppose you will think that is very foolish of me, but it is true. That was why I did not come back to the orchard for such a long

time, even after I had got over my fright. I hated to think that YOU would think me ugly. And that is why I do not want to go out into the world and meet people. They would look at me as the egg peddler did one day when I went out with Aunt Janet to his wagon the spring after mother died. He stared at me so. I knew it was because he thought me so ugly, and I have always hidden when he came ever since.”

Eric’s lips twitched. In spite of his pity for the real suffering displayed in her eyes, he could not help feeling amused over the absurd idea of this beautiful girl believing herself in all seriousness to be ugly.

“But, Kilmeny, do you think yourself ugly when you look in a mirror?” he asked smiling.

“I have never looked in a mirror,” she wrote. “I never knew there was such a thing until after mother died, and I read about it in a book. Then I asked Aunt Janet and she said mother had broken all the looking glasses in the house when I was a baby. But I have seen my face reflected in the spoons, and in a little silver sugar bowl Aunt Janet has. And it IS ugly — very ugly.”

Eric’s face went down into the grass. For his life he could not help laughing; and for his life he would not let Kilmeny see him laughing. A certain little whimsical wish took possession of him and he did not hasten to tell her the truth, as had been his first impulse. Instead, when he dared to look up he said slowly,

“I don’t think you are ugly, Kilmeny.”

“Oh, but I am sure you must,” she wrote protestingly. “Even Neil does. He tells me I am kind and nice, but one day I asked him if he thought me very ugly, and he looked away and would not speak, so I knew what he thought about it, too. Do not let us speak of this again. It makes me feel sorry and spoils everything. I forget it at other times. Let me play you some goodbye music, and do not feel vexed because I would not take your book. It would only make me unhappy to read it.”

“I am not vexed,” said Eric, “and I think you will take it some day yet — after I have shown you something I want you to see. Never mind about your looks, Kilmeny. Beauty isn’t everything.”

“Oh, it is a great deal,” she wrote naively. “But you do like me, even though I am so ugly, don’t you? You like me because of my beautiful music, don’t you?”

“I like you very much, Kilmeny,” answered Eric, laughing a little; but there was in his voice a tender note of which he was unconscious. Kilmeny was aware of it, however, and she picked up her violin with a pleased smile.

He left her playing there, and all the way through the dim resinous spruce wood her music followed him like an invisible guardian spirit.

“Kilmeny the Beautiful!” he murmured, “and yet, good heavens, the child thinks she is ugly — she with a face more lovely than ever an artist dreamed of! A girl of eighteen who has never looked in a mirror! I wonder if there is another such in any civilized country in the world. What could have possessed her mother to tell her such a falsehood? I wonder if Margaret Gordon could have been quite sane. It is strange that Neil has never told her the truth. Perhaps he doesn’t want her to find out.”

Eric had met Neil Gordon a few evenings before this, at a country dance where Neil had played the violin for the dancers. Influenced by curiosity he had sought the lad’s acquaintance. Neil was friendly and talkative at first; but at the first hint concerning the Gordons which Eric threw out skilfully his face and manner changed. He looked secretive and suspicious, almost sinister. A sullen look crept into his big black eyes and he drew his bow across the violin strings with a discordant screech, as if to terminate the conversation. Plainly nothing was to be found out from him about Kilmeny and her grim guardians.

CHAPTER X.

A TROUBLING OF THE WATERS

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One evening in late June Mrs. Williamson was sitting by her kitchen window. Her knitting lay unheeded in her lap, and Timothy, though he nestled ingratiatingly against her foot as he lay on the rug and purred his loudest, was unregarded. She rested her face on her hand and looked out of the window, across the distant harbour, with troubled eyes.

“I guess I must speak,” she thought wistfully. “I hate to do it. I always did hate meddling. My mother always used to say that ninety-nine times out of a hundred the last state of a meddler and then she meddled with was worse than the first. But I guess it’s my duty. I was Margaret’s friend, and it is my duty to protect her child any way I can. If the Master does go back across there to meet her I must tell him what I think about it.”

Overhead in his room, Eric was walking about whistling. Presently he came downstairs, thinking of the orchard, and the girl who would be waiting for him there.

As he crossed the little front entry he heard Mrs. Williamson’s voice calling to him.

“Mr. Marshall, will you please come here a moment?”

He went out to the kitchen. Mrs. Williamson looked at him deprecatingly. There was a flush on her faded cheek and her voice trembled.

“Mr. Marshall, I want to ask you a question. Perhaps you will think it isn’t any of my business. But it isn’t because I want to meddle. No, no. It is only because I think I ought to speak. I have thought it over for a long time, and it seems to me that I ought to speak. I hope you won’t be angry,

but even if you are I must say what I have to say. Are you going back to the old Connors orchard to meet Kilmeny Gordon?"

For a moment an angry flush burned in Eric's face. It was more Mrs. Williamson's tone than her words which startled and annoyed him.

"Yes, I am, Mrs. Williamson," he said coldly. "What of it?"

"Then, sir," said Mrs. Williamson with more firmness, "I have got to tell you that I don't think you are doing right. I have been suspecting all along that that was where you went every evening, but I haven't said a word to any one about it. Even my husband doesn't know. But tell me this, Master. Do Kilmeny's uncle and aunt know that you are meeting her there?"

"Why," said Eric, in some confusion, "I — I do not know whether they do or not. But Mrs. Williamson, surely you do not suspect me of meaning any harm or wrong to Kilmeny Gordon?"

"No, I don't, Master. I might think it of some men, but never of you. I don't for a minute think that you would do her or any woman any wilful wrong. But you may do her great harm for all that. I want you to stop and think about it. I guess you haven't thought. Kilmeny can't know anything about the world or about men, and she may get to thinking too much of you. That might break her heart, because you couldn't ever marry a dumb girl like her. So I don't think you ought to be meeting her so often in this fashion. It isn't right, Master. Don't go to the orchard again."

Without a word Eric turned away, and went upstairs to his room.

Mrs. Williamson picked up her knitting with a sigh.

"That's done, Timothy, and I'm real thankful," she said. "I guess there'll be no need of saying anything more. Mr. Marshall is a fine young man, only a little thoughtless. Now that he's got his eyes opened I'm sure he'll do what is right. I don't want Margaret's child made unhappy."

Her husband came to the kitchen door and sat down on the steps to enjoy his evening smoke, talking between whiffs to his wife of Elder Tracy's church row, and Mary Alice Martin's beau, the price Jake Crosby was

giving for eggs, the quantity of hay yielded by the hill meadow, the trouble he was having with old Molly's calf, and the respective merits of Plymouth Rock and Brahma roosters. Mrs. Williamson answered at random, and heard not one word in ten.

“What's got the Master, Mother?” inquired old Robert, presently.
“I hear him striding up and down in his room 'sif he was caged.
Sure you didn't lock him in by mistake?”

“Maybe he’s worried over the way Seth Tracy’s acting in school,” suggested Mrs. Williamson, who did not choose that her gossipy husband should suspect the truth about Eric and Kilmeny Gordon.

“Shucks, he needn’t worry a morsel over that. Seth’ll quiet down as soon as he finds he can’t run the Master. He’s a rare good teacher — better’n Mr. West was even, and that’s saying something. The trustees are hoping he’ll stay for another term. They’re going to ask him at the school meeting tomorrow, and offer him a raise of supplement.”

Upstairs, in his little room under the eaves, Eric Marshall was in the grip of the most intense and overwhelming emotion he had ever experienced.

Up and down, to and fro, he walked, with set lips and clenched hands. When he was wearied out he flung himself on a chair by the window and wrestled with the flood of feeling.

Mrs. Williamson’s words had torn away the delusive veil with which he had bound his eyes. He was face to face with the knowledge that he loved Kilmeny Gordon with the love that comes but once, and is for all time. He wondered how he could have been so long blind to it. He knew that he must have loved her ever since their first meeting that May evening in the old orchard.

And he knew that he must choose between two alternatives — either he must never go to the orchard again, or he must go as an avowed lover to woo him a wife.

Worldly prudence, his inheritance from a long line of thrifty, cool-headed ancestors, was strong in Eric, and he did not yield easily or speedily to the dictates of his passion. All night he struggled against the new emotions that threatened to sweep away the “common sense” which David Baker had bade him take with him when he went a-wooing. Would not a marriage with Kilmeny Gordon be an unwise thing from any standpoint?

Then something stronger and greater and more vital than wisdom or unwisdom rose up in him and mastered him. Kilmeny, beautiful, dumb

Kilmeny was, as he had once involuntarily thought, “the one maid” for him. Nothing should part them. The mere idea of never seeing her again was so unbearable that he laughed at himself for having counted it a possible alternative.

“If I can win Kilmeny’s love I shall ask her to be my wife,” he said, looking out of the window to the dark, southwestern hill beyond which lay his orchard.

The velvet sky over it was still starry; but the water of the harbour was beginning to grow silvery in the reflection of the dawn that was breaking in the east.

“Her misfortune will only make her dearer to me. I cannot realize that a month ago I did not know her. It seems to me that she has been a part of my life for ever. I wonder if she was grieved that I did not go to the orchard last night — if she waited for me. If she does, she does not know it herself yet. It will be my sweet task to teach her what love means, and no man has ever had a lovelier, purer, pupil.”

At the annual school meeting, the next afternoon, the trustees asked Eric to take the Lindsay school for the following year. He consented unhesitatingly.

That evening he went to Mrs. Williamson, as she washed her tea dishes in the kitchen.

“Mrs. Williamson, I am going back to the old Connors orchard to see Kilmeny again tonight.”

She looked at him reproachfully.

“Well, Master, I have no more to say. I suppose it wouldn’t be of any use if I had. But you know what I think of it.”

“I intend to marry Kilmeny Gordon if I can win her.”

An expression of amazement came into the good woman's face. She looked scrutinizingly at the firm mouth and steady gray eyes for a moment. Then she said in a troubled voice,

"Do you think that is wise, Master? I suppose Kilmeny is pretty; the egg peddler told me she was; and no doubt she is a good, nice girl. But she wouldn't be a suitable wife for you — a girl that can't speak."

"That doesn't make any difference to me."

"But what will your people say?"

"I have no 'people' except my father. When he sees Kilmeny he will understand. She is all the world to me, Mrs. Williamson."

"As long as you believe that there is nothing more to be said," was the quiet answer, "I'd be a little bit afraid if I was you, though. But young people never think of those things."

"My only fear is that she won't care for me," said Eric soberly.

Mrs. Williamson surveyed the handsome, broad-shouldered young man shrewdly.

"I don't think there are many women would say you 'no', Master. I wish you well in your wooing, though I can't help thinking you're doing a daft-like thing. I hope you won't have any trouble with Thomas and Janet. They are so different from other folks there is no knowing. But take my advice, Master, and go and see them about it right off. Don't go on meeting Kilmeny unbeknownst to them."

"I shall certainly take your advice," said Eric, gravely. "I should have gone to them before. It was merely thoughtlessness on my part. Possibly they do know already. Kilmeny may have told them."

Mrs. Williamson shook her head decidedly.

"No, no, Master, she hasn't. They'd never have let her go on meeting you there if they had known. I know them too well to think of that for a

moment. Go you straight to them and say to them just what you have said to me. That is your best plan, Master. And take care of Neil. People say he has a notion of Kilmeny himself. He'll do you a bad turn if he can, I've no doubt. Them foreigners can't be trusted — and he's just as much a foreigner as his parents before him — though he HAS been brought up on oatmeal and the shorter catechism, as the old saying has it. I feel that somehow — I always feel it when I look at him singing in the choir."

"Oh, I am not afraid of Neil," said Eric carelessly. "He couldn't help loving Kilmeny — nobody could."

"I suppose every young man thinks that about his girl — if he's the right sort of young man," said Mrs. Williamson with a little sigh.

She watched Eric out of sight anxiously.

"I hope it'll all come out right," she thought. "I hope he ain't making an awful mistake — but — I'm afraid. Kilmeny must be very pretty to have bewitched him so. Well, I suppose there is no use in my worrying over it. But I do wish he had never gone back to that old orchard and seen her."

CHAPTER XI.

A LOVER AND HIS LASS

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Kilmeny was in the orchard when Eric reached it, and he lingered for a moment in the shadow of the spruce wood to dream over her beauty.

The orchard had lately overflowed in waves of old-fashioned caraway, and she was standing in the midst of its sea of bloom, with the lace-like blossoms swaying around her in the wind. She wore the simple dress of pale blue print in which he had first seen her; silk attire could not better have become her loveliness. She had woven herself a chaplet of half open white rosebuds and placed it on her dark hair, where the delicate blossoms seemed less wonderful than her face.

When Eric stepped through the gap she ran to meet him with outstretched hands, smiling. He took her hands and looked into her eyes with an expression before which hers for the first time faltered. She looked down, and a warm blush strained the ivory curves of her cheek and throat. His heart bounded, for in that blush he recognized the banner of love's vanguard.

"Are you glad to see me, Kilmeny?" he asked, in a low significant tone.

She nodded, and wrote in a somewhat embarrassed fashion,

"Yes. Why do you ask? You know I am always glad to see you. I was afraid you would not come. You did not come last night and I was so sorry. Nothing in the orchard seemed nice any longer. I couldn't even play. I tried to, and my violin only cried. I waited until it was dark and then I went home."

“I am sorry you were disappointed, Kilmeny. I couldn’t come last night. Some day I shall tell you why. I stayed home to learn a new lesson. I am sorry you missed me — no, I am glad. Can you understand how a person may be glad and sorry for the same thing?”

She nodded again, with a return of her usual sweet composure.

“Yes, I could not have understood once, but I can now. Did you learn your new lesson?”

“Yes, very thoroughly. It was a delightful lesson when I once understood it. I must try to teach it to you some day. Come over to the old bench, Kilmeny. There is something I want to say to you. But first, will you give me a rose?”

She ran to the bush, and, after careful deliberation, selected a perfect half-open bud and brought it to him — a white bud with a faint, sunrise flush about its golden heart.

“Thank you. It is as beautiful as — as a woman I know,” Eric said.

A wistful look came into her face at his words, and she walked with a drooping head across the orchard to the bench.

“Kilmeny,” he said, seriously, “I am going to ask you to do something for me. I want you to take me home with you and introduce me to your uncle and aunt.”

She lifted her head and stared at him incredulously, as if he had asked her to do something wildly impossible. Understanding from his grave face that he meant what he said, a look of dismay dawned in her eyes. She shook her head almost violently and seemed to be making a passionate, instinctive effort to speak. Then she caught up her pencil and wrote with feverish haste:

“I cannot do that. Do not ask me to. You do not understand. They would be very angry. They do not want to see any one coming to the house. And they would never let me come here again. Oh, you do not mean it?”

He pitied her for the pain and bewilderment in her eyes; but he took her slender hands in his and said firmly,

“Yes, Kilmeny, I do mean it. It is not quite right for us to be meeting each other here as we have been doing, without the knowledge and consent of your friends. You cannot now understand this, but — believe me — it is so.”

She looked questioningly, pityingly into his eyes. What she read there seemed to convince her, for she turned very pale and an expression of hopelessness came into her face. Releasing her hands, she wrote slowly,

“If you say it is wrong I must believe it. I did not know anything so pleasant could be wrong. But if it is wrong we must not meet here any more. Mother told me I must never do anything that was wrong. But I did not know this was wrong.”

“It was not wrong for you, Kilmeny. But it was a little wrong for me, because I knew better — or rather, should have known better. I didn’t stop to think, as the children say. Some day you will understand fully. Now, you will take me to your uncle and aunt, and after I have said to them what I want to say it will be all right for us to meet here or anywhere.”

She shook her head.

“No,” she wrote, “Uncle Thomas and Aunt Janet will tell you to go away and never come back. And they will never let me come here any more. Since it is not right to meet you I will not come, but it is no use to think of going to them. I did not tell them about you because I knew that they would forbid me to see you, but I am sorry, since it is so wrong.”

“You must take me to them,” said Eric firmly. “I am quite sure that things will not be as you fear when they hear what I have to say.”

Uncomforted, she wrote forlornly,

“I must do it, since you insist, but I am sure it will be no use. I cannot take you tonight because they are away. They went to the store at Radnor. But I

will take you tomorrow night; and after that I shall not see you any more.”

Two great tears brimmed over in her big blue eyes and splashed down on her slate. Her lips quivered like a hurt child's. Eric put his arm impulsively about her and drew her head down upon his shoulder. As she cried there, softly, miserably, he pressed his lips to the silky black hair with its coronal of rosebuds. He did not see two burning eyes which were looking at him over the old fence behind him with hatred and mad passion blazing in their depths. Neil Gordon was crouched there, with clenched hands and heaving breast, watching them.

“Kilmeny, dear, don't cry,” said Eric tenderly. “You shall see me again. I promise you that, whatever happens. I do not think your uncle and aunt will be as unreasonable as you fear, but even if they are they shall not prevent me from meeting you somehow.”

Kilmeny lifted her head, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

“You do not know what they are like,” she wrote. “They will lock me into my room. That is the way they always punished me when I was a little girl. And once, not so very long ago, when I was a big girl, they did it.”

“If they do I'll get you out somehow,” said Eric, laughing a little.

She allowed herself to smile, but it was a rather forlorn little effort. She did not cry any more, but her spirits did not come back to her. Eric talked gaily, but she only listened in a pensive, absent way, as if she scarcely heard him. When he asked her to play she shook her head.

“I cannot think any music tonight,” she wrote, “I must go home, for my head aches and I feel very stupid.”

“Very well, Kilmeny. Now, don't worry, little girl. It will all come out all right.”

Evidently she did not share his confidence, for her head drooped again as they walked together across the orchard. At the entrance of the wild cherry lane she paused and looked at him half reproachfully, her eyes filling

again. She seemed to be bidding him a mute farewell. With an impulse of tenderness which he could not control, Eric put his arm about her and kissed her red, trembling mouth. She started back with a little cry. A burning colour swept over her face, and the next moment she fled swiftly up the darkening lane.

The sweetness of that involuntary kiss clung to Eric's lips as he went homeward, half-intoxicating him. He knew that it had opened the gates of womanhood to Kilmeny. Never again, he felt, would her eyes meet his with their old unclouded frankness. When next he looked into them he knew that he should see there the consciousness of his kiss. Behind her in the orchard that night Kilmeny had left her childhood.

CHAPTER XII.

A PRISONER OF LOVE

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When Eric betook himself to the orchard the next evening he had to admit that he felt rather nervous. He did not know how the Gordons would receive him and certainly the reports he had heard of them were not encouraging, to say the least of it. Even Mrs. Williamson, when he had told her where he was going, seemed to look upon him as one bent on bearding a lion in his den.

“I do hope they won’t be very uncivil to you, Master,” was the best she could say.

He expected Kilmeny to be in the orchard before him, for he had been delayed by a call from one of the trustees; but she was nowhere to be seen. He walked across it to the wild cherry lane; but at its entrance he stopped short in sudden dismay.

Neil Gordon had stepped from behind the trees and stood confronting him, with blazing eyes, and lips which writhed in emotion so great that at first it prevented him from speaking.

With a thrill of dismay Eric instantly understood what must have taken place. Neil had discovered that he and Kilmeny had been meeting in the orchard, and beyond doubt had carried that tale to Janet and Thomas Gordon. He realized how unfortunate it was that this should have happened before he had had time to make his own explanation. It would probably prejudice Kilmeny’s guardians still further against him. At this point in his thoughts Neil’s pent up passion suddenly found vent in a burst of wild words.

“So you’ve come to meet her again. But she isn’t here — you’ll never see her again! I hate you — I hate you — I hate you!”

His voice rose to a shrill scream. He took a furious step nearer Eric as if he would attack him. Eric looked steadily in his eyes with a calm defiance, before which his wild passion broke like foam on a rock.

“So you have been making trouble for Kilmeny, Neil, have you?” said Eric contemptuously. “I suppose you have been playing the spy. And I suppose that you have told her uncle and aunt that she has been meeting me here. Well, you have saved me the trouble of doing it, that is all. I was going to tell them myself, tonight. I don’t know what your motive in doing this has been. Was it jealousy of me? Or have you done it out of malice to Kilmeny?”

His contempt cowed Neil more effectually than any display of anger could have done.

“Never you mind why I did it,” he muttered sullenly. “What I did or why I did it is no business of yours. And you have no business to come sneaking around here either. Kilmeny won’t meet you here again.”

“She will meet me in her own home then,” said Eric sternly.

“Neil, in behaving as you have done you have shown yourself to be a very foolish, undisciplined boy. I am going straightway to Kilmeny’s uncle and aunt to explain everything.”

Neil sprang forward in his path.

“No — no — go away,” he implored wildly. “Oh, sir — oh, Mr. Marshall, please go away. I’ll do anything for you if you will. I love Kilmeny. I’ve loved her all my life. I’d give my life for her. I can’t have you coming here to steal her from me. If you do — I’ll kill you! I wanted to kill you last night when I saw you kiss her. Oh, yes, I saw you. I was watching — spying, if you like. I don’t care what you call it. I had followed her — I suspected something. She was so different — so changed. She never would wear the flowers I picked for her any more. She seemed to forget I was

there. I knew something had come between us. And it was you, curse you! Oh, I'll make you sorry for it."

He was working himself up into a fury again — the untamed fury of the Italian peasant thwarted in his heart's desire. It overrode all the restraint of his training and environment. Eric, amid all his anger and annoyance, felt a thrill of pity for him. Neil Gordon was only a boy still; and he was miserable and beside himself.

"Neil, listen to me," he said quietly. "You are talking very foolishly. It is not for you to say who shall or shall not be Kilmeny's friend. Now, you may just as well control yourself and go home like a decent fellow. I am not at all frightened by your threats, and I shall know how to deal with you if you persist in interfering with me or persecuting Kilmeny. I am not the sort of person to put up with that, my lad."

The restrained power in his tone and look cowed Neil. The latter turned sullenly away, with another muttered curse, and plunged into the shadow of the firs.

Eric, not a little ruffled under all his external composure by this most unexpected and unpleasant encounter, pursued his way along the lane which wound on by the belt of woodland in twist and curve to the Gordon homestead. His heart beat as he thought of Kilmeny. What might she not be suffering? Doubtless Neil had given a very exaggerated and distorted account of what he had seen, and probably her dour relations were very angry with her, poor child. Anxious to avert their wrath as soon as might be, he hurried on, almost forgetting his meeting with Neil. The threats of the latter did not trouble him at all. He thought the angry outburst of a jealous boy mattered but little. What did matter was that Kilmeny was in trouble which his heedlessness had brought upon her.

Presently he found himself before the Gordon house. It was an old building with sharp eaves and dormer windows, its shingles stained a dark gray by long exposure to wind and weather. Faded green shutters hung on the windows of the lower story. Behind it grew a thick wood of spruces. The little yard in front of it was grassy and prim and flowerless; but over the low front door a luxuriant early-flowering rose vine clambered, in a

riot of blood-red blossom which contrasted strangely with the general bareness of its surroundings. It seemed to fling itself over the grim old house as if intent on bombarding it with an alien life and joyousness.

Eric knocked at the door, wondering if it might be possible that Kilmeny should come to it. But a moment later it was opened by an elderly woman — a woman of rigid lines from the hem of her lank, dark print dress to the crown of her head, covered with black hair which, despite its few gray threads, was still thick and luxuriant. She had a long, pale face somewhat worn and wrinkled, but possessing a certain harsh comeliness of feature which neither age nor wrinkles had quite destroyed; and her deep-set, light gray eyes were not devoid of suggested kindness, although they now surveyed Eric with an unconcealed hostility. Her figure, in its merciless dress, was very angular; yet there was about her a dignity of carriage and manner which Eric liked. In any case, he preferred her unsmiling dourness to vulgar garrulity.

He lifted his hat.

“Have I the honour of speaking to Miss Gordon?” he asked.

“I am Janet Gordon,” said the woman stiffly.

“Then I wish to talk with you and your brother.”

“Come in.”

She stepped aside and motioned him to a low brown door opening on the right.

“Go in and sit down. I’ll call Thomas,” she said coldly, as she walked out through the hall.

Eric walked into the parlour and sat down as bidden. He found himself in the most old-fashioned room he had ever seen. The solidly made chairs and tables, of some wood grown dark and polished with age, made even Mrs. Williamson’s “parlour set” of horsehair seem extravagantly modern by contrast. The painted floor was covered with round braided rugs. On the

centre table was a lamp, a Bible and some theological volumes contemporary with the square-runged furniture. The walls, wainscoted half way up in wood and covered for the rest with a dark, diamond-patterned paper, were hung with faded engravings, mostly of clerical-looking, bewigged personages in gowns and bands.

But over the high, undecorated black mantelpiece, in a ruddy glow of sunset light striking through the window, hung one which caught and held Eric's attention to the exclusion of everything else. It was the enlarged "crayon" photograph of a young girl, and, in spite of the crudity of execution, it was easily the center of interest in the room.

Eric at once guessed that this must be the picture of Margaret Gordon, for, although quite unlike Kilmeny's sensitive, spirited face in general, there was a subtle, unmistakable resemblance about brow and chin.

The pictured face was a very handsome one, suggestive of velvety dark eyes and vivid colouring; but it was its expression rather than its beauty which fascinated Eric. Never had he seen a countenance indicative of more intense and stubborn will power. Margaret Gordon was dead and buried; the picture was a cheap and inartistic production in an impossible frame of gilt and plush; yet the vitality in that face dominated its surroundings still. What then must have been the power of such a personality in life?

Eric realized that this woman could and would have done whatsoever she willed, unflinchingly and unrelentingly. She could stamp her desire on everything and everybody about her, moulding them to her wish and will, in their own despite and in defiance of all the resistance they might make. Many things in Kilmeny's upbringing and temperament became clear to him.

"If that woman had told me I was ugly I should have believed her," he thought. "Ay, even though I had a mirror to contradict her. I should never have dreamed of disputing or questioning anything she might have said. The strange power in her face is almost uncanny, peering out as it does from a mask of beauty and youthful curves. Pride and stubbornness are its salient characteristics. Well, Kilmeny does not at all resemble her mother in expression and only very slightly in feature."

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Thomas and Janet Gordon. The latter had evidently been called from his work. He nodded without speaking, and the two sat gravely down before Eric.

“I have come to see you with regard to your niece, Mr. Gordon,” he said abruptly, realizing that there would be small use in beating about the bush with this grim pair. “I met your — I met Neil Gordon in the Connors orchard, and I found that he has told you that I have been meeting Kilmeny there.”

He paused. Thomas Gordon nodded again; but he did not speak, and he did not remove his steady, piercing eyes from the young man’s flushed countenance. Janet still sat in a sort of expectant immovability.

“I fear that you have formed an unfavourable opinion of me on this account, Mr. Gordon,” Eric went on. “But I hardly think I deserve it. I can explain the matter if you will allow me. I met your niece accidentally in the orchard three weeks ago and heard her play. I thought her music very wonderful and I fell into the habit of coming to the orchard in the evenings to hear it. I had no thought of harming her in any way, Mr. Gordon. I thought of her as a mere child, and a child who was doubly sacred because of her affliction. But recently I — I — it occurred to me that I was not behaving quite honourably in encouraging her to meet me thus. Yesterday evening I asked her to bring me here and introduce me to you and her aunt. We would have come then if you had been at home. As you were not we arranged to come tonight.”

“I hope you will not refuse me the privilege of seeing your niece, Mr. Gordon,” said Eric eagerly. “I ask you to allow me to visit her here. But I do not ask you to receive me as a friend on my own recommendations only. I will give you references — men of standing in Charlottetown and Queenslea. If you refer to them—”

“I don’t need to do that,” said Thomas Gordon, quietly. “I know more of you than you think, Master. I know your father well by reputation and I have seen him. I know you are a rich man’s son, whatever your whim in teaching a country school may be. Since you have kept your own counsel about your affairs I supposed you didn’t want your true position generally

known, and so I have held my tongue about you. I know no ill of you, Master, and I think none, now that I believe you were not beguiling Kilmeny to meet you unknown to her friends of set purpose. But all this doesn't make you a suitable friend for her, sir — it makes you all the more unsuitable. The less she sees of you the better."

Eric almost started to his feet in an indignant protest; but he swiftly remembered that his only hope of winning Kilmeny lay in bringing Thomas Gordon to another way of thinking. He had got on better than he had expected so far; he must not now jeopardize what he had gained by rashness or impatience.

"Why do you think so, Mr. Gordon?" he asked, regaining his self-control with an effort.

"Well, plain speaking is best, Master. If you were to come here and see Kilmeny often she'd most likely come to think too much of you. I mistrust there's some mischief done in that direction already. Then when you went away she might break her heart — for she is one of those who feel things deeply. She has been happy enough. I know folks condemn us for the way she has been brought up, but they don't know everything. It was the best way for her, all things considered. And we don't want her made unhappy, Master."

"But I love your niece and I want to marry her if I can win her love," said Eric steadily.

He surprised them out of their self possession at last. Both started, and looked at him as if they could not believe the evidence of their ears.

"Marry her! Marry Kilmeny!" exclaimed Thomas Gordon incredulously. "You can't mean it, sir. Why, she is dumb — Kilmeny is dumb."

"That makes no difference in my love for her, although I deeply regret it for her own sake," answered Eric. "I can only repeat what I have already said, Mr. Gordon. I want Kilmeny for my wife."

The older man leaned forward and looked at the floor in a troubled fashion, drawing his bushy eyebrows down and tapping the calloused tips of his fingers together uneasily. He was evidently puzzled by this unexpected turn of the conversation, and in grave doubt what to say.

“What would your father say to all this, Master?” he queried at last.

“I have often heard my father say that a man must marry to please himself,” said Eric, with a smile. “If he felt tempted to go back on that opinion I think the sight of Kilmeny would convert him. But, after all, it is what I say that matters in this case, isn’t it, Mr. Gordon? I am well educated and not afraid of work. I can make a home for Kilmeny in a few years even if I have to depend entirely on my own resources. Only give me the chance to win her — that is all I ask.”

“I don’t think it would do, Master,” said Thomas Gordon, shaking his head. “Of course, I dare say you — you” — he tried to say “love,” but Scotch reserve balked stubbornly at the terrible word—”you think you like Kilmeny now, but you are only a lad — and lads’ fancies change.”

“Mine will not,” Eric broke in vehemently. “It is not a fancy, Mr. Gordon. It is the love that comes once in a lifetime and once only. I may be but a lad, but I know that Kilmeny is the one woman in the world for me. There can never be any other. Oh, I’m not speaking rashly or inconsiderately. I have weighed the matter well and looked at it from every aspect. And it all comes to this — I love Kilmeny and I want what any decent man who loves a woman truly has the right to have — the chance to win her love in return.”

“Well!” Thomas Gordon drew a long breath that was almost a sigh. “Maybe — if you feel like that, Master — I don’t know — there are some things it isn’t right to cross. Perhaps we oughtn’t — Janet, woman, what shall we say to him?”

Janet Gordon had hitherto spoken no word. She had sat rigidly upright on one of the old chairs under Margaret Gordon’s insistent picture, with her knotted, toil-worn hands grasping the carved arms tightly, and her eyes fastened on Eric’s face. At first their expression had been guarded and

hostile, but as the conversation proceeded they lost this gradually and became almost kindly. Now, when her brother appealed to her, she leaned forward and said eagerly,

“Do you know that there is a stain on Kilmeny’s birth, Master?”

“I know that her mother was the innocent victim of a very sad mistake, Miss Gordon. I admit no real stain where there was no conscious wrong doing. Though, for that matter, even if there were, it would be no fault of Kilmeny’s and would make no difference to me as far as she is concerned.”

A sudden change swept over Janet Gordon’s face, quite marvelous in the transformation it wrought. Her grim mouth softened and a flood of repressed tenderness glorified her cold gray eyes.

“Well, then.” she said almost triumphantly, “since neither that nor her dumbness seems to be any drawback in your eyes I don’t see why you should not have the chance you want. Perhaps your world will say she is not good enough for you, but she is — she is” — this half defiantly. “She is a sweet and innocent and true-hearted lassie. She is bright and clever and she is not ill looking. Thomas, I say let the young man have his will.”

Thomas Gordon stood up, as if he considered the responsibility off his shoulders and the interview at an end.

“Very well, Janet, woman, since you think it is wise. And may God deal with him as he deals with her. Good evening, Master. I’ll see you again, and you are free to come and go as suits you. But I must go to my work now. I left my horses standing in the field.”

“I will go up and send Kilmeny down,” said Janet quietly.

She lighted the lamp on the table and left the room. A few minutes later Kilmeny came down. Eric rose and went to meet her eagerly, but she only put out her right hand with a pretty dignity and, while she looked into his face, she did not look into his eyes.

“You see I was right after all, Kilmeny,” he said, smiling. “Your uncle and aunt haven’t driven me away. On the contrary they have been very kind to me, and they say I may see you whenever and wherever I like.”

She smiled, and went over to the table to write on her slate.

“But they were very angry last night, and said dreadful things to me. I felt very frightened and unhappy. They seemed to think I had done something terribly wrong. Uncle Thomas said he would never trust me out of his sight again. I could hardly believe it when Aunt Janet came up and told me you were here and that I might come down. She looked at me very strangely as she spoke, but I could see that all the anger had gone out of her face. She seemed pleased and yet sad. But I am glad they have forgiven us.”

She did not tell him how glad she was, and how unhappy she had been over the thought that she was never to see him again. Yesterday she would have told him all frankly and fully; but for her yesterday was a lifetime away — a lifetime in which she had come into her heritage of womanly dignity and reserve. The kiss which Eric had left on her lips, the words her uncle and aunt had said to her, the tears she had shed for the first time on a sleepless pillow — all had conspired to reveal her to herself. She did not yet dream that she loved Eric Marshall, or that he loved her. But she was no longer the child to be made a dear comrade of. She was, though quite unconsciously, the woman to be wooed and won, exacting, with sweet, innate pride, her dues of allegiance.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SWEETER WOMAN NE'ER DREW BREATH

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Thenceforward Eric Marshall was a constant visitor at the Gordon homestead. He soon became a favourite with Thomas and Janet, especially the latter. He liked them both, discovering under all their outward peculiarities sterling worth and fitness of character. Thomas Gordon was surprisingly well read and could floor Eric any time in argument, once he became sufficiently warmed up to attain fluency of words. Eric hardly recognized him the first time he saw him thus animated. His bent form straightened, his sunken eyes flashed, his face flushed, his voice rang like a trumpet, and he poured out a flood of eloquence which swept Eric's smart, up-to-date arguments away like straws in the rush of a mountain torrent. Eric enjoyed his own defeat enormously, but Thomas Gordon was ashamed of being thus drawn out of himself, and for a week afterwards confined his remarks to "Yes" and "No," or, at the outside, to a brief statement that a change in the weather was brewing.

Janet never talked on matters of church and state; such she plainly considered to be far beyond a woman's province. But she listened with lurking interest in her eyes while Thomas and Eric pelted on each other with facts and statistics and opinions, and on the rare occasions when Eric scored a point she permitted herself a sly little smile at her brother's expense.

Of Neil, Eric saw but little. The Italian boy avoided him, or if they chanced to meet passed him by with sullen, downcast eyes. Eric did not trouble himself greatly about Neil; but Thomas Gordon, understanding the motive which had led Neil to betray his discovery of the orchard trysts, bluntly told Kilmeny that she must not make such an equal of Neil as she had done.

“You have been too kind to the lad, lassie, and he’s got presumptuous. He must be taught his place. I mistrust we have all made more of him than we should.”

But most of the idyllic hours of Eric’s wooing were spent in the old orchard; the garden end of it was now a wilderness of roses — roses red as the heart of a sunset, roses pink as the early flush of dawn, roses white as the snows on mountain peaks, roses full blown, and roses in buds that were sweeter than anything on earth except Kilmeny’s face. Their petals fell in silken heaps along the old paths or clung to the lush grasses among which Eric lay and dreamed, while Kilmeny played to him on her violin.

Eric promised himself that when she was his wife her wonderful gift for music should be cultivated to the utmost. Her powers of expression seemed to deepen and develop every day, growing as her soul grew, taking on new colour and richness from her ripening heart.

To Eric, the days were all pages in an inspired idyl. He had never dreamed that love could be so mighty or the world so beautiful. He wondered if the universe were big enough to hold his joy or eternity long enough to live it out. His whole existence was, for the time being, bounded by that orchard where he wooed his sweetheart. All other ambitions and plans and hopes were set aside in the pursuit of this one aim, the attainment of which would enhance all others a thousand-fold, the loss of which would rob all others of their reason for existence. His own world seemed very far away and the things of that world forgotten.

His father, on hearing that he had taken the Lindsay school for a year, had written him a testy, amazed letter, asking him if he were demented.

“Or is there a girl in the case?” he wrote. “There must be, to tie you down to a place like Lindsay for a year. Take care, master Eric; you’ve been too sensible all your life. A man is bound to make a fool of himself at least once, and when you didn’t get through with that in your teens it may be attacking you now.”

David also wrote, expostulating more gravely; but he did not express the suspicions Eric knew he must entertain.

“Good old David! He is quaking with fear that I am up to something he can’t approve of, but he won’t say a word by way of attempting to force my confidence.”

It could not long remain a secret in Lindsay that “the Master” was going to the Gordon place on courting thoughts intent. Mrs. Williamson kept her own and Eric’s counsel; the Gordons said nothing; but the secret leaked out and great was the surprise and gossip and wonder. One or two incautious people ventured to express their opinion of the Master’s wisdom to the Master himself; but they never repeated the experiment. Curiosity was rife. A hundred stories were circulated about Kilmeny, all greatly exaggerated in the circulation. Wise heads were shaken and the majority opined that it was a great pity. The Master was a likely young fellow; he could have his pick of almost anybody, you might think; it was too bad that he should go and take up with that queer, dumb niece of the Gordons who had been brought up in such a heathenish way. But then you never could guess what way a man’s fancy would jump when he set out to pick him a wife. They guessed Neil Gordon didn’t like it much. He seemed to have got dreadful moody and sulky of late and wouldn’t sing in the choir any more. Thus the buzz of comment and gossip ran.

To those two in the old orchard it mattered not a whit. Kilmeny knew nothing of gossip. To her, Lindsay was as much of an unknown world as the city of Eric’s home. Her thoughts strayed far and wide in the realm of her fancy, but they never wandered out to the little realities that hedged her strange life around. In that life she had blossomed out, a fair, unique thing. There were times when Eric almost regretted that one day he must take her out of her white solitude to a world that, in the last analysis, was only Lindsay on a larger scale, with just the same pettiness of thought and feeling and opinion at the bottom of it. He wished he might keep her to himself for ever, in that old, spruce-hidden orchard where the roses fell.

One day he indulged himself in the fulfillment of the whim he had formed when Kilmeny had told him she thought herself ugly. He went to Janet and asked her permission to bring a mirror to the house that he might have the privilege of being the first to reveal Kilmeny to herself exteriorly. Janet was somewhat dubious at first.

“There hasn’t been such a thing in the house for sixteen years, Master. There never was but three — one in the spare room, and a little one in the kitchen, and Margaret’s own. She broke them all the day it first struck her that Kilmeny was going to be bonny. I might have got one after she died maybe. But I didn’t think of it; and there’s no need of lasses to be always prinking at their looking glasses.”

But Eric pleaded and argued skilfully, and finally Janet said,

“Well, well, have your own way. You’d have it anyway I think, lad. You are one of those men who always get their own way. But that is different from the men who TAKE their own way — and that’s a mercy,” she added under her breath.

Eric went to town the next Saturday and picked out a mirror that pleased him. He had it shipped to Radnor and Thomas Gordon brought it home, not knowing what it was, for Janet had thought it just as well he should not know.

“It’s a present the Master is making Kilmeny,” she told him.

She sent Kilmeny off to the orchard after tea, and Eric slipped around to the house by way of the main road and lane. He and Janet together unpacked the mirror and hung it on the parlour wall.

“I never saw such a big one, Master,” said Janet rather doubtfully, as if, after all, she distrusted its gleaming, pearly depth and richly ornamented frame. “I hope it won’t make her vain. She is very bonny, but it may not do her any good to know it.”

“It won’t harm her,” said Eric confidently. “When a belief in her ugliness hasn’t spoiled a girl a belief in her beauty won’t.”

But Janet did not understand epigrams. She carefully removed a little dust from the polished surface, and frowned meditatively at the by no means beautiful reflection she saw therein.

“I cannot think what made Kilmeny suppose she was ugly, Master.”

“Her mother told her she was,” said Eric, rather bitterly.

“Ah!” Janet shot a quick glance at the picture of her sister. “Was that it? Margaret was a strange woman, Master. I suppose she thought her own beauty had been a snare to her. She WAS bonny. That picture doesn’t do her justice. I never liked it. It was taken before she was — before she met Ronald Fraser. We none of us thought it very like her at the time. But, Master, three years later it was like her — oh, it was like her then! That very look came in her face.”

“Kilmeny doesn’t resemble her mother,” remarked Eric, glancing at the picture with the same feeling of mingled fascination and distaste with which he always regarded it. “Does she look like her father?”

“No, not a great deal, though some of her ways are very like his. She looks like her grandmother — Margaret’s mother, Master. Her name was Kilmeny too, and she was a handsome, sweet woman. I was very fond of my stepmother, Master. When she died she gave her baby to me, and asked me to be a mother to it. Ah well, I tried; but I couldn’t fence the sorrow out of Margaret’s life, and it sometimes comes to my mind that maybe I’ll not be able to fence it out of Kilmeny’s either.”

“That will be my task,” said Eric.

“You’ll do your best, I do not doubt. But maybe it will be through you that sorrow will come to her after all.”

“Not through any fault of mine, Aunt Janet.”

“No, no, I’m not saying it will be your fault. But my heart misgives me at times. Oh, I dare say I am only a foolish old woman, Master. Go your ways and bring your lass here to look at your plaything when you like. I’ll not make or meddle with it.”

Janet betook herself to the kitchen and Eric went to look for Kilmeny. She was not in the orchard and it was not until he had searched for some time that he found her. She was standing under a beech tree in a field beyond the orchard, leaning on the longer fence, with her hands clasped against

her cheek. In them she held a white Mary-lily from the orchard. She did not run to meet him while he was crossing the pasture, as she would once have done. She waited motionless until he was close to her. Eric began, half laughingly, half tenderly, to quote some lines from her namesake ballad:

””Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?
Long hae we sought baith holt and den, —
By linn, by ford, and greenwood tree!
Yet you are halesome and fair to see.
Where got you that joup o’ the lily sheen?
That bonny snood o’ the birk sae green,
And those roses, the fairest that ever was seen?
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?”

“Only it’s a lily and not a rose you are carrying. I might go on and quote the next couplet too —

””Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But there was nae smile on Kilmeny’s face.’

“Why are you looking so sober?”

Kilmeny did not have her slate with her and could not answer; but Eric guessed from something in her eyes that she was bitterly contrasting the beauty of the ballad’s heroine with her own supposed ugliness.

“Come down to the house, Kilmeny. I have something there to show you — something lovelier than you have ever seen before,” he said, with boyish pleasure shining in his eyes. “I want you to go and put on that muslin dress you wore last Sunday evening, and pin up your hair the same way you did then. Run along — don’t wait for me. But you are not to go into the parlour until I come. I want to pick some of those Mary-lilies up in the orchard.”

When Eric returned to the house with an armful of the long stemmed, white Madonna lilies that bloomed in the orchard Kilmeny was just coming down the steep, narrow staircase with its striped carpeting of

homespun drugget. Her marvelous loveliness was brought out into brilliant relief by the dark wood work and shadows of the dim old hall.

She wore a trailing, clinging dress of some creamy tinted fabric that had been her mother's. It had not been altered in any respect, for fashion held no sway at the Gordon homestead, and Kilmeny thought that the dress left nothing to be desired. Its quaint style suited her admirably; the neck was slightly cut away to show the round white throat, and the sleeves were long, full "bishops," out of which her beautiful, slender hands slipped like flowers from their sheaths. She had crossed her long braids at the back and pinned them about her head like a coronet; a late white rose was fastened low down on the left side.

”A man had given all other bliss
And all his worldly wealth for this —
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips,”

quoted Eric in a whisper as he watched her descend. Aloud he said,

“Take these lilies on your arm, letting their bloom fall against your shoulder — so. Now, give me your hand and shut your eyes. Don't open them until I say you may.”

He led her into the parlour and up to the mirror.

“Look,” he cried, gaily.

Kilmeny opened her eyes and looked straight into the mirror where, like a lovely picture in a golden frame, she saw herself reflected. For a moment she was bewildered. Then she realized what it meant. The lilies fell from her arm to the floor and she turned pale. With a little low, involuntary cry she put her hands over her face.

Eric pulled them boyishly away.

“Kilmeny, do you think you are ugly now? This is a truer mirror than Aunt Janet's silver sugar bowl! Look — look — look! Did you ever imagine

anything fairer than yourself, dainty Kilmeny?”

She was blushing now, and stealing shy radiant glances at the mirror. With a smile she took her slate and wrote naively,

“I think I am pleasant to look upon. I cannot tell you how glad I am. It is so dreadful to believe one is ugly. You can get used to everything else, but you never get used to that. It hurts just the same every time you remember it. But why did mother tell me I was ugly? Could she really have thought so? Perhaps I have become better looking since I grew up.”

“I think perhaps your mother had found that beauty is not always a blessing, Kilmeny, and thought it wiser not to let you know you possessed it. Come, let us go back to the orchard now. We mustn’t waste this rare evening in the house. There is going to be a sunset that we shall remember all our lives. The mirror will hang here. It is yours. Don’t look into it too often, though, or Aunt Janet will disapprove. She is afraid it will make you vain.”

Kilmeny gave one of her rare, musical laughs, which Eric never heard without a recurrence of the old wonder that she could laugh so when she could not speak. She blew an airy little kiss at her mirrored face and turned from it, smiling happily.

On their way to the orchard they met Neil. He went by them with an averted face, but Kilmeny shivered and involuntarily drew nearer to Eric.

“I don’t understand Neil at all now,” she wrote nervously. “He is not nice, as he used to be, and sometimes he will not answer when I speak to him. And he looks so strangely at me, too. Besides, he is surly and impertinent to Uncle and Aunt.”

“Don’t mind Neil,” said Eric lightly. “He is probably sulky because of some things I said to him when I found he had spied on us.”

That night before she went up stairs Kilmeny stole into the parlour for another glimpse of herself in that wonderful mirror by the light of a dim

little candle she carried. She was still lingering there dreamily when Aunt Janet's grim face appeared in the shadows of the doorway.

"Are you thinking about your own good looks, lassie? Ay, but remember that handsome is as handsome does," she said, with grudging admiration — for the girl with her flushed cheeks and shining eyes was something that even dour Janet Gordon could not look upon unmoved.

Kilmeny smiled softly.

"I'll try to remember," she wrote, "but oh, Aunt Janet, I am so glad I am not ugly. It is not wrong to be glad of that, is it?"

The older woman's face softened.

"No, I don't suppose it is, lassie," she conceded. "A comely face is something to be thankful for — as none know better than those who have never possessed it. I remember well when I was a girl — but that is neither here nor there. The Master thinks you are wonderful bonny, Kilmeny," she added, looking keenly at the girl.

Kilmeny started and a scarlet blush scorched her face. That, and the expression that flashed into her eyes, told Janet Gordon all she wished to know. With a stifled sigh she bade her niece good night and went away.

Kilmeny ran fleetly up the stairs to her dim little room, that looked out into the spruces, and flung herself on her bed, burying her burning face in the pillow. Her aunt's words had revealed to her the hidden secret of her heart. She knew that she loved Eric Marshall — and the knowledge brought with it a strange anguish. For was she not dumb? All night she lay staring wide-eyed through the darkness till the dawn.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN HER SELFLESS MOOD

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Eric noticed a change in Kilmeny at their next meeting — a change that troubled him. She seemed aloof, abstracted, almost ill at ease. When he proposed an excursion to the orchard he thought she was reluctant to go. The days that followed convinced him of the change. Something had come between them. Kilmeny seemed as far away from him as if she had in truth, like her namesake of the ballad, sojourned for seven years in the land “where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,” and had come back washed clean from all the affections of earth.

Eric had a bad week of it; but he determined to put an end to it by plain speaking. One evening in the orchard he told her of his love.

It was an evening in August, with wheat fields ripening to their harvestry — a soft violet night made for love, with the distant murmur of an unquiet sea on a rocky shore sounding through it. Kilmeny was sitting on the old bench where he had first seen her. She had been playing for him, but her music did not please her and she laid aside the violin with a little frown.

It might be that she was afraid to play — afraid that her new emotions might escape her and reveal themselves in music. It was difficult to prevent this, so long had she been accustomed to pour out all her feelings in harmony. The necessity for restraint irked her and made of her bow a clumsy thing which no longer obeyed her wishes. More than ever at that instant did she long for speech — speech that would conceal and protect where dangerous silence might betray.

In a low voice that trembled with earnestness Eric told her that he loved her — that he had loved her from the first time he had seen her in that old

orchard. He spoke humbly but not fearfully, for he believed that she loved him, and he had little expectation of any rebuff.

“Kilmeny, will you be my wife?” he asked finally, taking her hands in his.

Kilmeny had listened with averted face. At first she had blushed painfully but now she had grown very pale. When he had finished speaking and was waiting for her answer, she suddenly pulled her hands away, and, putting them over her face, burst into tears and noiseless sobs.

“Kilmeny, dearest, have I alarmed you? Surely you knew before that I loved you. Don’t you care for me?” Eric said, putting his arm about her and trying to draw her to him. But she shook her head sorrowfully, and wrote with compressed lips,

“Yes, I do love you, but I will never marry you, because I cannot speak.”

“Oh, Kilmeny,” said Eric smiling, for he believed his victory won, “that doesn’t make any difference to me — you know it doesn’t, sweetest. If you love me that is enough.”

But Kilmeny only shook her head again. There was a very determined look on her pale face. She wrote,

“No, it is not enough. It would be doing you a great wrong to marry you when I cannot speak, and I will not do it because I love you too much to do anything that would harm you. Your world would think you had done a very foolish thing and it would be right. I have thought it all over many times since something Aunt Janet said made me understand, and I know I am doing right. I am sorry I did not understand sooner, before you had learned to care so much.”

“Kilmeny, darling, you have taken a very absurd fancy into that dear black head of yours. Don’t you know that you will make me miserably unhappy all my life if you will not be my wife?”

“No, you think so now; and I know you will feel very badly for a time. Then you will go away and after awhile you will forget me; and then you

will see that I was right. I shall be very unhappy, too, but that is better than spoiling your life. Do not plead or coax because I shall not change my mind.”

Eric did plead and coax, however — at first patiently and smilingly, as one might argue with a dear foolish child; then with vehement and distracted earnestness, as he began to realize that Kilmeny meant what she said. It was all in vain. Kilmeny grew paler and paler, and her eyes revealed how keenly she was suffering. She did not even try to argue with him, but only listened patiently and sadly, and shook her head. Say what he would, entreat and implore as he might, he could not move her resolution a hairsbreadth.

Yet he did not despair; he could not believe that she would adhere to such a resolution; he felt sure that her love for him would eventually conquer, and he went home not unhappily after all. He did not understand that it was the very intensity of her love which gave her the strength to resist his pleading, where a more shallow affection might have yielded. It held her back unflinchingly from doing him what she believed to be a wrong.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD, UNHAPPY, FAR-OFF THING

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The next day Eric sought Kilmeny again and renewed his pleadings, but again in vain. Nothing he could say, no argument which he could advance, was of any avail against her sad determination. When he was finally compelled to realize that her resolution was not to be shaken, he went in his despair to Janet Gordon. Janet listened to his story with concern and disappointment plainly visible on her face. When he had finished she shook her head.

“I’m sorry, Master. I can’t tell you how sorry I am. I had hoped for something very different. HOPED! I have PRAYED for it. Thomas and I are getting old and it has weighed on my mind for years — what was to become of Kilmeny when we would be gone. Since you came I had hoped she would have a protector in you. But if Kilmeny says she will not marry you I am afraid she’ll stick to it.”

“But she loves me,” cried the young man, “and if you and her uncle speak to her — urge her — perhaps you can influence her—”

“No, Master, it wouldn’t be any use. Oh, we will, of course, but it will not be any use. Kilmeny is as determined as her mother when once she makes up her mind. She has always been good and obedient for the most part, but once or twice we have found out that there is no moving her if she does resolve upon anything. When her mother died Thomas and I wanted to take her to church. We could not prevail on her to go. We did not know why then, but now I suppose it was because she believed she was so very ugly. It is because she thinks so much of you that she will not marry you. She is afraid you would come to repent having married a dumb girl. Maybe she is right — maybe she is right.”

“I cannot give her up,” said Eric stubbornly. “Something must be done. Perhaps her defect can be remedied even yet. Have you ever thought of that? You have never had her examined by a doctor qualified to pronounce on her case, have you?”

“No, Master, we never took her to anyone. When we first began to fear that she was never going to talk Thomas wanted to take her to Charlottetown and have her looked to. He thought so much of the child and he felt terrible about it. But her mother wouldn’t hear of it being done. There was no use trying to argue with her. She said that it would be no use — that it was her sin that was visited on her child and it could never be taken away.”

“And did you give in meekly to a morbid whim like that?” asked Eric impatiently.

“Master, you didn’t know my sister. We HAD to give in — nobody could hold out against her. She was a strange woman — and a terrible woman in many ways — after her trouble. We were afraid to cross her for fear she would go out of her mind.”

“But, could you not have taken Kilmeny to a doctor unknown to her mother?”

“No, that was not possible. Margaret never let her out of her sight, not even when she was grown up. Besides, to tell you the whole truth, Master, we didn’t think ourselves that it would be much use to try to cure Kilmeny. It WAS a sin that made her as she is.”

“Aunt Janet, how can you talk such nonsense? Where was there any sin? Your sister thought herself a lawful wife. If Ronald Fraser thought otherwise — and there is no proof that he did — HE committed a sin, but you surely do not believe that it was visited in this fashion on his innocent child!”

“No, I am not meaning that, Master. That wasn’t where Margaret did wrong; and though I never liked Ronald Fraser over much, I must say this in his defence — I believe he thought himself a free man when he married Margaret. No, it’s something else — something far worse. It gives me a

shiver whenever I think of it. Oh, Master, the Good Book is right when it says the sins of the parents are visited on the children. There isn't a truer word in it than that from cover to cover."

"What, in heaven's name, is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Eric. "Tell me what it is. I must know the whole truth about Kilmeny. Do not torment me."

"I am going to tell you the story, Master, though it will be like opening an old wound. No living person knows it but Thomas and me. When you hear it you will understand why Kilmeny can't speak, and why it isn't likely that there can ever be anything done for her. She doesn't know the truth and you must never tell her. It isn't a fit story for her ears, especially when it is about her mother. Promise me that you will never tell her, no matter what may happen."

"I promise. Go on — go on," said the young man feverishly.

Janet Gordon locked her hands together in her lap, like a woman who nerves herself to some hateful task. She looked very old; the lines on her face seemed doubly deep and harsh.

"My sister Margaret was a very proud, high-spirited girl, Master. But I would not have you think she was unlovable. No, no, that would be doing a great injustice to her memory. She had her faults as we all have; but she was bright and merry and warmhearted. We all loved her. She was the light and life of this house. Yes, Master, before the trouble that came on her Margaret was a winsome lass, singing like a lark from morning till night. Maybe we spoiled her a little — maybe we gave her too much of her own way.

"Well, Master, you have heard the story of her marriage to Ronald Fraser and what came after, so I need not go into that. I know, or used to know Elizabeth Williamson well, and I know that whatever she told you would be the truth and nothing more or less than the truth.

"Our father was a very proud man. Oh, Master, if Margaret was too proud she got it from no stranger. And her misfortune cut him to the heart. He

never spoke a word to us here for more than three days after he heard of it. He sat in the corner there with bowed head and would not touch bite or sup. He had not been very willing for her to marry Ronald Fraser; and when she came home in disgrace she had not set foot over the threshold before he broke out railing at her. Oh, I can see her there at the door this very minute, Master, pale and trembling, clinging to Thomas's arm, her great eyes changing from sorrow and shame to wrath. It was just at sunset and a red ray came in at the window and fell right across her breast like a stain of blood.

“Father called her a hard name, Master. Oh, he was too hard — even though he was my father I must say he was too hard on her, brokenhearted as she was, and guilty of nothing more after all than a little willfulness in the matter of her marriage.

“And father was sorry for it — Oh, Master, the word wasn't out of his mouth before he was sorry for it. But the mischief was done. Oh, I'll never forget Margaret's face, Master! It haunts me yet in the black of the night. It was full of anger and rebellion and defiance. But she never answered him back. She clenched her hands and went up to her old room without saying a word, all those mad feelings surging in her soul, and being held back from speech by her sheer, stubborn will. And, Master, never a word did Margaret say from that day until after Kilmeny was born — not one word, Master. Nothing we could do for her softened her. And we were kind to her, Master, and gentle with her, and never reproached her by so much as a look. But she would not speak to anyone. She just sat in her room most of the time and stared at the wall with such awful eyes. Father implored her to speak and forgive him, but she never gave any sign that she heard him.

“I haven't come to the worst yet, Master. Father sickened and took to his bed. Margaret would not go in to see him. Then one night Thomas and I were watching by him; it was about eleven o'clock. All at once he said,

“‘Janet, go up and tell the lass' — he always called Margaret that — it was a kind of pet name he had for her—'that I'm deein' and ask her to come down and speak to me afore I'm gone.'”

“Master, I went. Margaret was sitting in her room all alone in the cold and dark, staring at the wall. I told her what our father had said. She never let on she heard me. I pleaded and wept, Master. I did what I had never done to any human creature — I kneeled to her and begged her, as she hoped for mercy herself, to come down and see our dying father. Master, she wouldn’t! She never moved or looked at me. I had to get up and go downstairs and tell that old man she would not come.”

Janet Gordon lifted her hands and struck them together in her agony of remembrance.

“When I told father he only said, oh, so gently,

“‘Poor lass, I was too hard on her. She isna to blame. But I canna go to meet her mother till our little lass has forgie’n me for the name I called her. Thomas, help me up. Since she winna come to me I must e’en go to her.’

“There was no crossing him — we saw that. He got up from his deathbed and Thomas helped him out into the hall and up the stair. I walked behind with the candle. Oh, Master, I’ll never forget it — the awful shadows and the storm wind wailing outside, and father’s gasping breath. But we got him to Margaret’s room and he stood before her, trembling, with his white hairs falling about his sunken face. And he prayed Margaret to forgive him — to forgive him and speak just one word to him before he went to meet her mother. Master” — Janet’s voice rose almost to a shriek—”she would not — she would not! And yet she WANTED to speak — afterwards she confessed to me that she wanted to speak. But her stubbornness wouldn’t let her. It was like some evil power that had gripped hold of her and wouldn’t let go. Father might as well have pleaded with a graven image. Oh, it was hard and dreadful! She saw her father die and she never spoke the word he prayed for to him. THAT was her sin, Master, — and for that sin the curse fell on her unborn child. When father understood that she would not speak he closed his eyes and was like to have fallen if Thomas had not caught him.

“‘Oh, lass, you’re a hard woman,’ was all he said. And they were his last words. Thomas and I carried him back to his room, but the breath was

gone from him before we ever got him there.

“Well, Master, Kilmeny was born a month afterwards, and when Margaret felt her baby at her breast the evil thing that had held her soul in its bondage lost its power. She spoke and wept and was herself again. Oh, how she wept! She implored us to forgive her and we did freely and fully. But the one against whom she had sinned most grievously was gone, and no word of forgiveness could come to her from the grave. My poor sister never knew peace of conscience again, Master. But she was gentle and kind and humble until — until she began to fear that Kilmeny was never going to speak. We thought then that she would go out of her mind. Indeed, Master, she never was quite right again.

“But that is the story and it’s a thankful woman I am that the telling of it is done. Kilmeny can’t speak because her mother wouldn’t.”

Eric had listened with a gray horror on his face to the gruesome tale. The black tragedy of it appalled him — the tragedy of that merciless law, the most cruel and mysterious thing in God’s universe, which ordains that the sin of the guilty shall be visited on the innocent. Fight against it as he would, the miserable conviction stole into his heart that Kilmeny’s case was indeed beyond the reach of any human skill.

“It is a dreadful tale,” he said moodily, getting up and walking restlessly to and fro in the dim spruce-shadowed old kitchen where they were. “And if it is true that her mother’s willful silence caused Kilmeny’s dumbness, I fear, as you say, that we cannot help her. But you may be mistaken. It may have been nothing more than a strange coincidence. Possibly something may be done for her. At all events, we must try. I have a friend in Queenslea who is a physician. His name is David Baker, and he is a very skilful specialist in regard to the throat and voice. I shall have him come here and see Kilmeny.”

“Have your way,” assented Janet in the hopeless tone which she might have used in giving him permission to attempt any impossible thing.

“It will be necessary to tell Dr. Baker why Kilmeny cannot speak — or why you think she cannot.”

Janet's face twitched.

"Must that be, Master? Oh, it's a bitter tale to tell a stranger."

"Don't be afraid. I shall tell him nothing that is not strictly necessary to his proper understanding of the case. It will be quite enough to say that Kilmeny may be dumb because for several months before her birth her mother's mind was in a very morbid condition, and she preserved a stubborn and unbroken silence because of a certain bitter personal resentment."

"Well, do as you think best, Master."

Janet plainly had no faith in the possibility of anything being done for Kilmeny. But a rosy glow of hope flashed over Kilmeny's face when Eric told her what he meant to do.

"Oh, do you think he can make me speak?" she wrote eagerly.

"I don't know, Kilmeny. I hope that he can, and I know he will do all that mortal skill can do. If he can remove your defect will you promise to marry me, dearest?"

She nodded. The grave little motion had the solemnity of a sacred promise.

"Yes," she wrote, "when I can speak like other women I will marry you."

CHAPTER XVI.

DAVID BAKER'S OPINION

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The next week David Baker came to Lindsay. He arrived in the afternoon when Eric was in school. When the latter came home he found that David had, in the space of an hour, captured Mrs. Williamson's heart, wormed himself into the good graces of Timothy, and become hail-fellow-well-met with old Robert. But he looked curiously at Eric when the two young men found themselves alone in the upstairs room.

"Now, Eric, I want to know what all this is about. What scrape have you got into? You write me a letter, entreating me in the name of friendship to come to you at once. Accordingly I come post haste. You seem to be in excellent health yourself. Explain why you have inveigled me hither."

"I want you to do me a service which only you can do, David," said Eric quietly. "I didn't care to go into the details by letter. I have met in Lindsay a young girl whom I have learned to love. I have asked her to marry me, but, although she cares for me, she refuses to do so because she is dumb. I wish you to examine her and find out the cause of her defect, and if it can be cured. She can hear perfectly and all her other faculties are entirely normal. In order that you may better understand the case I must tell you the main facts of her history."

This Eric proceeded to do. David Baker listened with grave attention, his eyes fastened on his friend's face. He did not betray the surprise and dismay he felt at learning that Eric had fallen in love with a dumb girl of doubtful antecedents; and the strange case enlisted his professional interest. When he had heard the whole story he thrust his hands into his pockets and strode up and down the room several times in silence. Finally he halted before Eric.

“So you have done what I foreboded all along you would do — left your common sense behind you when you went courting.”

“If I did,” said Eric quietly, “I took with me something better and nobler than common sense.”

David shrugged his shoulders.

“You’ll have hard work to convince me of that, Eric.”

“No, it will not be difficult at all. I have one argument that will convince you speedily — and that is Kilmeny Gordon herself. But we will not discuss the matter of my wisdom or lack of it just now. What I want to know is this — what do you think of the case as I have stated it to you?”

David frowned thoughtfully.

“I hardly know what to think. It is very curious and unusual, but it is not totally unprecedented. There have been cases on record where pre-natal influences have produced a like result. I cannot just now remember whether any were ever cured. Well, I’ll see if anything can be done for this girl. I cannot express any further opinion until I have examined her.”

The next morning Eric took David up to the Gordon homestead. As they approached the old orchard a strain of music came floating through the resinous morning arcades of the spruce wood — a wild, sorrowful, appealing cry, full of indescribable pathos, yet marvelously sweet.

“What is that?” exclaimed David, starting.

“That is Kilmeny playing on her violin,” answered Eric. “She has great talent in that respect and improvises wonderful melodies.”

When they reached the orchard Kilmeny rose from the old bench to meet them, her lovely luminous eyes distended, her face flushed with the excitement of mingled hope and fear.

“Oh, ye gods!” muttered David helplessly.

He could not hide his amazement and Eric smiled to see it. The latter had not failed to perceive that his friend had until now considered him as little better than a lunatic.

“Kilmeny, this is my friend, Dr. Baker,” he said.

Kilmeny held out her hand with a smile. Her beauty, as she stood there in the fresh morning sunshine beside a clump of her sister lilies, was something to take away a man’s breath. David, who was by no means lacking in confidence and generally had a ready tongue where women were concerned, found himself as mute and awkward as a school boy, as he bowed over her hand.

But Kilmeny was charmingly at ease. There was not a trace of embarrassment in her manner, though there was a pretty shyness. Eric smiled as he recalled HIS first meeting with her. He suddenly realized how far Kilmeny had come since then and how much she had developed.

With a little gesture of invitation Kilmeny led the way through the orchard to the wild cherry lane, and the two men followed.

“Eric, she is simply unutterable!” said David in an undertone. “Last night, to tell you the truth, I had a rather poor opinion of your sanity. But now I am consumed with a fierce envy. She is the loveliest creature I ever saw.”

Eric introduced David to the Gordons and then hurried away to his school. On his way down the Gordon lane he met Neil and was half startled by the glare of hatred in the Italian boy’s eyes. Pity succeeded the momentary alarm. Neil’s face had grown thin and haggard; his eyes were sunken and feverishly bright; he looked years older than on the day when Eric had first seen him in the brook hollow.

Prompted by sudden compassionate impulse Eric stopped and held out his hand.

“Neil, can’t we be friends?” he said. “I am sorry if I have been the cause of inflicting pain on you.”

“Friends! Never!” said Neil passionately. “You have taken Kilmeny from me. I shall hate you always. And I’ll be even with you yet.”

He strode fiercely up the lane, and Eric, with a shrug of his shoulders, went on his way, dismissing the meeting from his mind.

The day seemed interminably long to him. David had not returned when he went home to dinner; but when he went to his room in the evening he found his friend there, staring out of the window.

“Well,” he said, impatiently, as David wheeled around but still kept silence, “What have you to say to me? Don’t keep me in suspense any longer, David. I have endured all I can. To-day has seemed like a thousand years. Have you discovered what is the matter with Kilmeny?”

“There is nothing the matter with her,” answered David slowly, flinging himself into a chair by the window.

“What do you mean?”

“Just exactly what I say. Her vocal organs are all perfect. As far as they are concerned, there is absolutely no reason why she should not speak.”

“Then why can’t she speak? Do you think — do you think—”

“I think that I cannot express my conclusion in any better words than Janet Gordon used when she said that Kilmeny cannot speak because her mother wouldn’t. That is all there is to it. The trouble is psychological, not physical. Medical skill is helpless before it. There are greater men than I in my profession; but it is my honest belief, Eric, that if you were to consult them they would tell you just what I have told you, neither more nor less.”

“Then there is no hope,” said Eric in a tone of despair. “You can do nothing for her?”

David took from the back of his chair a crochet antimacassar with a lion rampant in the center and spread it over his knee.

“I can do nothing for her,” he said, scowling at that work of art. “I do not believe any living man can do anything for her. But I do not say — exactly — that there is no hope.”

“Come, David, I am in no mood for guessing riddles. Speak plainly, man, and don’t torment me.”

David frowned dubiously and poked his finger through the hole which represented the eye of the king of beasts.

“I don’t know that I can make it plain to you. It isn’t very plain to myself. And it is only a vague theory of mine, of course. I cannot substantiate it by any facts. In short, Eric, I think it is possible that Kilmeny may speak sometime — if she ever wants it badly enough.”

“Wants to! Why, man, she wants to as badly as it is possible for any one to want anything. She loves me with all her heart and she won’t marry me because she can’t speak. Don’t you suppose that a girl under such circumstances would ‘want’ to speak as much as any one could?”

“Yes, but I do not mean that sort of wanting, no matter how strong the wish may be. What I do mean is — a sudden, vehement, passionate inrush of desire, physical, psychical, mental, all in one, mighty enough to rend asunder the invisible fetters that hold her speech in bondage. If any occasion should arise to evoke such a desire I believe that Kilmeny would speak — and having once spoken would thenceforth be normal in that respect — ay, if she spoke but the one word.”

“All this sounds like great nonsense to me,” said Eric restlessly. “I suppose you have an idea what you are talking about, but I haven’t. And, in any case, it practically means that there is no hope for her — or me. Even if your theory is correct it is not likely such an occasion as you speak of will ever arise. And Kilmeny will never marry me.”

“Don’t give up so easily, old fellow. There HAVE been cases on record where women have changed their minds.”

“Not women like Kilmeny,” said Eric miserably. “I tell you she has all her mother’s unfaltering will and tenacity of purpose, although she is free from any taint of pride or selfishness. I thank you for your sympathy and interest, David. You have done all you could — but, heavens, what it would have meant to me if you could have helped her!”

With a groan Eric flung himself on a chair and buried his face in his hands. It was a moment which held for him all the bitterness of death. He had thought that he was prepared for disappointment; he had not known how strong his hope had really been until that hope was utterly taken from him.

David, with a sigh, returned the crochet antimacassar carefully to its place on the chair back.

“Eric, last night, to be honest, I thought that, if I found I could not help this girl, it would be the best thing that could happen, as far as you were concerned. But since I have seen her — well, I would give my right hand if I could do anything for her. She is the wife for you, if we could make her speak; yes, and by the memory of your mother” — David brought his fist down on the window sill with a force that shook the casement,—”she is the wife for you, speech or no speech, if we could only convince her of it.”

“She cannot be convinced of that. No, David, I have lost her. Did you tell her what you have told me?”

“I told her I could not help her. I did not say anything to her of my theory — that would have done no good.”

“How did she take it?”

“Very bravely and quietly—’like a winsome lady’. But the look in her eyes — Eric, I felt as if I had murdered something. She bade me goodbye with a pitiful smile and went upstairs. I did not see her again, although I stayed to dinner as her uncle’s request. Those old Gordons are a queer pair. I liked them, though. They are strong and staunch — good friends, bitter enemies. They were sorry that I could not help Kilmeny, but I saw plainly that old Thomas Gordon thought that I had been meddling with predestination in attempting it.”

Eric smiled mechanically.

“I must go up and see Kilmeny. You’ll excuse me, won’t you, David? My books are there — help yourself.”

But when Eric reached the Gordon house he saw only old Janet, who told him that Kilmeny was in her room and refused to see him.

“She thought you would come up, and she left this with me to give you, Master.”

Janet handed him a little note. It was very brief and blotted with tears.

“Do not come any more, Eric,” it ran. “I must not see you, because it would only make it harder for us both. You must go away and forget me. You will be thankful for this some day. I shall always love and pray for you.”

“KILMENY.”

“I MUST see her,” said Eric desperately. “Aunt Janet, be my friend. Tell her she must see me for a little while at least.”

Janet shook her head but went upstairs. She soon returned.

“She says she cannot come down. You know she means it, Master, and it is of no use to coax her. And I must say I think she is right. Since she will not marry you it is better for her not to see you.”

Eric was compelled to go home with no better comfort than this. In the morning, as it was Sunday, he drove David Baker to the station. He had not slept and he looked so miserable and reckless that David felt anxious about him. David would have stayed in Lindsay for a few days, but a certain critical case in Queenslea demanded his speedy return. He shook hands with Eric on the station platform.

“Eric, give up that school and come home at once. You can do no good in Lindsay now, and you’ll only eat your heart out here.”

“I must see Kilmeny once more before I leave,” was all Eric’s answer.

That afternoon he went again to the Gordon homestead. But the result was the same; Kilmeny refused to see him, and Thomas Gordon said gravely,

“Master, you know I like you and I am sorry Kilmeny thinks as she does, though maybe she is right. I would be glad to see you often for your own sake and I’ll miss you much; but as things are I tell you plainly you’d better not come here any more. It will do no good, and the sooner you and she get over thinking about each other the better for you both. Go now, lad, and God bless you.”

“Do you know what it is you are asking of me?” said Eric hoarsely.

“I know I am asking a hard thing for your own good, Master. It is not as if Kilmeny would ever change her mind. We have had some experience with a woman’s will ere this. Tush, Janet, woman, don’t be weeping. You women are foolish creatures. Do you think tears can wash such things away? No, they cannot blot out sin, or the consequences of sin. It’s awful how one sin can spread out and broaden, till it eats into innocent lives, sometimes long after the sinner has gone to his own accounting. Master, if you take my advice, you’ll give up the Lindsay school and go back to your own world as soon as may be.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A BROKEN FETTER

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Eric went home with a white, haggard face. He had never thought it was possible for a man to suffer as he suffered then. What was he to do? It seemed impossible to go on with life — there was NO life apart from Kilmeny. Anguish wrung his soul until his strength went from him and youth and hope turned to gall and bitterness in his heart.

He never afterwards could tell how he lived through the following Sunday or how he taught school as usual on Monday. He found out how much a man may suffer and yet go on living and working. His body seemed to him an automaton that moved and spoke mechanically, while his tortured spirit, pent-up within, endured pain that left its impress on him for ever. Out of that fiery furnace of agony Eric Marshall was to go forth a man who had put boyhood behind him for ever and looked out on life with eyes that saw into it and beyond.

On Tuesday afternoon there was a funeral in the district and, according to custom, the school was closed. Eric went again to the old orchard. He had no expectation of seeing Kilmeny there, for he thought she would avoid the spot lest she might meet him. But he could not keep away from it, although the thought of it was an added torment, and he vibrated between a wild wish that he might never see it again, and a sick wonder how he could possibly go away and leave it — that strange old orchard where he had met and wooed his sweetheart, watching her develop and blossom under his eyes, like some rare flower, until in the space of three short months she had passed from exquisite childhood into still more exquisite womanhood.

As he crossed the pasture field before the spruce wood he came upon Neil Gordon, building a longer fence. Neil did not look up as Eric passed, but sullenly went on driving poles. Before this Eric had pitied Neil; now he

was conscious of feeling sympathy with him. Had Neil suffered as he was suffering? Eric had entered into a new fellowship whereof the passport was pain.

The orchard was very silent and dreamy in the thick, deep tinted sunshine of the September afternoon, a sunshine which seemed to possess the power of extracting the very essence of all the odours which summer has stored up in wood and field. There were few flowers now; most of the lilies, which had queened it so bravely along the central path a few days before, were withered. The grass had become ragged and sere and unkempt. But in the corners the torches of the goldenrod were kindling and a few misty purple asters nodded here and there. The orchard kept its own strange attractiveness, as some women with youth long passed still preserve an atmosphere of remembered beauty and innate, indestructible charm.

Eric walked drearily and carelessly about it, and finally sat down on a half fallen fence panel in the shadow of the overhanging spruce boughs. There he gave himself up to a reverie, poignant and bitter sweet, in which he lived over again everything that had passed in the orchard since his first meeting there with Kilmeny.

So deep was his abstraction that he was conscious of nothing around him. He did not hear stealthy footsteps behind him in the dim spruce wood. He did not even see Kilmeny as she came slowly around the curve of the wild cherry lane.

Kilmeny had sought the old orchard for the healing of her heartbreak, if healing were possible for her. She had no fear of encountering Eric there at that time of day, for she did not know that it was the district custom to close the school for a funeral. She would never have gone to it in the evening, but she longed for it continually; it, and her memories, were all that was left her now.

Years seemed to have passed over the girl in those few days. She had drunk of pain and broken bread with sorrow. Her face was pale and strained, with bluish, transparent shadows under her large wistful eyes, out of which the dream and laughter of girlhood had gone, but into which had come the potent charm of grief and patience. Thomas Gordon had shaken

his head bodingly when he had looked at her that morning at the breakfast table.

“She won’t stand it,” he thought. “She isn’t long for this world. Maybe it is all for the best, poor lass. But I wish that young Master had never set foot in the Connors orchard, or in this house. Margaret, Margaret, it’s hard that your child should have to be paying the reckoning of a sin that was sinned before her birth.”

Kilmeny walked through the lane slowly and absently like a woman in a dream. When she came to the gap in the fence where the lane ran into the orchard she lifted her wan, drooping face and saw Eric, sitting in the shadow of the wood at the other side of the orchard with his bowed head in his hands. She stopped quickly and the blood rushed wildly over her face.

The next moment it ebbed, leaving her white as marble. Horror filled her eyes, — blank, deadly horror, as the livid shadow of a cloud might fill two blue pools.

Behind Eric Neil Gordon was standing tense, crouched, murderous. Even at that distance Kilmeny saw the look on his face, saw what he held in his hand, and realized in one agonized flash of comprehension what it meant.

All this photographed itself in her brain in an instant. She knew that by the time she could run across the orchard to warn Eric by a touch it would be too late. Yet she must warn him — she MUST — she MUST! A mighty surge of desire seemed to rise up within her and overwhelm her like a wave of the sea, — a surge that swept everything before it in an irresistible flood. As Neil Gordon swiftly and vindictively, with the face of a demon, lifted the axe he held in his hand, Kilmeny sprang forward through the gap.

“ERIC, ERIC, LOOK BEHIND YOU — LOOK BEHIND YOU!”

Eric started up, confused, bewildered, as the voice came shrieking across the orchard. He did not in the least realize that it was Kilmeny who had called to him, but he instinctively obeyed the command.

He wheeled around and saw Neil Gordon, who was looking, not at him, but past him at Kilmeny. The Italian boy's face was ashen and his eyes were filled with terror and incredulity, as if he had been checked in his murderous purpose by some supernatural interposition. The axe, lying at his feet where he had dropped it in his unutterable consternation on hearing Kilmeny's cry told the whole tale. But before Eric could utter a word Neil turned, with a cry more like that of an animal than a human being, and fled like a hunted creature into the shadow of the spruce wood.

A moment later Kilmeny, her lovely face dewed with tears and sunned over with smiles, flung herself on Eric's breast.

“Oh, Eric, I can speak, — I can speak! Oh, it is so wonderful!
Eric, I love you — I love you!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEIL GORDON SOLVES HIS OWN PROBLEM

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“It is a miracle!” said Thomas Gordon in an awed tone.

It was the first time he had spoken since Eric and Kilmeny had rushed in, hand in hand, like two children intoxicated with joy and wonder, and gasped out their story together to him and Janet.

“Oh, no, it is very wonderful, but it is not a miracle,” said Eric. “David told me it might happen. I had no hope that it would. He could explain it all to you if he were here.”

Thomas Gordon shook his head. “I doubt if he could, Master — he, or any one else. It is near enough to a miracle for me. Let us thank God reverently and humbly that he has seen fit to remove his curse from the innocent. Your doctors may explain it as they like, lad, but I’m thinking they won’t get much nearer to it than that. It is awesome, that is what it is. Janet, woman, I feel as if I were in a dream. Can Kilmeny really speak?”

“Indeed I can, Uncle,” said Kilmeny, with a rapturous glance at Eric. “Oh, I don’t know how it came to me — I felt that I **MUST** speak — and I did. And it is so easy now — it seems to me as if I could always have done it.”

She spoke naturally and easily. The only difficulty which she seemed to experience was in the proper modulation of her voice. Occasionally she pitched it too high — again, too low. But it was evident that she would soon acquire perfect control of it. It was a beautiful voice — very clear and soft and musical.

“Oh, I am so glad that the first word I said was your name, dearest,” she murmured to Eric.

“What about Neil?” asked Thomas Gordon gravely, rousing himself with an effort from his abstraction of wonder. “What are we to do with him when he returns? In one way this is a sad business.”

Eric had almost forgotten about Neil in his overwhelming amazement and joy. The realization of his escape from sudden and violent death had not yet had any opportunity to take possession of his thoughts.

“We must forgive him, Mr. Gordon. I know how I should feel towards a man who took Kilmeny from me. It was an evil impulse to which he gave way in his suffering — and think of the good which has resulted from it.”

“That is true, Master, but it does not alter the terrible fact that the boy had murder in his heart, — that he would have killed you. An overruling Providence has saved him from the actual commission of the crime and brought good out of evil; but he is guilty in thought and purpose. And we have cared for him and instructed him as our own — with all his faults we have loved him! It is a hard thing, and I do not see what we are to do. We cannot act as if nothing had happened. We can never trust him again.”

But Neil Gordon solved the problem himself. When Eric returned that night he found old Robert Williamson in the pantry regaling himself with a lunch of bread and cheese after a trip to the station. Timothy sat on the dresser in black velvet state and gravely addressed himself to the disposal of various tidbits that came his way.

“Good night, Master. Glad to see you’re looking more like yourself. I told the wife it was only a lover’s quarrel most like. She’s been worrying about you; but she didn’t like to ask you what was the trouble. She ain’t one of them unfortunate folks who can’t be happy athout they’re everlasting poking their noses into other people’s business. But what kind of a rumpus was kicked up at the Gordon place, tonight, Master?”

Eric looked amazed. What could Robert Williamson have heard so soon?

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Why, us folks at the station knew there must have been a to-do of some kind when Neil Gordon went off on the harvest excursion the way he did.”

“Neil gone! On the harvest excursion!” exclaimed Eric.

“Yes, sir. You know this was the night the excursion train left. They cross on the boat tonight — special trip. There was a dozen or so fellows from hereabouts went. We was all standing around chatting when Lincoln Frame drove up full speed and Neil jumped out of his rig. Just bolted into the office, got his ticket and out again, and on to the train without a word to any one, and as black looking as the Old Scratch himself. We was all too surprised to speak till he was gone. Lincoln couldn’t give us much information. He said Neil had rushed up to their place about dark, looking as if the constable was after him, and offered to sell that black filly of his to Lincoln for sixty dollars if Lincoln would drive him to the station in time to catch the excursion train. The filly was Neil’s own, and Lincoln had been wanting to buy her but Neil would never hear to it afore. Lincoln jumped at the chance. Neil had brought the filly with him, and Lincoln hitched right up and took him to the station. Neil hadn’t no luggage of any kind and wouldn’t open his mouth the whole way up, Lincoln says. We concluded him and old Thomas must have had a row. D’ye know anything about it? Or was you so wrapped up in sweethearting that you didn’t hear or see nothing else?”

Eric reflected rapidly. He was greatly relieved to find that Neil had gone. He would never return and this was best for all concerned. Old Robert must be told a part of the truth at least, since it would soon become known that Kilmeny could speak.

“There was some trouble at the Gordon place tonight, Mr. Williamson,” he said quietly. “Neil Gordon behaved rather badly and frightened Kilmeny terribly, — so terribly that a very surprising thing has happened. She has found herself able to speak, and can speak perfectly.”

Old Robert laid down the piece of cheese he was conveying to his mouth on the point of a knife and stared at Eric in blank amazement.

“God bless my soul, Master, what an extraordinary thing!” he ejaculated. “Are you in earnest? Or are you trying to see how much of a fool you can make of the old man?”

“No, Mr. Williamson, I assure you it is no more than the simple truth. Dr. Baker told me that a shock might cure her, — and it has. As for Neil, he has gone, no doubt for good, and I think it well that he has.”

Not caring to discuss the matter further, Eric left the kitchen. But as he mounted the stairs to his room he heard old Robert muttering, like a man in hopeless bewilderment,

“Well, I never heard anything like this in all my born days — never — never. Timothy, did YOU ever hear the like? Them Gordons are an unaccountable lot and no mistake. They couldn’t act like other people if they tried. I must wake mother up and tell her about this, or I’ll never be able to sleep.”

CHAPTER XIX.

VICTOR FROM VANQUISHED ISSUES

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Now that everything was settled Eric wished to give up teaching and go back to his own place. True, he had “signed papers” to teach the school for a year; but he knew that the trustees would let him off if he procured a suitable substitute. He resolved to teach until the fall vacation, which came in October, and then go. Kilmeny had promised that their marriage should take place in the following spring. Eric had pleaded for an earlier date, but Kilmeny was sweetly resolute, and Thomas and Janet agreed with her.

“There are so many things that I must learn yet before I shall be ready to be married,” Kilmeny had said. “And I want to get accustomed to seeing people. I feel a little frightened yet whenever I see any one I don’t know, although I don’t think I show it. I am going to church with Uncle and Aunt after this, and to the Missionary Society meetings. And Uncle Thomas says that he will send me to a boarding school in town this winter if you think it advisable.”

Eric vetoed this promptly. The idea of Kilmeny in a boarding school was something that could not be thought about without laughter.

“I can’t see why she can’t learn all she needs to learn after she is married to me, just as well as before,” he grumbled to her uncle and aunt.

“But we want to keep her with us for another winter yet,” explained Thomas Gordon patiently. “We are going to miss her terrible when she does go, Master. She has never been away from us for a day — she is all the brightness there is in our lives. It is very kind of you to say that she can come home whenever she likes, but there will be a great difference. She will belong to your world and not to ours. That is for the best — and

we wouldn't have it otherwise. But let us keep her as our own for this one winter yet."

Eric yielded with the best grace he could muster. After all, he reflected, Lindsay was not so far from Queenslea, and there were such things as boats and trains.

"Have you told your father about all this yet?" asked Janet anxiously.

No, he had not. But he went home and wrote a full account of his summer to old Mr. Marshall that night.

Mr. Marshall, Senior, answered the letter in person. A few days later, Eric, coming home from school, found his father sitting in Mrs. Williamson's prim, fleckless parlour. Nothing was said about Eric's letter, however, until after tea. When they found themselves alone, Mr. Marshall said abruptly,

"Eric, what about this girl? I hope you haven't gone and made a fool of yourself. It sounds remarkably like it. A girl that has been dumb all her life — a girl with no right to her father's name — a country girl brought up in a place like Lindsay! Your wife will have to fill your mother's place, — and your mother was a pearl among women. Do you think this girl is worthy of it? It isn't possible! You've been led away by a pretty face and dairy maid freshness. I expected some trouble out of this freak of yours coming over here to teach school."

"Wait until you see Kilmeny, father," said Eric, smiling.

"Humph! That's just exactly what David Baker said. I went straight to him when I got your letter, for I knew that there was some connection between it and that mysterious visit of his over here, concerning which I never could drag a word out of him by hook or crook. And all HE said was, 'Wait until you see Kilmeny Gordon, sir.' Well, I WILL wait till I see her, but I shall look at her with the eyes of sixty-five, mind you, not the eyes of twenty-four. And if she isn't what your wife ought to be, sir, you give her up or paddle your own canoe. I shall not aid or abet you in making a fool of yourself and spoiling your life."

Eric bit his lip, but only said quietly,

“Come with me, father. We will go to see her now.”

They went around by way of the main road and the Gordon lane.
Kilmeny was not in when they reached the house.

“She is up in the old orchard, Master,” said Janet. “She loves that place so much she spends all her spare time there. She likes to go there to study.”

They sat down and talked awhile with Thomas and Janet. When they left, Mr. Marshall said,

“I like those people. If Thomas Gordon had been a man like Robert Williamson I shouldn’t have waited to see your Kilmeny. But they are all right — rugged and grim, but of good stock and pith — native refinement and strong character. But I must say candidly that I hope your young lady hasn’t got her aunt’s mouth.”

“Kilmeny’s mouth is like a love-song made incarnate in sweet flesh,” said Eric enthusiastically.

“Humph!” said Mr. Marshall. “Well,” he added more tolerantly, a moment later, “I was a poet, too, for six months in my life when I was courting your mother.”

Kilmeny was reading on the bench under the lilac trees when they reached the orchard. She stood up and came shyly forward to meet them, guessing who the tall, white-haired old gentleman with Eric must be. As she approached Eric saw with a thrill of exultation that she had never looked lovelier. She wore a dress of her favourite blue, simply and quaintly made, as all her gowns were, revealing the perfect lines of her lithe, slender figure. Her glossy black hair was wound about her head in a braided coronet, against which a spray of wild asters shone like pale purple stars. Her face was flushed delicately with excitement. She looked like a young princess, crowned with a ruddy splash of sunlight that fell through the old trees.

“Father, this is Kilmeny,” said Eric proudly.

Kilmeny held out her hand with a shyly murmured greeting. Mr. Marshall took it and held it in his, looking so steadily and piercingly into her face that even her frank gaze wavered before the intensity of his keen old eyes. Then he drew her to him and kissed her gravely and gently on her white forehead.

“My dear,” he said, “I am glad and proud that you have consented to be my son’s wife — and my very dear and honoured daughter.”

Eric turned abruptly away to hide his emotion and on his face was a light as of one who sees a great glory widening and deepening down the vista of his future.

THE END

CHRONICLES OF AVONL EA (1912)

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TO THE MEMORY OF

Mrs. William A. Houston,

A DEAR FRIEND, WHO HAS GONE BEYOND

The unsung beauty hid

life's common things below.

— Whittier

The Hurrying of Ludovic

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Anne Shirley was curled up on the window-seat of Theodora Dix's sitting-room one Saturday evening, looking dreamily afar at some fair starland beyond the hills of sunset. Anne was visiting for a fortnight of her vacation at Echo Lodge, where Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Irving were spending the summer, and she often ran over to the old Dix homestead to chat for awhile with Theodora. They had had their chat out, on this particular evening, and Anne was giving herself over to the delight of building an air-castle. She leaned her shapely head, with its braided coronet of dark red hair, against the window-casing, and her gray eyes were like the moonlight gleam of shadowy pools.

Then she saw Ludovic Speed coming down the lane. He was yet far from the house, for the Dix lane was a long one, but Ludovic could be recognized as far as he could be seen. No one else in Middle Grafton had such a tall, gently-stooping, placidly-moving figure. In every kink and turn of it there was an individuality all Ludovic's own.

Anne roused herself from her dreams, thinking it would only be tactful to take her departure. Ludovic was courting Theodora. Everyone in Grafton knew that, or, if anyone were in ignorance of the fact, it was not because he had not had time to find out. Ludovic had been coming down that lane to see Theodora, in the same ruminating, unhastening fashion, for fifteen years!

When Anne, who was slim and girlish and romantic, rose to go, Theodora, who was plump and middle-aged and practical, said, with a twinkle in her eye:

"There isn't any hurry, child. Sit down and have your call out. You've seen Ludovic coming down the lane, and, I suppose, you think you'll be a crowd. But you won't. Ludovic rather likes a third person around, and so

do I. It spurs up the conversation as it were. When a man has been coming to see you straight along, twice a week for fifteen years, you get rather talked out by spells.”

Theodora never pretended to bashfulness where Ludovic was concerned. She was not at all shy of referring to him and his dilatory courtship. Indeed, it seemed to amuse her.

Anne sat down again and together they watched Ludovic coming down the lane, gazing calmly about him at the lush clover fields and the blue loops of the river winding in and out of the misty valley below.

Anne looked at Theodora’s placid, finely-moulded face and tried to imagine what she herself would feel like if she were sitting there, waiting for an elderly lover who had, seemingly, taken so long to make up his mind. But even Anne’s imagination failed her for this.

“Anyway,” she thought, impatiently, “if I wanted him I think I’d find some way of hurrying him up. Ludovic SPEED! Was there ever such a misfit of a name? Such a name for such a man is a delusion and a snare.”

Presently Ludovic got to the house, but stood so long on the doorstep in a brown study, gazing into the tangled green boskage of the cherry orchard, that Theodora finally went and opened the door before he knocked. As she brought him into the sitting-room she made a comical grimace at Anne over his shoulder.

Ludovic smiled pleasantly at Anne. He liked her; she was the only young girl he knew, for he generally avoided young girls — they made him feel awkward and out of place. But Anne did not affect him in this fashion. She had a way of getting on with all sorts of people, and, although they had not known her very long, both Ludovic and Theodora looked upon her as an old friend.

Ludovic was tall and somewhat ungainly, but his unhesitating placidity gave him the appearance of a dignity that did not otherwise pertain to him. He had a drooping, silky, brown moustache, and a little curly tuft of imperial, — a fashion which was regarded as eccentric in Grafton, where

men had clean-shaven chins or went full-bearded. His eyes were dreamy and pleasant, with a touch of melancholy in their blue depths.

He sat down in the big bulgy old armchair that had belonged to Theodora's father. Ludovic always sat there, and Anne declared that the chair had come to look like him.

The conversation soon grew animated enough. Ludovic was a good talker when he had somebody to draw him out. He was well read, and frequently surprised Anne by his shrewd comments on men and matters out in the world, of which only the faint echoes reached Deland River. He had also a liking for religious arguments with Theodora, who did not care much for politics or the making of history, but was avid of doctrines, and read everything pertaining thereto. When the conversation drifted into an eddy of friendly wrangling between Ludovic and Theodora over Christian Science, Anne understood that her usefulness was ended for the time being, and that she would not be missed.

"It's star time and goodnight time," she said, and went away quietly.

But she had to stop to laugh when she was well out of sight of the house, in a green meadow bestarred with the white and gold of daisies. A wind, odour-freighted, blew daintily across it. Anne leaned against a white birch tree in the corner and laughed heartily, as she was apt to do whenever she thought of Ludovic and Theodora. To her eager youth, this courtship of theirs seemed a very amusing thing. She liked Ludovic, but allowed herself to be provoked with him.

"The dear, big, irritating goose!" she said aloud. "There never was such a lovable idiot before. He's just like the alligator in the old rhyme, who wouldn't go along, and wouldn't keep still, but just kept bobbing up and down."

Two evenings later, when Anne went over to the Dix place, she and Theodora drifted into a conversation about Ludovic. Theodora, who was the most industrious soul alive, and had a mania for fancy work into the bargain, was busying her smooth, plump fingers with a very elaborate Battenburg lace centrepiece. Anne was lying back in a little rocker, with

her slim hands folded in her lap, watching Theodora. She realized that Theodora was very handsome, in a stately, Juno-like fashion of firm, white flesh, large, clearly-chiselled outlines, and great, cowey, brown eyes. When Theodora was not smiling, she looked very imposing. Anne thought it likely that Ludovic held her in awe.

“Did you and Ludovic talk about Christian Science ALL Saturday evening?” she asked.

Theodora overflowed into a smile.

“Yes, and we even quarrelled over it. At least I did. Ludovic wouldn’t quarrel with anyone. You have to fight air when you spar with him. I hate to square up to a person who won’t hit back.”

“Theodora,” said Anne coaxingly, “I am going to be curious and impertinent. You can snub me if you like. Why don’t you and Ludovic get married?”

Theodora laughed comfortably.

“That’s the question Grafton folks have been asking for quite a while, I reckon, Anne. Well, I’d have no objection to marrying Ludovic. That’s frank enough for you, isn’t it? But it’s not easy to marry a man unless he asks you. And Ludovic has never asked me.”

“Is he too shy?” persisted Anne. Since Theodora was in the mood, she meant to sift this puzzling affair to the bottom.

Theodora dropped her work and looked meditatively out over the green slopes of the summer world.

“No, I don’t think it is that. Ludovic isn’t shy. It’s just his way — the Speed way. The Speeds are all dreadfully deliberate. They spend years thinking over a thing before they make up their minds to do it. Sometimes they get so much in the habit of thinking about it that they never get over it — like old Alder Speed, who was always talking of going to England to

see his brother, but never went, though there was no earthly reason why he shouldn't. They're not lazy, you know, but they love to take their time."

"And Ludovic is just an aggravated case of Speedism," suggested Anne.

"Exactly. He never hurried in his life. Why, he has been thinking for the last six years of getting his house painted. He talks it over with me every little while, and picks out the colour, and there the matter stays. He's fond of me, and he means to ask me to have him sometime. The only question is — will the time ever come?"

"Why don't you hurry him up?" asked Anne impatiently.

Theodora went back to her stitches with another laugh.

"If Ludovic could be hurried up, I'm not the one to do it. I'm too shy. It sounds ridiculous to hear a woman of my age and inches say that, but it is true. Of course, I know it's the only way any Speed ever did make out to get married. For instance, there's a cousin of mine married to Ludovic's brother. I don't say she proposed to him out and out, but, mind you, Anne, it wasn't far from it. I couldn't do anything like that. I DID try once. When I realized that I was getting sere and mellow, and all the girls of my generation were going off on either hand, I tried to give Ludovic a hint. But it stuck in my throat. And now I don't mind. If I don't change Dix to Speed until I take the initiative, it will be Dix to the end of life. Ludovic doesn't realize that we are growing old, you know. He thinks we are giddy young folks yet, with plenty of time before us. That's the Speed failing. They never find out they're alive until they're dead."

"You're fond of Ludovic, aren't you?" asked Anne, detecting a note of real bitterness among Theodora's paradoxes.

"Laws, yes," said Theodora candidly. She did not think it worth while to blush over so settled a fact. "I think the world and all of Ludovic. And he certainly does need somebody to look after HIM. He's neglected — he looks frayed. You can see that for yourself. That old aunt of his looks after his house in some fashion, but she doesn't look after him. And he's coming now to the age when a man needs to be looked after and coddled a

bit. I'm lonesome here, and Ludovic is lonesome up there, and it does seem ridiculous, doesn't it? I don't wonder that we're the standing joke of Grafton. Goodness knows, I laugh at it enough myself. I've sometimes thought that if Ludovic could be made jealous it might spur him along. But I never could flirt and there's nobody to flirt with if I could. Everybody hereabouts looks upon me as Ludovic's property and nobody would dream of interfering with him."

"Theodora," cried Anne, "I have a plan!"

"Now, what are you going to do?" exclaimed Theodora.

Anne told her. At first Theodora laughed and protested. In the end, she yielded somewhat doubtfully, overborne by Anne's enthusiasm.

"Well, try it, then," she said, resignedly. "If Ludovic gets mad and leaves me, I'll be worse off than ever. But nothing venture, nothing win. And there is a fighting chance, I suppose. Besides, I must admit I'm tired of his dilly-dallying."

Anne went back to Echo Lodge tingling with delight in her plot. She hunted up Arnold Sherman, and told him what was required of him. Arnold Sherman listened and laughed. He was an elderly widower, an intimate friend of Stephen Irving, and had come down to spend part of the summer with him and his wife in Prince Edward Island. He was handsome in a mature style, and he had a dash of mischief in him still, so that he entered readily enough into Anne's plan. It amused him to think of hurrying Ludovic Speed, and he knew that Theodora Dix could be depended on to do her part. The comedy would not be dull, whatever its outcome.

The curtain rose on the first act after prayer meeting on the next Thursday night. It was bright moonlight when the people came out of church, and everybody saw it plainly. Arnold Sherman stood upon the steps close to the door, and Ludovic Speed leaned up against a corner of the graveyard fence, as he had done for years. The boys said he had worn the paint off that particular place. Ludovic knew of no reason why he should paste himself

up against the church door. Theodora would come out as usual, and he would join her as she went past the corner.

This was what happened, Theodora came down the steps, her stately figure outlined in its darkness against the gush of lamplight from the porch. Arnold Sherman asked her if he might see her home. Theodora took his arm calmly, and together they swept past the stupefied Ludovic, who stood helplessly gazing after them as if unable to believe his eyes.

For a few moments he stood there limply; then he started down the road after his fickle lady and her new admirer. The boys and irresponsible young men crowded after, expecting some excitement, but they were disappointed. Ludovic strode on until he overtook Theodora and Arnold Sherman, and then fell meekly in behind them.

Theodora hardly enjoyed her walk home, although Arnold Sherman laid himself out to be especially entertaining. Her heart yearned after Ludovic, whose shuffling footsteps she heard behind her. She feared that she had been very cruel, but she was in for it now. She steeled herself by the reflection that it was all for his own good, and she talked to Arnold Sherman as if he were the one man in the world. Poor, deserted Ludovic, following humbly behind, heard her, and if Theodora had known how bitter the cup she was holding to his lips really was, she would never have been resolute enough to present it, no matter for what ultimate good.

When she and Arnold turned in at her gate, Ludovic had to stop. Theodora looked over her shoulder and saw him standing still on the road. His forlorn figure haunted her thoughts all night. If Anne had not run over the next day and bolstered up her convictions, she might have spoiled everything by prematurely relenting.

Ludovic, meanwhile, stood still on the road, quite oblivious to the hoots and comments of the vastly amused small boy contingent, until Theodora and his rival disappeared from his view under the firs in the hollow of her lane. Then he turned about and went home, not with his usual leisurely amble, but with a perturbed stride which proclaimed his inward disquiet.

He felt bewildered. If the world had come suddenly to an end or if the lazy, meandering Grafton River had turned about and flowed up hill, Ludovic could not have been more astonished. For fifteen years he had walked home from meetings with Theodora; and now this elderly stranger, with all the glamour of “the States” hanging about him, had coolly walked off with her under Ludovic’s very nose. Worse — most unkindest cut of all — Theodora had gone with him willingly; nay, she had evidently enjoyed his company. Ludovic felt the stirring of a righteous anger in his easygoing soul.

When he reached the end of his lane, he paused at his gate, and looked at his house, set back from the lane in a crescent of birches. Even in the moonlight, its weather-worn aspect was plainly visible. He thought of the “palatial residence” rumour ascribed to Arnold Sherman in Boston, and stroked his chin nervously with his sunburnt fingers. Then he doubled up his fist and struck it smartly on the gatepost.

“Theodora needn’t think she is going to jilt me in this fashion, after keeping company with me for fifteen years,” he said. “I’LL have something to say to it, Arnold Sherman or no Arnold Sherman. The impudence of the puppy!”

The next morning Ludovic drove to Carmody and engaged Joshua Pye to come and paint his house, and that evening, although he was not due till Saturday night, he went down to see Theodora.

Arnold Sherman was there before him, and was actually sitting in Ludovic’s own prescriptive chair. Ludovic had to deposit himself in Theodora’s new wicker rocker, where he looked and felt lamentably out of place.

If Theodora felt the situation to be awkward, she carried it off superbly. She had never looked handsomer, and Ludovic perceived that she wore her second best silk dress. He wondered miserably if she had donned it in expectation of his rival’s call. She had never put on silk dresses for him. Ludovic had always been the meekest and mildest of mortals, but he felt quite murderous as he sat mutely there and listened to Arnold Sherman’s polished conversation.

“You should just have been here to see him glowering,” Theodora told the delighted Anne the next day. “It may be wicked of me, but I felt real glad. I was afraid he might stay away and sulk. So long as he comes here and sulks I don’t worry. But he is feeling badly enough, poor soul, and I’m really eaten up by remorse. He tried to outstay Mr. Sherman last night, but he didn’t manage it. You never saw a more depressed-looking creature than he was as he hurried down the lane. Yes, he actually hurried.”

The following Sunday evening Arnold Sherman walked to church with Theodora, and sat with her. When they came in Ludovic Speed suddenly stood up in his pew under the gallery. He sat down again at once, but everybody in view had seen him, and that night folks in all the length and breadth of Grafton River discussed the dramatic occurrence with keen enjoyment.

“Yes, he jumped right up as if he was pulled on his feet, while the minister was reading the chapter,” said his cousin, Lorella Speed, who had been in church, to her sister, who had not. “His face was as white as a sheet, and his eyes were just glaring out of his head. I never felt so thrilled, I declare! I almost expected him to fly at them then and there. But he just gave a sort of gasp and set down again. I don’t know whether Theodora Dix saw him or not. She looked as cool and unconcerned as you please.”

Theodora had not seen Ludovic, but if she looked cool and unconcerned, her appearance belied her, for she felt miserably flustered. She could not prevent Arnold Sherman coming to church with her, but it seemed to her like going too far. People did not go to church and sit together in Grafton unless they were the next thing to being engaged. What if this filled Ludovic with the narcotic of despair instead of wakening him up! She sat through the service in misery and heard not one word of the sermon.

But Ludovic’s spectacular performances were not yet over. The Speeds might be hard to get started, but once they were started their momentum was irresistible. When Theodora and Mr. Sherman came out, Ludovic was waiting on the steps. He stood up straight and stern, with his head thrown back and his shoulders squared. There was open defiance in the look he cast on his rival, and masterfulness in the mere touch of the hand he laid on Theodora’s arm.

“May I see you home, Miss Dix?” his words said. His tone said, “I am going to see you home whether or no.”

Theodora, with a deprecating look at Arnold Sherman, took his arm, and Ludovic marched her across the green amid a silence which the very horses tied to the storm fence seemed to share. For Ludovic ‘twas a crowded hour of glorious life.

Anne walked all the way over from Avonlea the next day to hear the news. Theodora smiled consciously.

“Yes, it is really settled at last, Anne. Coming home last night Ludovic asked me plump and plain to marry him, — Sunday and all as it was. It’s to be right away — for Ludovic won’t be put off a week longer than necessary.”

“So Ludovic Speed has been hurried up to some purpose at last,” said Mr. Sherman, when Anne called in at Echo Lodge, brimful with her news.

“And you are delighted, of course, and my poor pride must be the scapegoat. I shall always be remembered in Grafton as the man from Boston who wanted Theodora Dix and couldn’t get her.”

“But that won’t be true, you know,” said Anne comfortingly.

Arnold Sherman thought of Theodora’s ripe beauty, and the mellow companionableness she had revealed in their brief intercourse.

“I’m not perfectly sure of that,” he said, with a half sigh.

Old Lady Lloyd

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I. The May Chapter

Spencervale gossip always said that “Old Lady Lloyd” was rich and mean and proud. Gossip, as usual, was one-third right and two-thirds wrong. Old Lady Lloyd was neither rich nor mean; in reality she was pitifully poor — so poor that “Crooked Jack” Spencer, who dug her garden and chopped her wood for her, was opulent by contrast, for he, at least, never lacked three meals a day, and the Old Lady could sometimes achieve no more than one. But she WAS very proud — so proud that she would have died rather than let the Spencervale people, among whom she had queened it in her youth, suspect how poor she was and to what straits was sometimes reduced. She much preferred to have them think her miserly and odd — a queer old recluse who never went anywhere, even to church, and who paid the smallest subscription to the minister’s salary of anyone in the congregation.

“And her just rolling in wealth!” they said indignantly. “Well, she didn’t get her miserly ways from her parents. THEY were real generous and neighbourly. There never was a finer gentleman than old Doctor Lloyd. He was always doing kindnesses to everybody; and he had a way of doing them that made you feel as if you was doing the favour, not him. Well, well, let Old Lady Lloyd keep herself and her money to herself if she wants to. If she doesn’t want our company, she doesn’t have to suffer it, that’s all. Reckon she isn’t none too happy for all her money and pride.”

No, the Old Lady was none too happy, that was unfortunately true. It is not easy to be happy when your life is eaten up with loneliness and emptiness on the spiritual side, and when, on the material side, all you have between you and starvation is the little money your hens bring you in.

The Old Lady lived “away back at the old Lloyd place,” as it was always called. It was a quaint, low-eaved house, with big chimneys and square windows and with spruces growing thickly all around it. The Old Lady lived there all alone and there were weeks at a time when she never saw a human being except Crooked Jack. What the Old Lady did with herself and how she put in her time was a puzzle the Spencervale people could not solve. The children believed she amused herself counting the gold in the big black box under her bed. Spencervale children held the Old Lady in mortal terror; some of them — the “Spencer Road” fry — believed she was a witch; all of them would run if, when wandering about the woods in search of berries or spruce gum, they saw at a distance the spare, upright form of the Old Lady, gathering sticks for her fire. Mary Moore was the only one who was quite sure she was not a witch.

“Witches are always ugly,” she said decisively, “and Old Lady Lloyd isn’t ugly. She’s real pretty — she’s got such a soft white hair and big black eyes and a little white face. Those Road children don’t know what they’re talking of. Mother says they’re a very ignorant crowd.”

“Well, she doesn’t ever go to church, and she mutters and talks to herself all the time she’s picking up sticks,” maintained Jimmy Kimball stoutly.

The Old Lady talked to herself because she was really very fond of company and conversation. To be sure, when you have talked to nobody but yourself for nearly twenty years, it is apt to grow somewhat monotonous; and there were times when the Old Lady would have sacrificed everything but her pride for a little human companionship. At such times she felt very bitter and resentful toward Fate for having taken everything from her. She had nothing to love, and that is about as unwholesome a condition as is possible to anyone.

It was always hardest in the spring. Once upon a time the Old Lady — when she had not been the Old Lady, but pretty, wilful, high-spirited Margaret Lloyd — had loved springs; now she hated them because they hurt her; and this particular spring of this particular May chapter hurt her more than any that had gone before. The Old Lady felt as if she could NOT endure the ache of it. Everything hurt her — the new green tips on the firs, the fairy mists down in the little beech hollow below the house, the fresh

smell of the red earth Crooked Jack spaded up in her garden. The Old Lady lay awake all one moonlit night and cried for very heartache. She even forgot her body hunger in her soul hunger; and the Old Lady had been hungry, more or less, all that week. She was living on store biscuits and water, so that she might be able to pay Crooked Jack for digging her garden. When the pale, lovely dawn-colour came stealing up the sky behind the spruces, the Old Lady buried her face in her pillow and refused to look at it.

“I hate the new day,” she said rebelliously. “It will be just like all the other hard, common days. I don’t want to get up and live it. And, oh, to think that long ago I reached out my hands joyfully to every new day, as to a friend who was bringing me good tidings! I loved the mornings then — sunny or gray, they were as delightful as an unread book — and now I hate them — hate them — hate them!”

But the Old Lady got up nevertheless, for she knew Crooked Jack would be coming early to finish the garden. She arranged her beautiful, thick, white hair very carefully, and put on her purple silk dress with the little gold spots in it. The Old Lady always wore silk from motives of economy. It was much cheaper to wear a silk dress that had belonged to her mother than to buy new print at the store. The Old Lady had plenty of silk dresses which had belonged to her mother. She wore them morning, noon, and night, and Spencervale people considered it an additional evidence of her pride. As for the fashion of them, it was, of course, just because she was too mean to have them made over. They did not dream that the Old Lady never put on one of the silk dresses without agonizing over its unfashionableness, and that even the eyes of Crooked Jack cast on her antique flounces and overskirts was almost more than her feminine vanity could endure.

In spite of the fact that the Old Lady had not welcomed the new day, its beauty charmed her when she went out for a walk after her dinner — or, rather, after her mid-day biscuit. It was so fresh, so sweet, so virgin; and the spruce woods around the old Lloyd place were athrill with busy spring doings and all sprinkled through with young lights and shadows. Some of their delight found its way into the Old Lady’s bitter heart as she wandered

through them, and when she came out at the little plank bridge over the brook down under the beeches, she felt almost gentle and tender once more. There was one big beech there, in particular, which the Old Lady loved for reasons best known to herself — a great, tall beech with a trunk like the shaft of a gray marble column and a leafy spread of branches over the still, golden-brown pool made beneath it by the brook. It had been a young sapling in the days that were haloed by the vanished glory of the Old Lady's life.

The Old Lady heard childish voices and laughter afar up the lane which led to William Spencer's place just above the woods. William Spencer's front lane ran out to the main road in a different direction, but this "back lane" furnished a short cut and his children always went to school that way.

The Old Lady shrank hastily back behind a clump of young spruces. She did not like the Spencer children because they always seemed so afraid of her. Through the spruce screen she could see them coming gaily down the lane — the two older ones in front, the twins behind, clinging to the hands of a tall, slim, young girl — the new music teacher, probably. The Old Lady had heard from the egg pedlar that she was going to board at William Spencer's, but she had not heard her name.

She looked at her with some curiosity as they drew near — and then, all at once, the Old Lady's heart gave a great bound and began to beat as it had not beaten for years, while her breath came quickly and she trembled violently. Who — WHO could this girl be?

Under the new music teacher's straw hat were masses of fine chestnut hair of the very shade and wave that the Old Lady remembered on another head in vanished years; from under those waves looked large, violet-blue eyes with very black lashes and brows — and the Old Lady knew those eyes as well as she knew her own; and the new music teacher's face, with all its beauty of delicate outline and dainty colouring and glad, buoyant youth, was a face from the Old Lady's past — a perfect resemblance in every respect save one; the face which the Old Lady remembered had been weak, with all its charm; but this girl's face possessed a fine, dominant strength compact of sweetness and womanliness. As she passed by the Old Lady's hiding place she laughed at something one of the children said; and oh, but

the Old Lady knew that laughter well. She had heard it before under that very beech tree.

She watched them until they disappeared over the wooded hill beyond the bridge; and then she went back home as if she walked in a dream. Crooked Jack was delving vigorously in the garden; ordinarily the Old Lady did not talk much with Crooked Jack, for she disliked his weakness for gossip; but now she went into the garden, a stately old figure in her purple, gold-spotted silk, with the sunshine gleaming on her white hair.

Crooked Jack had seen her go out and had remarked to himself that the Old Lady was losing ground; she was pale and peaked-looking. He now concluded that he had been mistaken. The Old Lady's cheeks were pink and her eyes shining. Somewhere in her walk she had shed ten years at least. Crooked Jack leaned on his spade and decided that there weren't many finer looking women anywhere than Old Lady Lloyd. Pity she was such an old miser!

"Mr. Spencer," said the Old Lady graciously — she always spoke very graciously to her inferiors when she talked to them at all—"can you tell me the name of the new music teacher who is boarding at Mr. William Spencer's?"

"Sylvia Gray," said Crooked Jack.

The Old Lady's heart gave another great bound. But she had known it — she had known that girl with Leslie Gray's hair and eyes and laugh must be Leslie Gray's daughter.

Crooked Jack spat on his hand and resumed his work, but his tongue went faster than his spade, and the Old Lady listened greedily. For the first time she enjoyed and blessed Crooked Jack's garrulity and gossip. Every word he uttered was as an apple of gold in a picture of silver to her.

He had been working at William Spencer's the day the new music teacher had come, and what Crooked Jack couldn't find out about any person in one whole day — at least as far as outward life went — was hardly worth finding out. Next to discovering things did he love telling them, and it

would be hard to say which enjoyed that ensuing half-hour more — Crooked Jack or the Old Lady.

Crooked Jack's account, boiled down, amounted to this; both Miss Gray's parents had died when she was a baby, she had been brought up by an aunt, she was very poor and very ambitious.

"Wants a moosical eddication," finished up Crooked Jack, "and, by jingo, she orter have it, for anything like the voice of her I never heerd. She sung for us that evening after supper and I thought 'twas an angel singing. It just went through me like a shaft o' light. The Spencer young ones are crazy over her already. She's got twenty pupils around here and in Grafton and Avonlea."

When the Old Lady had found out everything Crooked Jack could tell her, she went into the house and sat down by the window of her little sitting-room to think it all over. She was tingling from head to foot with excitement.

Leslie's daughter! This Old Lady had had her romance once. Long ago — forty years ago — she had been engaged to Leslie Gray, a young college student who taught in Spencervale for the summer term one year — the golden summer of Margaret Lloyd's life. Leslie had been a shy, dreamy, handsome fellow with literary ambitions, which, as he and Margaret both firmly believed, would one day bring him fame and fortune.

Then there had been a foolish, bitter quarrel at the end of that golden summer. Leslie had gone away in anger, afterwards he had written, but Margaret Lloyd, still in the grasp of her pride and resentment, had sent a harsh answer. No more letters came; Leslie Gray never returned; and one day Margaret awakened to the realization that she had put love out of her life for ever. She knew it would never be hers again; and from that moment her feet were turned from youth to walk down the valley of shadow to a lonely, eccentric age.

Many years later she heard of Leslie's marriage; then came news of his death, after a life that had not fulfilled his dreams for him. Nothing more

she had heard or known — nothing to this day, when she had seen his daughter pass her by unseeing in the beech hollow.

“His daughter! And she might have been MY daughter,” murmured the Old Lady. “Oh, if I could only know her and love her — and perhaps win her love in return! But I cannot. I could not have Leslie Gray’s daughter know how poor I am — how low I have been brought. I could not bear that. And to think she is living so near me, the darling — just up the lane and over the hill. I can see her go by every day — I can have that dear pleasure, at least. But oh, if I could only do something for her — give her some little pleasure! It would be such a delight.”

When the Old Lady happened to go into her spare room that evening, she saw from it a light shining through a gap in the trees on the hill. She knew that it shone from the Spencers’ spare room. So it was Sylvia’s light. The Old Lady stood in the darkness and watched it until it went out — watched it with a great sweetness breathing in her heart, such as risen from old roseleaves when they are stirred. She fancied Sylvia moving about her room, brushing and braiding her long, glistening hair — laying aside her little trinkets and girlish adornments — making her simple preparations for sleep. When the light went out the Old Lady pictured a slight white figure kneeling by the window in the soft starshine, and the Old Lady knelt down then and there and said her own prayers in fellowship. She said the simple form of words she had always used; but a new spirit seemed to inspire them; and she finished with a new petition—”Let me think of something I can do for her, dear Father — some little, little thing that I can do for her.”

The Old Lady had slept in the same room all her life — the one looking north into the spruces — and loved it; but the next day she moved into the spare room without a regret. It was to be her room after this; she must be where she could see Sylvia’s light, she put the bed where she could lie in it and look at that earth star which had suddenly shone across the twilight shadows of her heart. She felt very happy, she had not felt happy for many years; but now a strange, new, dreamlike interest, remote from the harsh realities of her existence, but none the less comforting and alluring, had

entered into her life. Besides, she had thought of something she could do for Sylvia—"a little, little thing" that might give her pleasure.

Spencervale people were wont to say regretfully that there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; the Spencervale young fry, when they wanted Mayflowers, thought they had to go over to the barrens at Avonlea, six miles away, for them. Old Lady Lloyd knew better. In her many long, solitary rambles, she had discovered a little clearing far back in the woods — a southward-sloping, sandy hill on a tract of woodland belonging to a man who lived in town — which in spring was starred over with the pink and white of arbutus.

To this clearing the Old Lady betook herself that afternoon, walking through wood lanes and under dim spruce arches like a woman with a glad purpose. All at once the spring was dear and beautiful to her once more; for love had entered again into her heart, and her starved soul was feasting on its divine nourishment.

Old Lady Lloyd found a wealth of Mayflowers on the sandy hill. She filled her basket with them, gloating over the loveliness which was to give pleasure to Sylvia. When she got home she wrote on a slip of paper, "For Sylvia." It was not likely anyone in Spencervale would know her handwriting, but, to make sure, she disguised it, writing in round, big letters like a child's. She carried her Mayflowers down to the hollow and heaped them in a recess between the big roots of the old beech, with the little note thrust through a stem on top.

Then the Old Lady deliberately hid behind the spruce clump. She had put on her dark green silk on purpose for hiding. She had not long to wait. Soon Sylvia Gray came down the hill with Mattie Spencer. When she reached the bridge she saw the Mayflowers and gave an exclamation of delight. Then she saw her name and her expression changed to wonder. The Old Lady, peering through the boughs, could have laughed for very pleasure over the success of her little plot.

"For me!" said Sylvia, lifting the flowers. "CAN they really be for me, Mattie? Who could have left them here?"

Mattie giggled.

“I believe it was Chris Stewart,” she said. “I know he was over at Avonlea last night. And ma says he’s taken a notion to you — she knows by the way he looked at you when you were singing night before last. It would be just like him to do something queer like this — he’s such a shy fellow with the girls.”

Sylvia frowned a little. She did not like Mattie’s expressions, but she did like Mayflowers, and she did not dislike Chris Stewart, who had seemed to her merely a nice, modest, country boy. She lifted the flowers and buried her face in them.

“Anyway, I’m much obliged to the giver, whoever he or she is,” she said merrily. “There’s nothing I love like Mayflowers. Oh, how sweet they are!”

When they had passed the Old Lady emerged from her lurking place, flushed with triumph. It did not vex her that Sylvia should think Chris Stewart had given her the flowers; nay, it was all the better, since she would be the less likely to suspect the real donor. The main thing was that Sylvia should have the delight of them. That quite satisfied the Old Lady, who went back to her lonely house with the cockles of her heart all in a glow.

It soon was a matter of gossip in Spencervale that Chris Stewart was leaving Mayflowers at the beech hollow for the music teacher every other day. Chris himself denied it, but he was not believed. Firstly, there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; secondly, Chris had to go to Carmody every other day to haul milk to the butter factory, and Mayflowers grew in Carmody, and, thirdly, the Stewarts always had a romantic streak in them. Was not that enough circumstantial evidence for anybody?

As for Sylvia, she did not mind if Chris had a boyish admiration for her and expressed it thus delicately. She thought it very nice of him, indeed, when he did not vex her with any other advances, and she was quite content to enjoy his Mayflowers.

Old Lady Lloyd heard all the gossip about it from the egg pedlar, and listened to him with laughter glimmering far down in her eyes. The egg pedlar went away and vowed he'd never seen the Old Lady so spry as she was this spring; she seemed real interested in the young folk's doings.

The Old Lady kept her secret and grew young in it. She walked back to the Mayflower hill as long as the Mayflowers lasted; and she always hid in the spruces to see Sylvia Gray go by. Every day she loved her more, and yearned after her more deeply. All the long repressed tenderness of her nature overflowed to this girl who was unconscious of it. She was proud of Sylvia's grace and beauty, and sweetness of voice and laughter. She began to like the Spencer children because they worshipped Sylvia; she envied Mrs. Spencer because the latter could minister to Sylvia's needs. Even the egg pedlar seemed a delightful person because he brought news of Sylvia — her social popularity, her professional success, the love and admiration she had won already.

The Old Lady never dreamed of revealing herself to Sylvia. That, in her poverty, was not to be thought of for a moment. It would have been very sweet to know her — sweet to have her come to the old house — sweet to talk to her — to enter into her life. But it might not be. The Old Lady's pride was still far stronger than her love. It was the one thing she had never sacrificed and never — so she believed — could sacrifice.

II. The June Chapter

There were no Mayflowers in June; but now the Old Lady's garden was full of blossoms and every morning Sylvia found a bouquet of them by the beech — the perfumed ivory of white narcissus, the flame of tulips, the fairy branches of bleeding-heart, the pink-and-snow of little, thorny, single, sweetbreathed early roses. The Old Lady had no fear of discovery, for the flowers that grew in her garden grew in every other Spencervale garden as well, including the Stewart garden. Chris Stewart, when he was teased about the music teacher, merely smiled and held his peace. Chris knew perfectly well who was the real giver of those flowers. He had made it his business to find out when the Mayflower gossip started. But since it was evident Old Lady Lloyd did not wish it to be known, Chris told no one. Chris had always liked Old Lady Lloyd ever since the day, ten years

before, when she had found him crying in the woods with a cut foot and had taken him into her house, and bathed and bound the wound, and given him ten cents to buy candy at the store. The Old Lady went without supper that night because of it, but Chris never knew that.

The Old Lady thought it a most beautiful June. She no longer hated the new days; on the contrary, she welcomed them.

“Every day is an uncommon day now,” she said jubilantly to herself — for did not almost every day bring her a glimpse of Sylvia? Even on rainy days the Old Lady gallantly braved rheumatism to hide behind her clump of dripping spruces and watch Sylvia pass. The only days she could not see her were Sundays; and no Sundays had ever seemed so long to Old Lady Lloyd as those June Sundays did.

One day the egg pedlar had news for her.

“The music teacher is going to sing a solo for a collection piece tomorrow,” he told her.

The Old Lady’s black eyes flashed with interest.

“I didn’t know Miss Gray was a member of the choir,” she said.

“Jined two Sundays ago. I tell you, our music is something worth listening to now. The church’ll be packed tomorrow, I reckon — her name’s gone all over the country for singing. You ought to come and hear it, Miss Lloyd.”

The pedlar said this out of bravado, merely to show he wasn’t scared of the Old Lady, for all her grand airs. The Old Lady made no answer, and he thought he had offended her. He went away, wishing he hadn’t said it. Had he but known it, the Old Lady had forgotten the existence of all and any egg pedlars. He had blotted himself and his insignificance out of her consciousness by his last sentence. All her thoughts, feelings, and wishes were submerged in a very whirlpool of desire to hear Sylvia sing that solo. She went into the house in a tumult and tried to conquer that desire. She could not do it, even though she summoned all her pride to her aid. Pride said:

“You will have to go to church to hear her. You haven’t fit clothes to go to church in. Think what a figure you will make before them all.”

But, for the first time, a more insistent voice than pride spoke to her soul — and, for the first time, the Old Lady listened to it. It was too true that she had never gone to church since the day on which she had to begin wearing her mother’s silk dresses. The Old Lady herself thought that this was very wicked; and she tried to atone by keeping Sunday very strictly, and always having a little service of her own, morning and evening. She sang three hymns in her cracked voice, prayed aloud, and read a sermon. But she could not bring herself to go to church in her out-of-date clothes — she, who had once set the fashions in Spencervale, and the longer she stayed away, the more impossible it seemed that she should ever again go. Now the impossible had become, not only possible, but insistent. She must go to church and hear Sylvia sing, no matter how ridiculous she appeared, no matter how people talked and laughed at her.

Spencervale congregation had a mild sensation the next afternoon. Just before the opening of service Old Lady Lloyd walked up the aisle and sat down in the long-unoccupied Lloyd pew, in front of the pulpit.

The Old Lady’s very soul was writhing within her. She recalled the reflection she had seen in her mirror before she left — the old black silk in the mode of thirty years ago and the queer little bonnet of shirred black satin. She thought how absurd she must look in the eyes of her world.

As a matter of fact, she did not look in the least absurd. Some women might have; but the Old Lady’s stately distinction of carriage and figure was so subtly commanding that it did away with the consideration of garmenting altogether.

The Old Lady did not know this. But she did know that Mrs. Kimball, the storekeeper’s wife, presently rustled into the next pew in the very latest fashion of fabric and mode; she and Mrs. Kimball were the same age, and there had been a time when the latter had been content to imitate Margaret Lloyd’s costumes at a humble distance. But the storekeeper had proposed, and things were changed now; and there sat poor Old Lady Lloyd, feeling the change bitterly, and half wishing she had not come to church at all.

Then all at once the Angel of Love touched there foolish thoughts, born of vanity and morbid pride, and they melted away as if they had never been. Sylvia Gray had come into the choir, and was sitting just where the afternoon sunshine fell over her beautiful hair like a halo. The Old Lady looked at her in a rapture of satisfied longing and thenceforth the service was blessed to her, as anything is blessed which comes through the medium of unselfish love, whether human or divine. Nay, are they not one and the same, differing in degree only, not in kind?

The Old Lady had never had such a good, satisfying look at Sylvia before. All her former glimpses had been stolen and fleeting. Now she sat and gazed upon her to her hungry heart's content, lingering delightedly over every little charm and loveliness — the way Sylvia's shining hair rippled back from her forehead, the sweet little trick she had of dropping quickly her long-lashed eyelids when she encountered too bold or curious a glance, and the slender, beautifully modelled hands — so like Leslie Gray's hands — that held her hymn book. She was dressed very plainly in a black skirt and a white shirtwaist; but none of the other girls in the choir, with all their fine feathers, could hold a candle to her — as the egg pedlar said to his wife, going home from church.

The Old Lady listened to the opening hymns with keen pleasure. Sylvia's voice thrilled through and dominated them all. But when the ushers got up to take the collection, an undercurrent of subdued excitement flowed over the congregation. Sylvia rose and came forward to Janet Moore's side at the organ. The next moment her beautiful voice soared through the building like the very soul of melody — true, clear, powerful, sweet. Nobody in Spencervale had ever listened to such a voice, except Old Lady Lloyd herself, who, in her youth, had heard enough good singing to enable her to be a tolerable judge of it. She realized instantly that this girl of her heart had a great gift — a gift that would some day bring her fame and fortune, if it could be duly trained and developed.

“Oh, I'm so glad I came to church,” thought Old Lady Lloyd.

When the solo was ended, the Old Lady's conscience compelled her to drag her eyes and thoughts from Sylvia, and fasten them on the minister, who had been flattering himself all through the opening portion of the

service that Old Lady Lloyd had come to church on his account. He was newly settled, having been in charge of the Spencervale congregation only a few months; he was a clever little fellow and he honestly thought it was the fame of his preaching that had brought Old Lady Lloyd out to church.

When the service was over all the Old Lady's neighbours came to speak to her, with kindly smile and handshake. They thought they ought to encourage her, now that she had made a start in the right direction; the Old Lady liked their cordiality, and liked it none the less because she detected in it the same unconscious respect and deference she had been wont to receive in the old days — a respect and deference which her personality compelled from all who approached her. The Old Lady was surprised to find that she could command it still, in defiance of unfashionable bonnet and ancient attire.

Janet Moore and Sylvia Gray walked home from church together. "Did you see Old Lady Lloyd out to-day?" asked Janet. "I was amazed when she walked in. She has never been to church in my recollection. What a quaint old figure she is! She's very rich, you know, but she wears her mother's old clothes and never gets a new thing. Some people think she is mean; but," concluded Janet charitably, "I believe it is simply eccentricity."

"I felt that was Miss Lloyd as soon as I saw her, although I had never seen her before," said Sylvia dreamily. "I have been wishing to see her — for a certain reason. She has a very striking face. I should like to meet her — to know her."

"I don't think it's likely you ever will," said Janet carelessly. "She doesn't like young people and she never goes anywhere. I don't think I'd like to know her. I'd be afraid of her — she has such stately ways and such strange, piercing eyes."

"I shouldn't be afraid of her," said Sylvia to herself, as she turned into the Spencer lane. "But I don't expect I'll ever become acquainted with her. If she knew who I am I suppose she would dislike me. I suppose she never suspects that I am Leslie Gray's daughter."

The minister, thinking it well to strike while the iron was hot, went up to call on Old Lady Lloyd the very next afternoon. He went in fear and trembling, for he had heard things about Old Lady Lloyd; but she made herself so agreeable in her highbred fashion that he was delighted, and told his wife when he went home that Spencervale people didn't understand Miss Lloyd. This was perfectly true; but it is by no means certain that the minister understood her either.

He made only one mistake in tact, but, as the Old Lady did not snub him for it, he never knew he made it. When he was leaving he said, "I hope we shall see you at church next Sunday, Miss Lloyd."

"Indeed, you will," said the Old Lady emphatically.

III. The July Chapter

The first day of July Sylvia found a little birch bark boat full of strawberries at the beech in the hollow. They were the earliest of the season; the Old Lady had found them in one of her secret haunts. They would have been a toothsome addition to the Old Lady's own slender bill of fare; but she never thought of eating them. She got far more pleasure out of the thought of Sylvia's enjoying them for her tea. Thereafter the strawberries alternated with the flowers as long as they lasted, and then came blueberries and raspberries. The blueberries grew far away and the Old Lady had many a tramp after them. Sometimes her bones ached at night because of it; but what cared the Old Lady for that? Bone ache is easier to endure than soul ache; and the Old Lady's soul had stopped aching for the first time in many year. It was being nourished with heavenly manna.

One evening Crooked Jack came up to fix something that had gone wrong with the Old Lady's well. The Old Lady wandered affably out to him; for she knew he had been working at the Spencers' all day, and there might be crumbs of information about Sylvia to be picked up.

"I reckon the music teacher's feeling pretty blue this evening," Crooked Jack remarked, after straining the Old Lady's patience to the last verge of human endurance by expatiating on William Spencer's new pump, and

Mrs. Spencer's new washing-machine, and Amelia Spencer's new young man.

"Why?" asked the Old Lady, turning very pale. Had anything happened to Sylvia?

"Well, she's been invited to a big party at Mrs. Moore's brother's in town, and she hasn't got a dress to go in," said Crooked Jack. "They're great swells and everybody will be got up regardless. Mrs. Spencer was telling me about it. She says Miss Gray can't afford a new dress because she's helping to pay her aunt's doctor's bills. She says she's sure Miss Gray feels awful disappointed over it, though she doesn't let on. But Mrs. Spencer says she knows she was crying after she went to bed last night."

The Old Lady turned and went into the house abruptly. This was dreadful. Sylvia must go to that party — she MUST. But how was it to be managed? Through the Old Lady's brain passed wild thoughts of her mother's silk dresses. But none of them would be suitable, even if there were time to make one over. Never had the Old Lady so bitterly regretted her vanished wealth.

"I've only two dollars in the house," she said, "and I've got to live on that till the next day the egg pedlar comes round. Is there anything I can sell — ANYTHING? Yes, yes, the grape jug!"

Up to this time, the Old Lady would as soon have thought of trying to sell her head as the grape jug. The grape jug was two hundred years old and had been in the Lloyd family ever since it was a jug at all. It was a big, pot-bellied affair, festooned with pink-gilt grapes, and with a verse of poetry printed on one side, and it had been given as a wedding present to the Old Lady's great-grandmother. As long as the Old Lady could remember it had sat on the top shelf in the cupboard in the sitting-room wall, far too precious ever to be used.

Two years before, a woman who collected old china had explored Spencervale, and, getting word of the grape jug, had boldly invaded the old Lloyd place and offered to buy it. She never, to her dying day, forgot the reception the Old Lady gave her; but, being wise in her day and

generation, she left her card, saying that if Miss Lloyd ever changed her mind about selling the jug, she would find that she, the aforesaid collector, had not changed hers about buying it. People who make a hobby of heirloom china must meekly overlook snubs, and this particular person had never seen anything she coveted so much as that grape jug.

The Old Lady had torn the card to pieces; but she remembered the name and address. She went to the cupboard and took down the beloved jug.

“I never thought to part with it,” she said wistfully, “but Sylvia must have a dress, and there is no other way. And, after all, when I’m gone, who would there be to have it? Strangers would get it then — it might as well go to them now. I’ll have to go to town tomorrow morning, for there’s no time to lose if the party is Friday night. I haven’t been to town for ten years. I dread the thought of going, more than parting with the jug. But for Sylvia’s sake!”

It was all over Spencervale by the next morning that Old Lady Lloyd had gone to town, carrying a carefully guarded box. Everybody wondered why she went; most people supposed she had become too frightened to keep her money in a black box below her bed, when there had been two burglaries over at Carmody, and had taken it to the bank.

The Old Lady sought out the address of the china collector, trembling with fear that she might be dead or gone. But the collector was there, very much alive, and as keenly anxious to possess the grape jug as ever. The Old Lady, pallid with the pain of her trampled pride, sold the grape jug and went away, believing that her great-grandmother must have turned over in her grave at the moment of the transaction. Old Lady Lloyd felt like a traitor to her traditions.

But she went unflinchingly to a big store and, guided by that special Providence which looks after simple-minded old souls in their dangerous excursions into the world, found a sympathetic clerk who knew just what she wanted and got it for her. The Old Lady selected a very dainty muslin gown, with gloves and slippers in keeping; and she ordered it sent at once, expressage prepaid, to Miss Sylvia Gray, in care of William Spencer, Spencervale.

Then she paid down the money — the whole price of the jug, minus a dollar and a half for railroad fare — with a grand, careless air and departed. As she marched erectly down the aisle of the store, she encountered a sleek, portly, prosperous man coming in. As their eyes met, the man started and his bland face flushed crimson; he lifted his hat and bowed confusedly. But the Old Lady looked through him as if he wasn't there, and passed on with not a sign of recognition about her. He took one step after her, then stopped and turned away, with a rather disagreeable smile and a shrug of his shoulders.

Nobody would have guessed, as the Old Lady swept out, how her heart was seething with abhorrence and scorn. She would not have had the courage to come to town, even for Sylvia's sake, if she had thought she would meet Andrew Cameron. The mere sight of him opened up anew a sealed fountain of bitterness in her soul; but the thought of Sylvia somehow stemmed the torrent, and presently the Old Lady was smiling rather triumphantly, thinking rightly that she had come off best in that unwelcome encounter. SHE, at any rate, had not faltered and coloured, and lost her presence of mind.

"It is little wonder HE did," thought the Old Lady vindictively. It pleased her that Andrew Cameron should lose, before her, the front of adamant he presented to the world. He was her cousin and the only living creature Old Lady Lloyd hated, and she hated and despised him with all the intensity of her intense nature. She and hers had sustained grievous wrong at his hands, and the Old Lady was convinced that she would rather die than take any notice of his existence.

Presently, she resolutely put Andrew Cameron out of her mind. It was desecration to think of him and Sylvia together. When she laid her weary head on her pillow that night she was so happy that even the thought of the vacant shelf in the room below, where the grape jug had always been, gave her only a momentary pang.

"It's sweet to sacrifice for one we love — it's sweet to have someone to sacrifice for," thought the Old Lady.

Desire grows by what it feeds on. The Old Lady thought she was content; but Friday evening came and found her in a perfect fever to see Sylvia in her party dress. It was not enough to fancy her in it; nothing would do the Old Lady but seeing her.

“And I SHALL see her,” said the Old Lady resolutely, looking out from her window at Sylvia’s light gleaming through the firs. She wrapped herself in a dark shawl and crept out, slipping down to the hollow and up the wood lane. It was a misty, moonlight night, and a wind, fragrant with the aroma of clover fields, blew down the lane to meet her.

“I wish I could take your perfume — the soul of you — and pour it into her life,” said the Old Lady aloud to that wind.

Sylvia Gray was standing in her room, ready for the party. Before her stood Mrs. Spencer and Amelia Spencer and all the little Spencer girls, in an admiring semicircle. There was another spectator. Outside, under the lilac bush, Old Lady Lloyd was standing. She could see Sylvia plainly, in her dainty dress, with the pale pink roses Old Lady Lloyd had left at the beech that day for her in her hair. Pink as they were, they were not so pink as her cheeks, and her eyes shone like stars. Amelia Spencer put up her hand to push back a rose that had fallen a little out of place, and the Old Lady envied her fiercely.

“That dress couldn’t have fitted better if it had been made for you,” said Mrs. Spencer admiringly. “Ain’t she lovely, Amelia? Who COULD have sent it?”

“Oh, I feel sure that Mrs. Moore was the fairy godmother,” said Sylvia. “There is nobody else who would. It was dear of her — she knew I wished so much to go to the party with Janet. I wish Aunty could see me now.” Sylvia gave a little sigh in spite of her joy. “There’s nobody else to care very much.”

Ah, Sylvia, you were wrong! There was somebody else — somebody who cared very much — an Old Lady, with eager, devouring eyes, who was standing under the lilac bush and who presently stole away through the moonlit orchard to the woods like a shadow, going home with a vision of you in your girlish beauty to companion her through the watches of that summer night.

IV. The August Chapter

One day the minister’s wife rushed in where Spencervale people had feared to tread, went boldly to Old Lady Lloyd, and asked her if she wouldn’t come to their Sewing Circle, which met fortnightly on Saturday afternoons.

“We are filling a box to send to our Trinidad missionary,” said the minister’s wife, “and we should be so pleased to have you come, Miss Lloyd.”

The Old Lady was on the point of refusing rather haughtily. Not that she was opposed to missions — or sewing circles either — quite the contrary, but she knew that each member of the Circle was expected to pay ten cents a week for the purpose of procuring sewing materials; and the poor Old Lady really did not see how she could afford it. But a sudden thought checked her refusal before it reached her lips.

“I suppose some of the young girls go to the Circle?” she said craftily.

“Oh, they all go,” said the minister’s wife. “Janet Moore and Miss Gray are our most enthusiastic members. It is very lovely of Miss Gray to give her Saturday afternoons — the only ones she has free from pupils — to our work. But she really has the sweetest disposition.”

“I’ll join your Circle,” said the Old Lady promptly. She was determined she would do it, if she had to live on two meals a day to save the necessary fee.

She went to the Sewing Circle at James Martin’s the next Saturday, and did the most beautiful hand sewing for them. She was so expert at it that she didn’t need to think about it at all, which was rather fortunate, for all her thoughts were taken up with Sylvia, who sat in the opposite corner with Janet Moore, her graceful hands busy with a little boy’s coarse gingham shirt. Nobody thought of introducing Sylvia to Old Lady Lloyd, and the Old Lady was glad of it. She sewed finely away, and listened with all her ears to the girlish chatter which went on in the opposite corner. One thing she found out — Sylvia’s birthday was the twentieth of August. And the Old Lady was straightway fired with a consuming wish to give Sylvia a birthday present. She lay awake most of the night wondering if she could do it, and most sorrowfully concluded that it was utterly out of the question, no matter how she might pinch and contrive. Old Lady Lloyd worried quite absurdly over this, and it haunted her like a spectre until the next Sewing Circle day.

It met at Mrs. Moore's and Mrs. Moore was especially gracious to Old Lady Lloyd, and insisted on her taking the wicker rocker in the parlour. The Old Lady would rather have been in the sitting-room with the young girls, but she submitted for courtesy's sake — and she had her reward. Her chair was just behind the parlour door, and presently Janet Moore and Sylvia Gray came and sat on the stairs in the hall outside, where a cool breeze blew in through the maples before the front door.

They were talking of their favourite poets. Janet, it appeared, adored Byron and Scott. Sylvia leaned to Tennyson and Browning.

“Do you know,” said Sylvia softly, “my father was a poet? He published a little volume of verse once; and, Janet, I've never seen a copy of it, and oh, how I would love to! It was published when he was at college — just a small, private edition to give his friends. He never published any more — poor father! I think life disappointed him. But I have such a longing to see that little book of his verse. I haven't a scrap of his writings. If I had it would seem as if I possessed something of him — of his heart, his soul, his inner life. He would be something more than a mere name to me.”

“Didn't he have a copy of his own — didn't your mother have one?” asked Janet.

“Mother hadn't. She died when I was born, you know, but Auntie says there was no copy of father's poems among mother's books. Mother didn't care for poetry, Auntie says — Auntie doesn't either. Father went to Europe after mother died, and he died there the next year. Nothing that he had with him was ever sent home to us. He had sold most of his books before he went, but he gave a few of his favourite ones to Auntie to keep for me. HIS book wasn't among them. I don't suppose I shall ever find a copy, but I should be so delighted if I only could.”

When the Old Lady got home she took from her top bureau drawer an inlaid box of sandalwood. It held a little, slim, limp volume, wrapped in tissue paper — the Old Lady's most treasured possession. On the flyleaf was written, “To Margaret, with the author's love.”

The Old Lady turned the yellow leaves with trembling fingers and, through eyes brimming with tears, read the verses, although she had known them all by heart for years. She meant to give the book to Sylvia for a birthday present — one of the most precious gifts ever given, if the value of gifts is gauged by the measure of self-sacrifice involved. In that little book was immortal love — old laughter — old tears — old beauty which had bloomed like a rose years ago, holding still its sweetness like old rose leaves. She removed the telltale flyleaf; and late on the night before Sylvia's birthday, the Old Lady crept, under cover of the darkness, through byways and across fields, as if bent on some nefarious expedition, to the little Spencervale store where the postoffice was kept. She slipped the thin parcel through the slit in the door, and then stole home again, feeling a strange sense of loss and loneliness. It was as if she had given away the last link between herself and her youth. But she did not regret it. It would give Sylvia pleasure, and that had come to be the overmastering passion of the Old Lady's heart.

The next night the light in Sylvia's room burned very late, and the Old Lady watched it triumphantly, knowing the meaning of it. Sylvia was reading her father's poems, and the Old Lady in her darkness read them too, murmuring the lines over and over to herself. After all, giving away the book had not mattered so very much. She had the soul of it still — and the flyleaf with the name, in Leslie's writing, by which nobody ever called her now.

The Old Lady was sitting on the Marshall sofa the next Sewing Circle afternoon when Sylvia Gray came and sat down beside her. The Old Lady's hands trembled a little, and one side of a handkerchief, which was afterwards given as a Christmas present to a little olive-skinned coolie in Trinidad, was not quite so exquisitely done as the other three sides.

Sylvia at first talked of the Circle, and Mrs. Marshall's dahlias, and the Old Lady was in the seventh heaven of delight, though she took care not to show it, and was even a little more stately and finely mannered than usual. When she asked Sylvia how she liked living in Spencervale, Sylvia said,

“Very much. Everybody is so kind to me. Besides” — Sylvia lowered her voice so that nobody but the Old Lady could hear it—“I have a fairy

godmother here who does the most beautiful and wonderful things for me.”

Sylvia, being a girl of fine instincts, did not look at Old Lady Lloyd as she said this. But she would not have seen anything if she had looked. The Old Lady was not a Lloyd for nothing.

“How very interesting,” she said, indifferently.

“Isn’t it? I am so grateful to her and I have wished so much she might know how much pleasure she has given me. I have found lovely flowers and delicious berries on my path all summer; I feel sure she sent me my party dress. But the dearest gift came last week on my birthday — a little volume of my father’s poems. I can’t express what I felt on receiving them. But I longed to meet my fairy godmother and thank her.”

“Quite a fascinating mystery, isn’t it? Have you really no idea who she is?”

The Old Lady asked this dangerous question with marked success. She would not have been so successful if she had not been so sure that Sylvia had no idea of the old romance between her and Leslie Gray. As it was, she had a comfortable conviction that she herself was the very last person Sylvia would be likely to suspect.

Sylvia hesitated for an almost unnoticeable moment. Then she said, “I haven’t tried to find out, because I don’t think she wants me to know. At first, of course, in the matter of the flowers and dress, I did try to solve the mystery; but, since I received the book, I became convinced that it was my fairy godmother who was doing it all, and I have respected her wish for concealment and always shall. Perhaps some day she will reveal herself to me. I hope so, at least.”

“I wouldn’t hope it,” said the Old Lady discouragingly. “Fairy godmothers — at least, in all the fairy tales I ever read — are somewhat apt to be queer, crochety people, much more agreeable when wrapped up in mystery than when met face to face.”

“I’m convinced that mine is the very opposite, and that the better I became acquainted with her, the more charming a personage I should find her,” said Sylvia gaily.

Mrs. Marshall came up at this juncture and entreated Miss Gray to sing for them. Miss Gray consenting sweetly, the Old Lady was left alone and was rather glad of it. She enjoyed her conversation with Sylvia much more in thinking it over after she got home than while it was taking place. When an Old Lady has a guilty conscience, it is apt to make her nervous and distract her thoughts from immediate pleasure. She wondered a little uneasily if Sylvia really did suspect her. Then she concluded that it was out of the question. Who would suspect a mean, unsociable Old Lady, who had no friends, and who gave only five cents to the Sewing Circle when everyone else gave ten or fifteen, to be a fairy godmother, the donor of beautiful party dresses, and the recipient of gifts from romantic, aspiring young poets?

V. The September Chapter

In September the Old Lady looked back on the summer and owned to herself that it had been a strangely happy one, with Sundays and Sewing Circle days standing out like golden punctuation marks in a poem of life. She felt like an utterly different woman; and other people thought her different also. The Sewing Circle women found her so pleasant, and even friendly, that they began to think they had misjudged her, and that perhaps it was eccentricity after all, and not meanness, which accounted for her peculiar mode of living. Sylvia Gray always came and talked to her on Circle afternoons now, and the Old Lady treasured every word she said in her heart and repeated them over and over to her lonely self in the watches of the night.

Sylvia never talked of herself or her plans, unless asked about them; and the Old Lady’s self-consciousness prevented her from asking any personal questions: so their conversation kept to the surface of things, and it was not from Sylvia, but from the minister’s wife that the Old Lady finally discovered what her darling’s dearest ambition was.

The minister's wife had dropped in at the old Lloyd place one evening late in September, when a chilly wind was blowing up from the northeast and moaning about the eaves of the house, as if the burden of its lay were "harvest is ended and summer is gone." The Old Lady had been listening to it, as she plaited a little basket of sweet grass for Sylvia. She had walked all the way to Avonlea sandhills for it the day before, and she was very tired. And her heart was sad. This summer, which had so enriched her life, was almost over; and she knew that Sylvia Gray talked of leaving Spencervale at the end of October. The Old Lady's heart felt like very lead within her at the thought, and she almost welcomed the advent of the minister's wife as a distraction, although she was desperately afraid that the minister's wife had called to ask for a subscription for the new vestry carpet, and the Old Lady simply could not afford to give one cent.

But the minister's wife had merely dropped in on her way home from the Spencers' and she did not make any embarrassing requests. Instead, she talked about Sylvia Gray, and her words fell on the Old Lady's ears like separate pearl notes of unutterably sweet music. The minister's wife had nothing but praise for Sylvia — she was so sweet and beautiful and winning.

"And with SUCH a voice," said the minister's wife enthusiastically, adding with a sigh, "It's such a shame she can't have it properly trained. She would certainly become a great singer — competent critics have told her so. But she is so poor she doesn't think she can ever possibly manage it — unless she can get one of the Cameron scholarships, as they are called; and she has very little hope of that, although the professor of music who taught her has sent her name in."

"What are the Cameron scholarships?" asked the Old Lady.

"Well, I suppose you have heard of Andrew Cameron, the millionaire?" said the minister's wife, serenely unconscious that she was causing the very bones of the Old Lady's family skeleton to jangle in their closet.

Into the Old Lady's white face came a sudden faint stain of colour, as if a rough hand had struck her cheek.

“Yes, I’ve heard of him,” she said.

“Well, it seems that he had a daughter, who was a very beautiful girl, and whom he idolized. She had a fine voice, and he was going to send her abroad to have it trained. And she died. It nearly broke his heart, I understand. But ever since, he sends one young girl away to Europe every year for a thorough musical education under the best teachers — in memory of his daughter. He has sent nine or ten already; but I fear there isn’t much chance for Sylvia Gray, and she doesn’t think there is herself.”

“Why not?” asked the Old Lady spiritedly. “I am sure that there can be few voices equal to Miss Gray’s.”

“Very true. But you see, these so-called scholarships are private affairs, dependent solely on the whim and choice of Andrew Cameron himself. Of course, when a girl has friends who use their influence with him, he will often send her on their recommendation. They say he sent a girl last year who hadn’t much of a voice at all just because her father had been an old business crony of his. But Sylvia doesn’t know anyone at all who would, to use a slang term, have any ‘pull’ with Andrew Cameron, and she is not acquainted with him herself. Well, I must be going; we’ll see you at the Manse on Saturday, I hope, Miss Lloyd. The Circle meets there, you know.”

“Yes, I know,” said the Old Lady absently. When the minister’s wife had gone, she dropped her sweetgrass basket and sat for a long, long time with her hands lying idly in her lap, and her big black eyes staring unseeingly at the wall before her.

Old Lady Lloyd, so pitifully poor that she had to eat six crackers the less a week to pay her fee to the Sewing Circle, knew that it was in her power — HERS — to send Leslie Gray’s daughter to Europe for her musical education! If she chose to use her “pull” with Andrew Cameron — if she went to him and asked him to send Sylvia Gray abroad the next year — she had no doubt whatever that it would be done. It all lay with her — if — if — IF she could so far crush and conquer her pride as to stoop to ask a favour of the man who had wronged her and hers so bitterly.

Years ago, her father, acting under the advice and urgency of Andrew Cameron, had invested all his little fortune in an enterprise that had turned out a failure. Abraham Lloyd lost every dollar he possessed, and his family were reduced to utter poverty. Andrew Cameron might have been forgiven for a mistake; but there was a strong suspicion, amounting to almost certainty, that he had been guilty of something far worse than a mistake in regard to his uncle's investment. Nothing could be legally proved; but it was certain that Andrew Cameron, already noted for his "sharp practices," emerged with improved finances from an entanglement that had ruined many better men; and old Doctor Lloyd had died brokenhearted, believing that his nephew had deliberately victimized him.

Andrew Cameron had not quite done this; he had meant well enough by his uncle at first, and what he had finally done he tried to justify to himself by the doctrine that a man must look out for Number One.

Margaret Lloyd made no such excuses for him; she held him responsible, not only for her lost fortune, but for her father's death, and never forgave him for it. When Abraham Lloyd had died, Andrew Cameron, perhaps pricked by his conscience, had come to her, sleekly and smoothly, to offer her financial aid. He would see, he told her, that she never suffered want.

Margaret Lloyd flung his offer back in his face after a fashion that left nothing to be desired in the way of plain speaking. She would die, she told him passionately, before she would accept a penny or a favour from him. He had preserved an unbroken show of good temper, expressed his heartfelt regret that she should cherish such an unjust opinion of him, and had left her with an oily assurance that he would always be her friend, and would always be delighted to render her any assistance in his power whenever she should choose to ask for it.

The Old Lady had lived for twenty years in the firm conviction that she would die in the poorhouse — as, indeed, seemed not unlikely — before she would ask a favour of Andrew Cameron. And so, in truth, she would have, had it been for herself. But for Sylvia! Could she so far humble herself for Sylvia's sake?

The question was not easily or speedily settled, as had been the case in the matters of the grape jug and the book of poems. For a whole week the Old Lady fought her pride and bitterness. Sometimes, in the hours of sleepless night, when all human resentments and rancours seemed petty and contemptible, she thought she had conquered it. But in the daytime, with the picture of her father looking down at her from the wall, and the rustle of her unfashionable dresses, worn because of Andrew Cameron's double dealing, in her ears, it got the better of her again.

But the Old Lady's love for Sylvia had grown so strong and deep and tender that no other feeling could endure finally against it. Love is a great miracle worker; and never had its power been more strongly made manifest than on the cold, dull autumn morning when the Old Lady walked to Bright River railway station and took the train to Charlottetown, bent on an errand the very thought of which turned her soul sick within her. The station master who sold her her ticket thought Old Lady Lloyd looked uncommonly white and peaked—"as if she hadn't slept a wink or eaten a bite for a week," he told his wife at dinner time. "Guess there's something wrong in her business affairs. This is the second time she's gone to town this summer."

When the Old Lady reached the town, she ate her slender little lunch and then walked out to the suburb where the Cameron factories and warehouses were. It was a long walk for her, but she could not afford to drive. She felt very tired when she was shown into the shining, luxurious office where Andrew Cameron sat at his desk.

After the first startled glance of surprise, he came forward beamingly, with outstretched hand.

"Why, Cousin Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise. Sit down — allow me, this is a much more comfortable chair. Did you come in this morning? And how is everybody out in Spencervale?"

The Old Lady had flushed at his first words. To hear the name by which her father and mother and lover had called her on Andrew Cameron's lips seemed like profanation. But, she told herself, the time was past for squeamishness. If she could ask a favour of Andrew Cameron, she could

bear lesser pangs. For Sylvia's sake she shook hands with him, for Sylvia's sake she sat down in the chair he offered. But for no living human being's sake could this determined Old Lady infuse any cordiality into her manner or her words. She went straight to the point with Lloyd simplicity.

"I have come to ask a favour of you," she said, looking him in the eye, not at all humbly or meekly, as became a suppliant, but challengingly and defiantly, as if she dared him to refuse.

"DELighted to hear it, Cousin Margaret." Never was anything so bland and gracious as his tone. "Anything I can do for you I shall be only too pleased to do. I am afraid you have looked upon me as an enemy, Margaret, and I assure you I have felt your injustice keenly. I realize that some appearances were against me, but—"

The Old Lady lifted her hand and stemmed his eloquence by that one gesture.

"I did not come here to discuss that matter," she said. "We will not refer to the past, if you please. I came to ask a favour, not for myself, but for a very dear young friend of mine — a Miss Gray, who has a remarkably fine voice which she wishes to have trained. She is poor, so I came to ask you if you would give her one of your musical scholarships. I understand her name has already been suggested to you, with a recommendation from her teacher. I do not know what he has said of her voice, but I do know he could hardly overrate it. If you send her abroad for training, you will not make any mistake."

The Old Lady stopped talking. She felt sure Andrew Cameron would grant her request, but she did hope he would grant it rather rudely or unwillingly. She could accept the favour so much more easily if it were flung to her like a bone to a dog. But not a bit of it. Andrew Cameron was suaver than ever. Nothing could give him greater pleasure than to grant his dear Cousin Margaret's request — he only wished it involved more trouble on his part. Her little protege should have her musical education assuredly — she should go abroad next year — and he was DELighted —

“Thank you,” said the Old Lady, cutting him short again. “I am much obliged to you — and I ask you not to let Miss Gray know anything of my interference. And I shall not take up any more of your valuable time. Good afternoon.”

“Oh, you mustn’t go so soon,” he said, with some real kindness or clannishness permeating the hateful cordiality of his voice — for Andrew Cameron was not entirely without the homely virtues of the average man. He had been a good husband and father; he had once been very fond of his Cousin Margaret; and he was really very sorry that “circumstances” had “compelled” him to act as he had done in that old affair of her father’s investment. “You must be my guest tonight.”

“Thank you. I must return home tonight,” said the Old Lady firmly, and there was that in her tone which told Andrew Cameron that it would be useless to urge her. But he insisted on telephoning for his carriage to drive her to the station. The Old Lady submitted to this, because she was secretly afraid her own legs would not suffice to carry her there; she even shook hands with him at parting, and thanked him a second time for granting her request.

“Not at all,” he said. “Please try to think a little more kindly of me, Cousin Margaret.”

When the Old Lady reached the station she found, to her dismay, that her train had just gone and that she would have to wait two hours for the evening one. She went into the waiting-room and sat down. She was very tired. All the excitement that had sustained her was gone, and she felt weak and old. She had nothing to eat, having expected to get home in time for tea; the waiting-room was chilly, and she shivered in her thin, old, silk mantilla. Her head ached and her heart likewise. She had won Sylvia’s desire for her; but Sylvia would go out of her life, and the Old Lady did not see how she was to go on living after that. Yet she sat there unflinchingly for two hours, an upright, indomitable old figure, silently fighting her losing battle with the forces of physical and mental pain, while happy people came and went, and laughed and talked before her.

At eight o'clock the Old Lady got off the train at Bright River station, and slipped off unnoticed into the darkness of the wet night. She had two miles to walk, and a cold rain was falling. Soon the Old Lady was wet to the skin and chilled to the marrow. She felt as if she were walking in a bad dream. Blind instinct alone guided her over the last mile and up the lane to her own house. As she fumbled at her door, she realized that a burning heat had suddenly taken the place of her chilliness. She stumbled in over her threshold and closed the door.

VI. The October Chapter

On the second morning after Old Lady Lloyd's journey to town, Sylvia Gray was walking blithely down the wood lane. It was a beautiful autumn morning, clear and crisp and sunny; the frosted ferns, drenched and battered with the rain of yesterday, gave out a delicious fragrance; here and there in the woods a maple waved a gay crimson banner, or a branch of birch showed pale golden against the dark, unchanging spruces. The air was very pure and exhilarating. Sylvia walked with a joyous lightness of step and uplift of brow.

At the beech in the hollow she paused for an expectant moment, but there was nothing among the gray old roots for her. She was just turning away when little Teddy Kimball, who lived next door to the manse, came running down the slope from the direction of the old Lloyd place. Teddy's freckled face was very pale.

"Oh, Miss Gray!" he gasped. "I guess Old Lady Lloyd has gone clean crazy at last. The minister's wife asked me to run up to the Old Lady, with a message about the Sewing Circle — and I knocked — and knocked — and nobody came — so I thought I'd just step in and leave the letter on the table. But when I opened the door, I heard an awful queer laugh in the sitting-room, and next minute, the Old Lady came to the sitting-room door. Oh, Miss Gray, she looked awful. Her face was red and her eyes awful wild — and she was muttering and talking to herself and laughing like mad. I was so scared I just turned and run."

Sylvia, without stopping for reflection, caught Teddy's hand and ran up the slope. It did not occur to her to be frightened, although she thought with

Teddy that the poor, lonely, eccentric Old Lady had really gone out of her mind at last.

The Old Lady was sitting on the kitchen sofa when Sylvia entered. Teddy, too frightened to go in, lurked on the step outside. The Old Lady still wore the damp black silk dress in which she had walked from the station. Her face was flushed, her eyes wild, her voice hoarse. But she knew Sylvia and cowered down.

“Don’t look at me,” she moaned. “Please go away — I can’t bear that YOU should know how poor I am. You’re to go to Europe — Andrew Cameron is going to send you — I asked him — he couldn’t refuse ME. But please go away.”

Sylvia did not go away. At a glance she had seen that this was sickness and delirium, not insanity. She sent Teddy off in hot haste for Mrs. Spencer and when Mrs. Spencer came they induced the Old Lady to go to bed, and sent for the doctor. By night everybody in Spencervale knew that Old Lady Lloyd had pneumonia.

Mrs. Spencer announced that she meant to stay and nurse the Old Lady. Several other women offered assistance. Everybody was kind and thoughtful. But the Old Lady did not know it. She did not even know Sylvia Gray, who came and sat by her every minute she could spare. Sylvia Gray now knew all that she had suspected — the Old Lady was her fairy godmother. The Old Lady babbled of Sylvia incessantly, revealing all her love for her, betraying all the sacrifices she had made. Sylvia’s heart ached with love and tenderness, and she prayed earnestly that the Old Lady might recover.

“I want her to know that I give her love for love,” she murmured.

Everybody knew now how poor the Old Lady really was. She let slip all the jealously guarded secrets of her existence, except her old love for Leslie Gray. Even in delirium something sealed her lips as to that. But all else came out — her anguish over her unfashionable attire, her pitiful makeshifts and contrivances, her humiliation over wearing unfashionable dresses and paying only five cents where every other Sewing Circle

member paid ten. The kindly women who waited on her listened to her with tear-filled eyes, and repented of their harsh judgments in the past.

“But who would have thought it?” said Mrs. Spencer to the minister’s wife. “Nobody ever dreamed that her father had lost ALL his money, though folks supposed he had lost some in that old affair of the silver mine out west. It’s shocking to think of the way she has lived all these years, often with not enough to eat — and going to bed in winter days to save fuel. Though I suppose if we had known we couldn’t have done much for her, she’s so desperate proud. But if she lives, and will let us help her, things will be different after this. Crooked Jack says he’ll never forgive himself for taking pay for the few little jobs he did for her. He says, if she’ll only let him, he’ll do everything she wants done for her after this for nothing. Ain’t it strange what a fancy she’s took to Miss Gray? Think of her doing all those things for her all summer, and selling the grape jug and all. Well, the Old Lady certainly isn’t mean, but nobody made a mistake in calling her queer. It all does seem desperate pitiful. Miss Gray’s taking it awful hard. She seems to think about as much of the Old Lady as the Old Lady thinks of her. She’s so worked up she don’t even seem to care about going to Europe next year. She’s really going — she’s had word from Andrew Cameron. I’m awful glad, for there never was a sweeter girl in the world; but she says it will cost too much if the Old Lady’s life is to pay for it.”

Andrew Cameron heard of the Old Lady’s illness and came out to Spencervale himself. He was not allowed to see the Old Lady, of course; but he told all concerned that no expense or trouble was to be spared, and the Spencervale doctor was instructed to send his bill to Andrew Cameron and hold his peace about it. Moreover, when Andrew Cameron went back home, he sent a trained nurse out to wait on the Old Lady, a capable, kindly woman who contrived to take charge of the case without offending Mrs. Spencer — than which no higher tribute could be paid to her tact!

The Old Lady did not die — the Lloyd constitution brought her through. One day, when Sylvia came in, the Old Lady smiled up at her, with a weak, faint, sensible smile, and murmured her name, and the nurse said that the crisis was past.

The Old Lady made a marvellously patient and tractable invalid. She did just as she was told, and accepted the presence of the nurse as a matter of course.

But one day, when she was strong enough to talk a little, she said to Sylvia,

“I suppose Andrew Cameron sent Miss Hayes here, did he?” “Yes,” said Sylvia, rather timidly.

The Old Lady noticed the timidity and smiled, with something of her old humour and spirit in her black eyes.

“Time has been when I’d have packed off unceremoniously any person Andrew Cameron sent here,” she said. “But, Sylvia, I have gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and I have left pride and resentment behind me for ever, I hope. I no longer feel as I felt towards Andrew. I can even accept a personal favour from him now. At last I can forgive him for the wrong he did me and mine. Sylvia, I find that I have been letting no ends of cats out of bags in my illness. Everybody knows now how poor I am — but I don’t seem to mind it a bit. I’m only sorry that I ever shut my neighbours out of my life because of my foolish pride. Everyone has been so kind to me, Sylvia. In the future, if my life is spared, it is going to be a very different sort of life. I’m going to open it to all the kindness and companionship I can find in young and old. I’m going to help them all I can and let them help me. I CAN help people — I’ve learned that money isn’t the only power for helping people. Anyone who has sympathy and understanding to give has a treasure that is without money and without price. And oh, Sylvia, you’ve found out what I never meant you to know. But I don’t mind that now, either.”

Sylvia took the Old Lady’s thin white hand and kissed it.

“I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me, dearest Miss Lloyd,” she said earnestly. “And I am so glad that all mystery is done away with between us, and I can love you as much and as openly as I have longed to do. I am so glad and so thankful that you love me, dear fairy godmother.”

“Do you know WHY I love you so?” said the Old Lady wistfully. “Did I let THAT out in my raving, too?”

“No, but I think I know. It is because I am Leslie Gray’s daughter, isn’t it? I know that father loved you — his brother, Uncle Willis, told me all about it.”

“I spoiled my own life because of my wicked pride,” said the Old Lady sadly. “But you will love me in spite of it all, won’t you, Sylvia? And you will come to see me sometimes? And write me after you go away?”

“I am coming to see you every day,” said Sylvia. “I am going to stay in Spencervale for a whole year yet, just to be near you. And next year when I go to Europe — thanks to you, fairy godmother — I’ll write you every day. We are going to be the best of chums, and we are going to have a most beautiful year of comradeship!”

The Old Lady smiled contentedly. Out in the kitchen, the minister’s wife, who had brought up a dish of jelly, was talking to Mrs. Spencer about the Sewing Circle. Through the open window, where the red vines hung, came the pungent, sunwarm October air. The sunshine fell over Sylvia’s chestnut hair like a crown of glory and youth.

“I do feel so perfectly happy,” said the Old Lady, with a long, rapturous breath.

Each In His Own Tongue

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The honey-tinted autumn sunshine was falling thickly over the crimson and amber maples around old Abel Blair's door. There was only one outer door in old Abel's house, and it almost always stood wide open. A little black dog, with one ear missing and a lame forepaw, almost always slept on the worn red sandstone slab which served old Abel for a doorstep; and on the still more worn sill above it a large gray cat almost always slept. Just inside the door, on a bandy-legged chair of elder days, old Abel almost always sat.

He was sitting there this afternoon — a little old man, sadly twisted with rheumatism; his head was abnormally large, thatched with long, wiry black hair; his face was heavily lined and swarthy sunburned; his eyes were deep-set and black, with occasional peculiar golden flashes in them. A strange looking man was old Abel Blair; and as strange was he as he looked. Lower Carmody people would have told you.

Old Abel was almost always sober in these, his later years. He was sober to-day. He liked to bask in that ripe sunlight as well as his dog and cat did; and in such baskings he almost always looked out of his doorway at the far, fine blue sky over the tops of the crowding maples. But to-day he was not looking at the sky, instead, he was staring at the black, dusty rafters of his kitchen, where hung dried meats and strings of onions and bunches of herbs and fishing tackle and guns and skins.

But old Abel saw not these things; his face was the face of a man who beholds visions, compact of heavenly pleasure and hellish pain, for old Abel was seeing what he might have been — and what he was; as he always saw when Felix Moore played to him on the violin. And the awful joy of dreaming that he was young again, with unspoiled life before him, was so great and compelling that it counterbalanced the agony in the realization of a dishonoured old age, following years in which he had

squandered the wealth of his soul in ways where Wisdom lifted not her voice.

Felix Moore was standing opposite to him, before an untidy stove, where the noon fire had died down into pallid, scattered ashes. Under his chin he held old Abel's brown, battered fiddle; his eyes, too, were fixed on the ceiling; and he, too, saw things not lawful to be uttered in any language save that of music; and of all music, only that given forth by the anguished, enraptured spirit of the violin. And yet this Felix was little more than twelve years old, and his face was still the face of a child who knows nothing of either sorrow or sin or failure or remorse. Only in his large, gray-black eyes was there something not of the child — something that spoke of an inheritance from many hearts, now ashes, which had aforetime grieved and joyed, and struggled and failed, and succeeded and grovelled. The inarticulate cries of their longings had passed into this child's soul, and transmuted themselves into the expression of his music.

Felix was a beautiful child. Carmody people, who stayed at home, thought so; and old Abel Blair, who had roamed afar in many lands, thought so; and even the Rev. Stephen Leonard, who taught, and tried to believe, that favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, thought so.

He was a slight lad, with sloping shoulders, a slim brown neck, and a head set on it with stag-like grace and uplift. His hair, cut straight across his brow and falling over his ears, after some caprice of Janet Andrews, the minister's housekeeper, was a glossy blue-black. The skin of his face and hands was like ivory; his eyes were large and beautifully tinted — gray, with dilating pupils; his features had the outlines of a cameo. Carmody mothers considered him delicate, and had long foretold that the minister would never bring him up; but old Abel pulled his grizzled moustache when he heard such forebodings and smiled.

"Felix Moore will live," he said positively. "You can't kill that kind until their work is done. He's got a work to do — if the minister'll let him do it. And if the minister don't let him do it, then I wouldn't be in that minister's shoes when he comes to the judgment — no, I'd rather be in my own. It's an awful thing to cross the purposes of the Almighty, either in

your own life or anybody else's. Sometimes I think it's what's meant by the unpardonable sin — ay, that I do!"

Carmody people never asked what old Abel meant. They had long ago given up such vain questioning. When a man had lived as old Abel had lived for the greater part of his life, was it any wonder he said crazy things? And as for hinting that Mr. Leonard, a man who was really almost too good to live, was guilty of any sin, much less an unpardonable one — well, there now! what use was it to be taking any account of old Abel's queer speeches? Though, to be sure, there was no great harm in a fiddle, and maybe Mr. Leonard was a mite too strict that way with the child. But then, could you wonder at it? There was his father, you see.

Felix finally lowered the violin, and came back to old Abel's kitchen with a long sigh. Old Abel smiled drearily at him — the smile of a man who has been in the hands of the tormentors.

"It's awful the way you play — it's awful," he said with a shudder. "I never heard anything like it — and you that never had any teaching since you were nine years old, and not much practice, except what you could get here now and then on my old, battered fiddle. And to think you make it up yourself as you go along! I suppose your grandfather would never hear to your studying music — would he now?"

Felix shook his head.

"I know he wouldn't, Abel. He wants me to be a minister. Ministers are good things to be, but I'm afraid I can't be a minister."

"Not a pulpit minister. There's different kinds of ministers, and each must talk to men in his own tongue if he's going to do 'em any real good," said old Abel meditatively. "YOUR tongue is music. Strange that your grandfather can't see that for himself, and him such a broadminded man! He's the only minister I ever had much use for. He's God's own if ever a man was. And he loves you — yes, sir, he loves you like the apple of his eye."

“And I love him,” said Felix warmly. “I love him so much that I’ll even try to be a minister for his sake, though I don’t want to be.”

“What do you want to be?”

“A great violinist,” answered the child, his ivory-hued face suddenly warming into living rose. “I want to play to thousands — and see their eyes look as yours do when I play. Sometimes your eyes frighten me, but oh, it’s a splendid fright! If I had father’s violin I could do better. I remember that he once said it had a soul that was doing purgatory for its sins when it had lived on earth. I don’t know what he meant, but it did seem to me that HIS violin was alive. He taught me to play on it as soon as I was big enough to hold it.”

“Did you love your father?” asked old Abel, with a keen look.

Again Felix crimsoned; but he looked straightly and steadily into his old friend’s face.

“No,” he said, “I didn’t; but,” he added, gravely and deliberately, “I don’t think you should have asked me such a question.”

It was old Abel’s turn to blush. Carmody people would not have believed he could blush; and perhaps no living being could have called that deepening hue into his weather-beaten cheek save only this grayeyed child of the rebuking face.

“No, I guess I shouldn’t,” he said. “But I’m always making mistakes. I’ve never made anything else. That’s why I’m nothing more than ‘Old Abel’ to the Carmody people. Nobody but you and your grandfather ever calls me ‘Mr. Blair.’ Yet William Blair at the store up there, rich and respected as he is, wasn’t half as clever a man as I was when we started in life: you mayn’t believe that, but it’s true. And the worst of it is, young Felix, that most of the time I don’t care whether I’m Mr. Blair or old Abel. Only when you play I care. It makes me feel just as a look I saw in a little girl’s eyes some years ago made me feel. Her name was Anne Shirley and she lived with the Cuthberts down at Avonlea. We got into a conversation at Blair’s store. She could talk a blue streak to anyone, that girl could. I

happened to say about something that it didn't matter to a battered old hulk of sixty odd like me. She looked at me with her big, innocent eyes, a little reproachful like, as if I'd said something awful heretical. 'Don't you think, Mr. Blair,' she says, 'that the older we get the more things ought to matter to us?' — as grave as if she'd been a hundred instead of eleven. 'Things matter SO much to me now,' she says, clasping her hands thisaway, 'and I'm sure that when I'm sixty they'll matter just five times as much to me.' Well, the way she looked and the way she spoke made me feel downright ashamed of myself because things had stopped mattering with me. But never mind all that. My miserable old feelings don't count for much. What come of your father's fiddle?"

"Grandfather took it away when I came here. I think he burned it. And I long for it so often."

"Well, you've always got my old brown fiddle to come to when you must."

"Yes, I know. And I'm glad for that. But I'm hungry for a violin all the time. And I only come here when the hunger gets too much to bear. I feel as if I oughtn't to come even then — I'm always saying I won't do it again, because I know grandfather wouldn't like it, if he knew."

"He has never forbidden it, has he?"

"No, but that is because he doesn't know I come here for that. He never thinks of such a thing. I feel sure he WOULD forbid it, if he knew. And that makes me very wretched. And yet I HAVE to come. Mr. Blair, do you know why grandfather can't bear to have me play on the violin? He loves music, and he doesn't mind my playing on the organ, if I don't neglect other things. I can't understand it, can you?"

"I have a pretty good idea, but I can't tell you. It isn't my secret. Maybe he'll tell you himself some day. But, mark you, young Felix, he has got good reasons for it all. Knowing what I know, I can't blame him over much, though I think he's mistaken. Come now, play something more for me before you go — something that's bright and happy this time, so as to leave me with a good taste in my mouth. That last thing you played took

me straight to heaven, — but heaven's awful near to hell, and at the last you tipped me in."

"I don't understand you," said Felix, drawing his fine, narrow black brows together in a perplexed frown.

"No — and I wouldn't want you to. You couldn't understand unless you was an old man who had it in him once to do something and be a MAN, and just went and made himself a devilish fool. But there must be something in you that understands things — all kinds of things — or you couldn't put it all into music the way you do. How do you do it? How in — how DO you do it, young Felix?"

"I don't know. But I play differently to different people. I don't know how that is. When I'm alone with you I have to play one way; and when Janet comes over here to listen I feel quite another way — not so thrilling, but happier and lonelier. And that day when Jessie Blair was here listening I felt as if I wanted to laugh and sing — as if the violin wanted to laugh and sing all the time."

The strange, golden gleam flashed through old Abel's sunken eyes.

"God," he muttered under his breath, "I believe the boy can get into other folk's souls somehow, and play out what HIS soul sees there."

"What's that you say?" inquired Felix, petting his fiddle.

"Nothing — never mind — go on. Something lively now, young Felix. Stop probing into my soul, where you haven't no business to be, you infant, and play me something out of your own — something sweet and happy and pure."

"I'll play the way I feel on sunshiny mornings, when the birds are singing and I forget I have to be a minister," said Felix simply.

A witching, gurgling, mirthful strain, like mingled bird and brook song, floated out on the still air, along the path where the red and golden maple leaves were falling very softly, one by one. The Reverend Stephen Leonard

heard it, as he came along the way, and the Reverend Stephen Leonard smiled. Now, when Stephen Leonard smiled, children ran to him, and grown people felt as if they looked from Pisgah over to some fair land of promise beyond the fret and worry of their care-dimmed earthly lives.

Mr. Leonard loved music, as he loved all things beautiful, whether in the material or the spiritual world, though he did not realize how much he loved them for their beauty alone, or he would have been shocked and remorseful. He himself was beautiful. His figure was erect and youthful, despite seventy years. His face was as mobile and charming as a woman's, yet with all a man's tried strength and firmness in it, and his dark blue eyes flashed with the brilliance of one and twenty; even his silken silvery hair could not make an old man of him. He was worshipped by everyone who knew him, and he was, in so far as mortal man may be, worthy of that worship.

"Old Abel is amusing himself with his violin again," he thought. "What a delicious thing he is playing! He has quite a gift for the violin. But how can he play such a thing as that, — a battered old hulk of a man who has, at one time or another, wallowed in almost every sin to which human nature can sink? He was on one of his sprees three days ago — the first one for over a year — lying dead-drunk in the market square in Charlottetown among the dogs; and now he is playing something that only a young archangel on the hills of heaven ought to be able to play. Well, it will make my task all the easier. Abel is always repentant by the time he is able to play on his fiddle."

Mr. Leonard was on the doorstep. The little black dog had frisked down to meet him, and the gray cat rubbed her head against his leg. Old Abel did not notice him; he was beating time with uplifted hand and smiling face to Felix's music, and his eyes were young again, glowing with laughter and sheer happiness.

"Felix! what does this mean?"

The violin bow clattered from Felix's hand upon the floor; he swung around and faced his grandfather. As he met the passion of grief and hurt in the old man's eyes, his own clouded with an agony of repentance.

“Grandfather — I’m sorry,” he cried brokenly.

“Now, now!” Old Abel had risen deprecatingly. “It’s all my fault, Mr. Leonard. Don’t you blame the boy. I coaxed him to play a bit for me. I didn’t feel fit to touch the fiddle yet myself — too soon after Friday, you see. So I coaxed him on — wouldn’t give him no peace till he played. It’s all my fault.”

“No,” said Felix, throwing back his head. His face was as white as marble, yet it seemed ablaze with desperate truth and scorn of old Abel’s shielding lie. “No, grandfather, it isn’t Abel’s fault. I came over here on purpose to play, because I thought you had gone to the harbour. I have come here often, ever since I have lived with you.”

“Ever since you have lived with me you have been deceiving me like this, Felix?”

There was no anger in Mr. Leonard’s tone — only measureless sorrow. The boy’s sensitive lips quivered.

“Forgive me, grandfather,” he whispered beseechingly.

“You never forbid him to come,” old Abel broke in angrily. “Be just, Mr. Leonard — be just.”

“I AM just. Felix knows that he has disobeyed me, in the spirit if not in the letter. Do you not know it, Felix?”

“Yes, grandfather, I have done wrong — I’ve known that I was doing wrong every time I came. Forgive me, grandfather.”

“Felix, I forgive you, but I ask you to promise me, here and now, that you will never again, as long as you live, touch a violin.” Dusky crimson rushed madly over the boy’s face. He gave a cry as if he had been lashed with a whip. Old Abel sprang to his feet.

“Don’t you ask such a promise of him, Mr. Leonard,” he cried furiously. “It’s a sin, that’s what it is. Man, man, what blinds you? You ARE blind. Can’t you see what is in the boy? His soul is full of music. It’ll torture him to death — or to worse — if you don’t let it have way.”

“There is a devil in such music,” said Mr. Leonard hotly.

“Ay, there may be, but don’t forget that there’s a Christ in it, too,” retorted old Abel in a low tense tone.

Mr. Leonard looked shocked; he considered that old Abel had uttered blasphemy. He turned away from him rebukingly.

“Felix, promise me.”

There was no relenting in his face or tone. He was merciless in the use of the power he possessed over that young, loving spirit. Felix understood that there was no escape; but his lips were very white as he said,

“I promise, grandfather.”

Mr. Leonard drew a long breath of relief. He knew that promise would be kept. So did old Abel. The latter crossed the floor and sullenly took the violin from Felix’s relaxed hand. Without a word or look he went into the little bedroom off the kitchen and shut the door with a slam of righteous indignation. But from its window he stealthily watched his visitors go away. Just as they entered on the maple path Mr. Leonard laid his hand on Felix’s head and looked down at him. Instantly the boy flung his arm up over the old man’s shoulder and smiled at him. In the look they exchanged there was boundless love and trust — ay, and good-fellowship. Old Abel’s scornful eyes again held the golden flash.

“How those two love each other!” he muttered enviously. “And how they torture each other!”

Mr. Leonard went to his study to pray when he got home. He knew that Felix had run for comforting to Janet Andrews, the little, thin, sweet-faced, rigid-lipped woman who kept house for them. Mr. Leonard knew that Janet would disapprove of his action as deeply as old Abel had done. She would say nothing, she would only look at him with reproachful eyes over the teacups at suppertime. But Mr. Leonard believed he had done what was best and his conscience did not trouble him, though his heart did.

Thirteen years before this, his daughter Margaret had almost broken that heart by marrying a man of whom he could not approve. Martin Moore was a professional violinist. He was a popular performer, though not in any sense a great one. He met the slim, golden-haired daughter of the manse at the house of a college friend she was visiting in Toronto, and fell

straightway in love with her. Margaret had loved him with all her virginal heart in return, and married him, despite her father's disapproval. It was not to Martin Moore's profession that Mr. Leonard objected, but to the man himself. He knew that the violinist's past life had not been such as became a suitor for Margaret Leonard; and his insight into character warned him that Martin Moore could never make any woman lastingly happy.

Margaret Leonard did not believe this. She married Martin Moore and lived one year in paradise. Perhaps that atoned for the three bitter years which followed — that, and her child. At all events, she died as she had lived, loyal and uncomplaining. She died alone, for her husband was away on a concert tour, and her illness was so brief that her father had not time to reach her before the end. Her body was taken home to be buried beside her mother in the little Carmody churchyard. Mr. Leonard wished to take the child, but Martin Moore refused to give him up.

Six years later Moore, too, died, and at last Mr. Leonard had his heart's desire — the possession of Margaret's son. The grandfather awaited the child's coming with mingled feelings. His heart yearned for him, yet he dreaded to meet a second edition of Martin Moore. Suppose Margaret's son resembled his handsome vagabond of a father! Or, worse still, suppose he were cursed with his father's lack of principle, his instability, his Bohemian instincts. Thus Mr. Leonard tortured himself wretchedly before the coming of Felix.

The child did not look like either father or mother. Instead, Mr. Leonard found himself looking into a face which he had put away under the grasses thirty years before — the face of his girl bride, who had died at Margaret's birth. Here again were her lustrous gray-black eyes, her ivory outlines, her fine-traced arch of brow; and here, looking out of those eyes, seemed her very spirit again. From that moment the soul of the old man was knit to the soul of the child, and they loved each other with a love surpassing that of women.

Felix's only inheritance from his father was his love of music. But the child had genius, where his father had possessed only talent. To Martin Moore's outward mastery of the violin was added the mystery and

intensity of his mother's nature, with some more subtle quality still, which had perhaps come to him from the grandmother he so strongly resembled. Moore had understood what a career was naturally before the child, and he had trained him in the technique of his art from the time the slight fingers could first grasp the bow. When nine-year-old Felix came to the Carmody manse, he had mastered as much of the science of the violin as nine out of ten musicians acquire in a lifetime; and he brought with him his father's violin; it was all Martin Moore had to leave his son — but it was an Amati, the commercial value of which nobody in Carmody suspected. Mr. Leonard had taken possession of it and Felix had never seen it since. He cried himself to sleep many a night for the loss of it. Mr. Leonard did not know this, and if Janet Andrews suspected it she held her tongue — an art in which she excelled. She “saw no harm in a fiddle,” herself, and thought Mr. Leonard absurdly strict in the matter, though it would not have been well for the luckless outsider who might have ventured to say as much to her. She had connived at Felix's visits to old Abel Blair, squaring the matter with her Presbyterian conscience by some peculiar process known only to herself.

When Janet heard of the promise which Mr. Leonard had exacted from Felix she seethed with indignation; and, though she “knew her place” better than to say anything to Mr. Leonard about it, she made her disapproval so plainly manifest in her bearing that the stern, gentle old man found the atmosphere of his hitherto peaceful manse unpleasantly chill and hostile for a time.

It was the wish of his heart that Felix should be a minister, as he would have wished his own son to be, had one been born to him. Mr. Leonard thought rightly that the highest work to which any man could be called was a life of service to his fellows; but he made the mistake of supposing the field of service much narrower than it is — of failing to see that a man may minister to the needs of humanity in many different but equally effective ways.

Janet hoped that Mr. Leonard might not exact the fulfilment of Felix's promise; but Felix himself, with the instinctive understanding of perfect love, knew that it was vain to hope for any change of viewpoint in his

grandfather. He addressed himself to the keeping of his promise in letter and in spirit. He never went again to old Abel's; he did not even play on the organ, though this was not forbidden, because any music awakened in him a passion of longing and ecstasy which demanded expression with an intensity not to be borne. He flung himself grimly into his studies and conned Latin and Greek verbs with a persistency which soon placed him at the head of all competitors.

Only once in the long winter did he come near to breaking his promise. One evening, when March was melting into April, and the pulses of spring were stirring under the lingering snow, he was walking home from school alone. As he descended into the little hollow below the manse a lively lilt of music drifted up to meet him. It was only the product of a mouth-organ, manipulated by a little black-eyed, French-Canadian hired boy, sitting on the fence by the brook; but there was music in the ragged urchin and it came out through his simple toy. It tingled over Felix from head to foot; and, when Leon held out the mouth-organ with a fraternal grin of invitation, he snatched at it as a famished creature might snatch at food.

Then, with it halfway to his lips, he paused. True, it was only the violin he had promised never to touch; but he felt that if he gave way ever so little to the desire that was in him, it would sweep everything before it. If he played on Leon Buote's mouth-organ, there in that misty spring dale, he would go to old Abel's that evening; he KNEW he would go. To Leon's amazement, Felix threw the mouth-organ back at him and ran up the hill as if he were pursued. There was something in his boyish face that frightened Leon; and it frightened Janet Andrews as Felix rushed past her in the hall of the manse.

"Child, what's the matter with you?" she cried. "Are you sick? Have you been scared?"

"No, no. Leave me alone, Janet," said Felix chokingly, dashing up the stairs to his own room.

He was quite composed when he came down to tea, an hour later, though he was unusually pale and had purple shadows under his large eyes.

Mr. Leonard scrutinized him somewhat anxiously; it suddenly occurred to the old minister that Felix was looking more delicate than his wont this spring. Well, he had studied hard all winter, and he was certainly growing very fast. When vacation came he must be sent away for a visit.

“They tell me Naomi Clark is real sick,” said Janet. “She has been ailing all winter, and now she’s fast to her bed. Mrs. Murphy says she believes the woman is dying, but nobody dares tell her so. She won’t give in she’s sick, nor take medicine. And there’s nobody to wait on her except that simple creature, Maggie Peterson.”

“I wonder if I ought to go and see her,” said Mr. Leonard uneasily.

“What use would it be to bother yourself? You know she wouldn’t see you — she’d shut the door in your face like she did before. She’s an awful wicked woman — but it’s kind of terrible to think of her lying there sick, with no responsible person to tend her.”

“Naomi Clark is a bad woman and she lived a life of shame, but I like her, for all that,” remarked Felix, in the grave, meditative tone in which he occasionally said rather startling things.

Mr. Leonard looked somewhat reproachfully at Janet Andrews, as if to ask her why Felix should have attained to this dubious knowledge of good and evil under her care; and Janet shot a dour look back which, being interpreted, meant that if Felix went to the district school she could not and would not be held responsible if he learned more there than arithmetic and Latin.

“What do you know of Naomi Clark to like or dislike?” she asked curiously. “Did you ever see her?”

“Oh, yes,” Felix replied, addressing himself to his cherry preserve with considerable gusto. “I was down at Spruce Cove one night last summer when a big thunderstorm came up. I went to Naomi’s house for shelter. The door was open, so I walked right in, because nobody answered my knock. Naomi Clark was at the window, watching the cloud coming up over the sea. She just looked at me once, but didn’t say anything, and then

went on watching the cloud. I didn't like to sit down because she hadn't asked me to, so I went to the window by her and watched it, too. It was a dreadful sight — the cloud was so black and the water so green, and there was such a strange light between the cloud and the water; yet there was something splendid in it, too. Part of the time I watched the storm, and the other part I watched Naomi's face. It was dreadful to see, like the storm, and yet I liked to see it.

"After the thunder was over it rained a while longer, and Naomi sat down and talked to me. She asked me who I was, and when I told her she asked me to play something for her on her violin," — Felix shot a deprecating glance at Mr. Leonard—"because, she said, she'd heard I was a great hand at it. She wanted something lively, and I tried just as hard as I could to play something like that. But I couldn't. I played something that was terrible — it just played itself — it seemed as if something was lost that could never be found again. And before I got through, Naomi came at me, and tore the violin from me, and — SWORE. And she said, 'You big-eyed brat, how did you know THAT?' Then she took me by the arm — and she hurt me, too, I can tell you — and she put me right out in the rain and slammed the door."

"The rude, unmannerly creature!" said Janet indignantly.

"Oh, no, she was quite in the right," said Felix composedly. "It served me right for what I played. You see, she didn't know I couldn't help playing it. I suppose she thought I did it on purpose."

"What on earth did you play, child?"

"I don't know." Felix shivered. "It was awful — it was dreadful. It was fit to break your heart. But it HAD to be played, if I played anything at all."

"I don't understand what you mean — I declare I don't," said Janet in bewilderment.

"I think we'll change the subject of conversation," said Mr. Leonard.

It was a month later when “the simple creature, Maggie” appeared at the manse door one evening and asked for the preached.

“Naomi wants ter see yer,” she mumbled. “Naomi sent Maggie ter tell yer ter come at onct.”

“I shall go, certainly,” said Mr. Leonard gently. “Is she very ill?”

“Her’s dying,” said Maggie with a broad grin. “And her’s awful skeered of hell. Her just knew ter-day her was dying. Maggie told her — her wouldn’t believe the harbour women, but her believed Maggie. Her yelled awful.”

Maggie chuckled to herself over the gruesome remembrance. Mr. Leonard, his heart filled with pity, called Janet and told her to give the poor creature some refreshment. But Maggie shook her head.

“No, no, preacher, Maggie must get right back to Naomi. Maggie’ll tell her the preacher’s coming ter save her from hell.”

She uttered an eerie cry, and ran at full speed shoreward through the spruce woods.

“The Lord save us!” said Janet in an awed tone. “I knew the poor girl was simple, but I didn’t know she was like THAT. And are you going, sir?”

“Yes, of course. I pray God I may be able to help the poor soul,” said Mr. Leonard sincerely. He was a man who never shirked what he believed to be his duty; but duty had sometimes presented itself to him in pleasanter guise than this summons to Naomi Clark’s deathbed.

The woman had been the plague spot of Lower Carmody and Carmody Harbour for a generation. In the earlier days of his ministry to the congregation he had tried to reclaim her, and Naomi had mocked and flouted him to his face. Then, for the sake of those to whom she was a snare or a heartbreak, he had endeavoured to set the law in motion against her, and Naomi had laughed the law to scorn. Finally, he had been compelled to let her alone.

Yet Naomi had not always been an outcast. Her girlhood had been innocent; but she was the possessor of a dangerous beauty, and her mother was dead. Her father was a man notorious for his harshness and violence of temper. When Naomi made the fatal mistake of trusting to a false love that betrayed and deserted, he drove her from his door with taunts and curses.

Naomi took up her quarters in a little deserted house at Spruce Cove. Had her child lived it might have saved her. But it died at birth, and with its little life went her last chance of worldly redemption. From that time forth, her feet were set in the way that takes hold on hell.

For the past five years, however, Naomi had lived a tolerably respectable life. When Janet Peterson had died, her idiot daughter, Maggie, had been left with no kin in the world. Nobody knew what was to be done with her, for nobody wanted to be bothered with her. Naomi Clark went to the girl and offered her a home. People said she was no fit person to have charge of Maggie, but everybody shirked the unpleasant task of interfering in the matter, except Mr. Leonard, who went to expostulate with Naomi, and, as Janet said, for his pains got her door shut in his face.

But from the day when Maggie Peterson went to live with her, Naomi ceased to be the harbour Magdalen.

The sun had set when Mr. Leonard reached Spruce Cove, and the harbour was veiling itself in a wondrous twilight splendour. Afar out, the sea lay throbbing and purple, and the moan of the bar came through the sweet, chill spring air with its burden of hopeless, endless longing and seeking. The sky was blossoming into stars above the afterglow; out to the east the moon was rising, and the sea beneath it was a thing of radiance and silver and glamour; and a little harbour boat that went sailing across it was transmuted into an elfin shallop from the coast of fairyland.

Mr. Leonard sighed as he turned from the sinless beauty of the sea and sky to the threshold of Naomi Clark's house. It was very small — one room below, and a sleeping-loft above; but a bed had been made up for the sick woman by the downstairs window looking out on the harbour; and Naomi lay on it, with a lamp burning at her head and another at her side, although

it was not yet dark. A great dread of darkness had always been one of Naomi's peculiarities.

She was tossing restlessly on her poor couch, while Maggie crouched on a box at the foot. Mr. Leonard had not seen her for five years, and he was shocked at the change in her. She was much wasted; her clear-cut, aquiline features had been of the type which becomes indescribably witchlike in old age, and, though Naomi Clark was barely sixty, she looked as if she might be a hundred. Her hair streamed over the pillow in white, uncared-for tresses, and the hands that plucked at the bedclothes were like wrinkled claws. Only her eyes were unchanged; they were as blue and brilliant as ever, but now filled with such agonized terror and appeal that Mr. Leonard's gentle heart almost stood still with the horror of them. They were the eyes of a creature driven wild with torture, hounded by furies, clutched by unutterable fear.

Naomi sat up and dragged at his arm.

"Can you help me? Can you help me?" she gasped imploringly. "Oh, I thought you'd never come! I was skeered I'd die before you got here — die and go to hell. I didn't know before today that I was dying. None of those cowards would tell me. Can you help me?"

"If I cannot, God can," said Mr. Leonard gently. He felt himself very helpless and inefficient before this awful terror and frenzy. He had seen sad deathbeds — troubled deathbeds — ay, and despairing deathbeds, but never anything like this. "God!" Naomi's voice shrilled terribly as she uttered the name. "I can't go to God for help. Oh, I'm skeered of hell, but I'm skeereder still of God. I'd rather go to hell a thousand times over than face God after the life I've lived. I tell you, I'm sorry for living wicked — I was always sorry for it all the time. There ain't never been a moment I wasn't sorry, though nobody would believe it. I was driven on by fiends of hell. Oh, you don't understand — you CAN'T understand — but I was always sorry!"

"If you repent, that is all that is necessary. God will forgive you if you ask Him."

“No, He can’t! Sins like mine can’t be forgiven. He can’t — and He won’t.”

“He can and He will. He is a God of love, Naomi.”

“No,” said Naomi with stubborn conviction. “He isn’t a God of love at all. That’s why I’m skeered of him. No, no. He’s a God of wrath and justice and punishment. Love! There ain’t no such thing as love! I’ve never found it on earth, and I don’t believe it’s to be found in God.”

“Naomi, God loves us like a father.”

“Like MY father?” Naomi’s shrill laughter, peeling through the still room, was hideous to hear.

The old minister shuddered.

“No — no! As a kind, tender, all-wise father, Naomi — as you would have loved your little child if it had lived.”

Naomi cowered and moaned.

“Oh, I wish I could believe THAT. I wouldn’t be frightened if I could believe that. MAKE me believe it. Surely you can make me believe that there’s love and forgiveness in God if you believe it yourself.”

“Jesus Christ forgave and loved the Magdalen, Naomi.”

“Jesus Christ? Oh, I ain’t afraid of HIM. Yes, HE could understand and forgive. He was half human. I tell you, it’s God I’m skeered of.”

“They are one and the same,” said Mr. Leonard helplessly. He knew he could not make Naomi realize it. This anguished deathbed was no place for a theological exposition on the mysteries of the Trinity.

“Christ died for you, Naomi. He bore your sins in His own body on the cross.”

“We bear our own sins,” said Naomi fiercely. “I’ve borne mine all my life — and I’ll bear them for all eternity. I can’t believe anything else. I CAN’T believe God can forgive me. I’ve ruined people body and soul — I’ve broken hearts and poisoned homes — I’m worse than a murderess. No — no — no, there’s no hope for me.” Her voice rose again into that shrill, intolerable shriek. “I’ve got to go to hell. It ain’t so much the fire I’m skeered of as the outer darkness. I’ve always been so skeered of darkness — it’s so full of awful things and thoughts. Oh, there ain’t nobody to help me! Man ain’t no good and I’m too skeered of God.”

She wrung her hands. Mr. Leonard walked up and down the room in the keenest anguish of spirit he had ever known. What could he do? What could he say? There was healing and peace in his religion for this woman as for all others, but he could express it in no language which this tortured soul could understand. He looked at her writhing face; he looked at the idiot girl chuckling to herself at the foot of the bed; he looked through the open door to the remote, starlit night — and a horrible sense of utter helplessness overcame him. He could do nothing — nothing! In all his life he had never known such bitterness of soul as the realization brought home to him.

“What is the good of you if you can’t help me?” moaned the dying woman. “Pray — pray — pray!” she shrilled suddenly.

Mr. Leonard dropped on his knees by the bed. He did not know what to say. No prayer that he had ever prayed was of use here. The old, beautiful formulas, which had soothed and helped the passing of many a soul, were naught save idle, empty words to Naomi Clark. In his anguish of mind Stephen Leonard gasped out the briefest and sincerest prayer his lips had ever uttered.

“O, God, our Father! Help this woman. Speak to her in a tongue which she can understand.”

A beautiful, white face appeared for a moment in the light that streamed out of the doorway into the darkness of the night. No one noticed it, and it quickly drew back into the shadow. Suddenly, Naomi fell back on her pillow, her lips blue, her face horribly pinched, her eyes rolled up in her

head. Maggie started up, pushed Mr. Leonard aside, and proceeded to administer some remedy with surprising skill and deftness. Mr. Leonard, believing Naomi to be dying, went to the door, feeling sick and bruised in soul.

Presently a figure stole out into the light.

“Felix, is that you?” said Mr. Leonard in a startled tone.

“Yes, sir.” Felix came up to the stone step. “Janet got frightened what you might fall on that rough road after dark, so she made me come after you with a lantern. I’ve been waiting behind the point, but at last I thought I’d better come and see if you would be staying much longer. If you will be, I’ll go back to Janet and leave the lantern here with you.” “Yes, that will be the best thing to do. I may not be ready to go home for some time yet,” said Mr. Leonard, thinking that the deathbed of sin behind him was no sight for Felix’s young eyes.

“Is that your grandson you’re talking to?” Naomi spoke clearly and strongly. The spasm had passed. “If it is, bring him in. I want to see him.”

Reluctantly, Mr. Leonard signed Felix to enter. The boy stood by Naomi’s bed and looked down at her with sympathetic eyes. But at first she did not look at him — she looked past him at the minister.

“I might have died in that spell,” she said, with sullen reproach in her voice, “and if I had, I’d been in hell now. You can’t help me — I’m done with you. There ain’t any hope for me, and I know it now.”

She turned to Felix.

“Take down that fiddle on the wall and play something for me,” she said imperiously. “I’m dying — and I’m going to hell — and I don’t want to think of it. Play me something to take my thoughts off it — I don’t care what you play. I was always fond of music — there was always something in it for me I never found anywhere else.”

Felix looked at his grandfather. The old man nodded, he felt too ashamed to speak; he sat with his fine silver head in his hands, while Felix took down and tuned the old violin, on which so many godless lilt had been played in many a wild revel. Mr. Leonard felt that he had failed his religion. He could not give Naomi the help that was in it for her.

Felix drew the bow softly, perplexedly over the strings. He had no idea what he should play. Then his eyes were caught and held by Naomi's burning, mesmeric, blue gaze as she lay on her crumpled pillow. A strange, inspired look came over the boy's face. He began to play as if it were not he who played, but some mightier power, of which he was but the passive instrument.

Sweet and soft and wonderful was the music that stole through the room. Mr. Leonard forgot his heartbreak and listened to it in puzzled amazement. He had never heard anything like it before. How could the child play like that? He looked at Naomi and marvelled at the change in her face. The fear and frenzy were going out of it; she listened breathlessly, never taking her eyes from Felix. At the foot of the bed the idiot girl sat with tears on her cheeks.

In that strange music was the joy of the innocent, mirthful childhood, blent with the laughter of waves and the call of glad winds. Then it held the wild, wayward dreams of youth, sweet and pure in all their wildness and waywardness. They were followed by a rapture of young love — all-surrendering, all-sacrificing love. The music changed. It held the torture of unshed tears, the anguish of a heart deceived and desolate. Mr. Leonard almost put his hands over his ears to shut out its intolerable poignancy. But on the dying woman's face was only a strange relief, as if some dumb, long-hidden pain had at last won to the healing of utterance.

The sullen indifference of despair came next, the bitterness of smouldering revolt and misery, the reckless casting away of all good. There was something indescribably evil in the music now — so evil that Mr. Leonard's white soul shuddered away in loathing, and Maggie cowered and whined like a frightened animal.

Again the music changed. And in it now there was agony and fear — and repentance and a cry for pardon. To Mr. Leonard there was something strangely familiar in it. He struggled to recall where he had heard it before; then he suddenly knew — he had heard it before Felix came in Naomi's terrible words! He looked at his grandson with something like awe. Here was a power of which he knew nothing — a strange and dreadful power. Was it of God? Or of Satan?

For the last time the music changed. And now it was not music at all — it was a great, infinite forgiveness, an all-comprehending love. It was healing for a sick soul; it was light and hope and peace. A Bible text, seemingly incongruous, came into Mr. Leonard's mind—"This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Felix lowered the violin and dropped wearily on a chair by the bed. The inspired light faded from his face; once more he was only a tired boy. But Stephen Leonard was on his knees, sobbing like a child; and Naomi Clark was lying still, with her hands clasped over her breast.

"I understand now," she said very softly. "I couldn't see it before — and now it's so plain. I just FEEL it. God IS a God of love. He can forgive anybody — even me — even me. He knows all about it. I ain't skeered any more. He just loves me and forgives me as I'd have loved and forgiven my baby if she'd lived, no matter how bad she was, or what she did. The minister told me that but I couldn't believe it. I KNOW it now. And He sent you here tonight, boy, to tell it to me in a way that I could feel it."

Naomi Clark died just as the dawn came up over the sea. Mr. Leonard rose from his watch at her bedside and went to the door. Before him spread the harbour, gray and austere in the faint light, but afar out the sun was rending asunder the milk-white mists in which the sea was scarfed, and under it was a virgin glow of sparkling water.

The fir trees on the point moved softly and whispered together. The whole world sang of spring and resurrection and life; and behind him Naomi Clark's dead face took on the peace that passes understanding.

The old minister and his grandson walked home together in a silence that neither wished to break. Janet Andrews gave them a good scolding and an excellent breakfast. Then she ordered them both to bed; but Mr. Leonard, smiling at her, said:

“Presently, Janet, presently. But now, take this key, go up to the black chest in the garret, and bring me what you will find there.”

When Janet had gone, he turned to Felix.

“Felix, would you like to study music as your lifework?”

Felix looked up, with a transfiguring flush on his wan face.

“Oh, grandfather! Oh, grandfather!”

“You may do so, my child. After this night I dare not hinder you. Go with my blessing, and may God guide and keep you, and make you strong to do His work and tell His message to humanity in you own appointed way. It is not the way I desired for you — but I see that I was mistaken. Old Abel spoke truly when he said there was a Christ in your violin as well as a devil. I understand what he meant now.”

He turned to meet Janet, who came into the study with a violin. Felix’s heart throbbed; he recognized it. Mr. Leonard took it from Janet and held it out to the boy.

“This is your father’s violin, Felix. See to it that you never make your music the servant of the power of evil — never debase it to unworthy ends. For your responsibility is as your gift, and God will exact the accounting of it from you. Speak to the world in your own tongue through it, with truth and sincerity; and all I have hoped for you will be abundantly fulfilled.”

Little Joscelyn

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“It simply isn’t to be thought of, Aunty Nan,” said Mrs. William Morrison decisively. Mrs. William Morrison was one of those people who always speak decisively. If they merely announce that they are going to peel the potatoes for dinner their hearers realize that there is no possible escape for the potatoes. Moreover, these people are always given their full title by everybody. William Morrison was called Billy oftener than not; but, if you had asked for Mrs. Billy Morrison, nobody in Avonlea would have known what you meant at first guess.

“You must see that for yourself, Aunty,” went on Mrs. William, hulling strawberries nimbly with her large, firm, white fingers as she talked. Mrs. William always improved every shining moment. “It is ten miles to Kensington, and just think how late you would be getting back. You are not able for such a drive. You wouldn’t get over it for a month. You know you are anything but strong this summer.”

Aunty Nan sighed, and patted the tiny, furry, gray morsel of a kitten in her lap with trembling fingers. She knew, better than anyone else could know it, that she was not strong that summer. In her secret soul, Aunty Nan, sweet and frail and timid under the burden of her seventy years, felt with mysterious unmistakable prescience that it was to be her last summer at the Gull Point Farm. But that was only the more reason why she should go to hear little Joscelyn sing; she would never have another chance. And oh, to hear little Joscelyn sing just once — Joscelyn, whose voice was delighting thousands out in the big world, just as in the years gone by it had delighted Aunty Nan and the dwellers at the Gull Point Farm for a whole golden summer with carols at dawn and dusk about the old place!

“Oh, I know I’m not very strong, Maria.” said Aunty Nan pleadingly, “but I am strong enough for that. Indeed I am. I could stay at Kensington over

night with George's folks, you know, and so it wouldn't tire me much. I do so want to hear Joscelyn sing. Oh, how I love little Joscelyn."

"It passes my understanding, the way you hanker after that child," cried Mrs. William impatiently. "Why, she was a perfect stranger to you when she came here, and she was here only one summer!"

"But oh, such a summer!" said Aunt Nan softly. "We all loved little Joscelyn. She just seemed like one of our own. She was one of God's children, carrying love with them everywhere. In some ways that little Anne Shirley the Cuthberts have got up there at Green Gables reminds me of her, though in other ways they're not a bit alike. Joscelyn was a beauty."

"Well, that Shirley snippet certainly isn't that," said Mrs. William sarcastically. "And if Joscelyn's tongue was one third as long as Anne Shirley's the wonder to me is that she didn't talk you all to death out of hand."

"Little Joscelyn wasn't much of a talker," said Aunt Nan dreamily. "She was kind of a quiet child. But you remember what she did say. And I've never forgotten little Joscelyn."

Mrs. William shrugged her plump, shapely shoulders.

"Well, it was fifteen years ago, Aunt Nan, and Joscelyn can't be very 'little' now. She is a famous woman, and she has forgotten all about you, you can be sure of that."

"Joscelyn wasn't the kind that forgets," said Aunt Nan loyally. "And, anyway, the point is, I haven't forgotten HER. Oh, Maria, I've longed for years and years just to hear her sing once more. It seems as if I MUST hear my little Joscelyn sing once again before I die. I've never had the chance before and I never will have it again. Do please ask William to take me to Kensington."

"Dear me, Aunt Nan, this is really childish," said Mrs. William, whisking her bowlful of berries into the pantry. "You must let other folks be the judge of what is best for you now. You aren't strong enough to drive to

Kensington, and, even if you were, you know well enough that William couldn't go to Kensington tomorrow night. He has got to attend that political meeting at Newbridge. They can't do without him."

"Jordan could take me to Kensington," pleaded Aunty Nan, with very unusual persistence.

"Nonsense! You couldn't go to Kensington with the hired man. Now, Aunty Nan, do be reasonable. Aren't William and I kind to you? Don't we do everything for your comfort?"

"Yes, oh, yes," admitted Aunty Nan deprecatingly.

"Well, then, you ought to be guided by our opinion. And you must just give up thinking about the Kensington concert, Aunty, and not worry yourself and me about it any more. I am going down to the shore field now to call William to tea. Just keep an eye on the baby in chance he wakes up, and see that the teapot doesn't boil over."

Mrs. William whisked out of the kitchen, pretending not to see the tears that were falling over Aunty Nan's withered pink cheeks. Aunty Nan was really getting very childish, Mrs. William reflected, as she marched down to the shore field. Why, she cried now about every little thing! And such a notion — to want to go to the Old Timers' concert at Kensington and be so set on it! Really, it was hard to put up with her whims. Mrs. William sighed virtuously.

As for Aunty Nan, she sat alone in the kitchen, and cried bitterly, as only lonely old age can cry. It seemed to her that she could not bear it, that she **MUST** go to Kensington. But she knew that it was not to be, since Mrs. William had decided otherwise. Mrs. William's word was law at Gull Point Farm.

"What's the matter with my old Aunty Nan?" cried a hearty young voice from the doorway. Jordan Sloane stood there, his round, freckled face looking as anxious and sympathetic as it was possible for such a very round, very freckled face to look. Jordan was the Morrisons' hired boy that summer, and he worshipped Aunty Nan.

“Oh, Jordan,” sobbed Aunty Nan, who was not above telling her troubles to the hired help, although Mrs. William thought she ought to be, “I can’t go to Kensington tomorrow night to hear little Joscelyn sing at the Old Timers’ concert. Maria says I can’t.”

“That’s too bad,” said Jordan. “Old cat,” he muttered after the retreating and serenely unconscious Mrs. William. Then he shambled in and sat down on the sofa beside Aunty Nan.

“There, there, don’t cry,” he said, patting her thin little shoulder with his big, sunburned paw. “You’ll make yourself sick if you go on crying, and we can’t get along without you at Gull Point Farm.”

Aunty Nan smiled wanly.

“I’m afraid you’ll soon have to get on without me, Jordan. I’m not going to be here very long now. No, I’m not, Jordan, I know it. Something tells me so very plainly. But I would be willing to go — glad to go, for I’m very tired, Jordan — if I could only have heard little Joscelyn sing once more.”

“Why are you so set on hearing her?” asked Jordan. “She ain’t no kin to you, is she?”

“No, but dearer to me — dearer to me than many of my own. Maria thinks that is silly, but you wouldn’t if you’d known her, Jordan. Even Maria herself wouldn’t, if she had known her. It is fifteen years since she came here one summer to board. She was a child of thirteen then, and hadn’t any relations except an old uncle who sent her to school in winter and boarded her out in summer, and didn’t care a rap about her. The child was just starving for love, Jordan, and she got it here. William and his brothers were just children then, and they hadn’t any sister. We all just worshipped her. She was so sweet, Jordan. And pretty, oh my! like a little girl in a picture, with great long curls, all black and purply and fine as spun silk, and big dark eyes, and such pink cheeks — real wild rose cheeks. And sing! My land! But couldn’t she sing! Always singing, every hour of the day that voice was ringing round the old place. I used to hold my breath to hear it. She always said that she meant to be a famous singer some day, and I never doubted it a mite. It was born in her. Sunday evening she used

to sing hymns for us. Oh, Jordan, it makes my old heart young again to remember it. A sweet child she was, my little Joscelyn! She used to write me for three or four years after she went away, but I haven't heard a word from her for long and long. I daresay she has forgotten me, as Maria says. 'Twouldn't be any wonder. But I haven't forgotten her, and oh, I want to see and hear her terrible much. She is to sing at the Old Timers' concert tomorrow night at Kensington. The folks who are getting the concert up are friends of hers, or, of course, she'd never have come to a little country village. Only sixteen miles away — and I can't go."

Jordan couldn't think of anything to say. He reflected savagely that if he had a horse of his own he would take Aunt Nan to Kensington, Mrs. William or no Mrs. William. Though, to be sure, it WAS a long drive for her; and she was looking very frail this summer.

"Ain't going to last long," muttered Jordan, making his escape by the porch door as Mrs. William puffed in by the other. "The sweetest old creetur that ever was created'll go when she goes. Yah, ye old madam, I'd like to give you a piece of my mind, that I would!"

This last was for Mrs. William, but was delivered in a prudent undertone. Jordan detested Mrs. William, but she was a power to be reckoned with, all the same. Meek, easygoing Billy Morrison did just what his wife told him to.

So Aunt Nan did not get to Kensington to hear little Joscelyn sing. She said nothing more about it but after that night she seemed to fail very rapidly. Mrs. William said it was the hot weather, and that Aunt Nan gave way too easily. But Aunt Nan could not help giving way now; she was very, very tired. Even her knitting wearied her. She would sit for hours in her rocking chair with the gray kitten in her lap, looking out of the window with dreamy, unseeing eyes. She talked to herself a good deal, generally about little Joscelyn. Mrs. William told Avonlea folk that Aunt Nan had got terribly childish and always accompanied the remark with a sigh that intimated how much she, Mrs. William, had to contend with.

Justice must be done to Mrs. William, however. She was not unkind to Aunt Nan; on the contrary, she was very kind to her in the letter. Her

comfort was scrupulously attended to, and Mrs. William had the grace to utter none of her complaints in the old woman's hearing. If Aunty Nan felt the absence of the spirit she never murmured at it.

One day, when the Avonlea slopes were golden-hued with the ripened harvest, Aunty Nan did not get up. She complained of nothing but great weariness. Mrs. William remarked to her husband that if SHE lay in bed every day she felt tired, there wouldn't be much done at Gull Point Farm. But she prepared an excellent breakfast and carried it patiently up to Aunty Nan, who ate little of it.

After dinner Jordan crept up by way of the back stairs to see her. Aunty Nan was lying with her eyes fixed on the pale pink climbing roses that nodded about the window. When she saw Jordan she smiled.

"Them roses put me so much in mind of little Joscelyn," she said softly. "She loved them so. If I could only see her! Oh, Jordan, if I could only see her! Maria says it's terrible childish to be always harping on that string, and mebbe it is. But — oh, Jordan, there's such a hunger in my heart for her, such a hunger!"

Jordan felt a queer sensation in his throat, and twisted his ragged straw hat about in his big hands. Just then a vague idea which had hovered in his brain all day crystallized into decision. But all he said was:

"I hope you'll feel better soon, Aunty Nan."

"Oh, yes, Jordan dear, I'll be better soon," said Aunty Nan with her own sweet smile. "'The inhabitant shall not say I am sick,' you know. But if I could only see little Joscelyn first!"

Jordan went out and hurried downstairs. Billy Morrison was in the stable, when Jordan stuck his head over the half-door.

"Say, can I have the rest of the day off, sir? I want to go to Kensington."

"Well, I don't mind," said Billy Morrison amiably. "May's well get you jaunting done 'fore harvest comes on. And here, Jord; take this quarter and

get some oranges for Aunty Nan. Needn't mention it to headquarters."

Billy Morrison's face was solemn, but Jordan winked as he pocketed the money.

"If I've any luck, I'll bring her something that'll do her more good than the oranges," he muttered, as he hurried off to the pasture. Jordan had a horse of his own now, a rather bony nag, answering to the name of Dan. Billy Morrison had agreed to pasture the animal if Jordan used him in the farm work, an arrangement scoffed at by Mrs. William in no measured terms.

Jordan hitched Dan into the second best buggy, dressed himself in his Sunday clothes, and drove off. On the road he re-read a paragraph he had clipped from the Charlottetown Daily Enterprise of the previous day.

"Joscelyn Burnett, the famous contralto, is spending a few days in Kensington on her return from her Maritime concert tour. She is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Bromley, of The Beeches."

"Now if I can get there in time," said Jordan emphatically.

Jordan got to Kensington, put Dan up in a livery stable, and inquired the way to The Beeches. He felt rather nervous when he found it, it was such a stately, imposing place, set back from the street in an emerald green seclusion of beautiful grounds.

"Fancy me stalking up to that front door and asking for Miss Joscelyn Burnett," grinned Jordan sheepishly. "Mebbe they'll tell me to go around to the back and inquire for the cook. But you're going just the same, Jordan Sloane, and no skulking. March right up now. Think of Aunty Nan and don't let style down you."

A pert-looking maid answered Jordan's ring, and stared at him when he asked for Miss Burnett.

"I don't think you can see her," she said shortly, scanning his country cut of hair and clothes rather superciliously. "What is your business with her?"

The maid's scorn roused Jordan's "dander," as he would have expressed it.

"I'll tell her that when I see her," he retorted coolly. "Just you tell her that I've a message for her from Aunty Nan Morrison of Gull Point Farm, Avonlea. If she hain't forgot, that'll fetch her. You might as well hurry up, if you please, I've not overly too much time."

The pert maid decided to be civil at least, and invited Jordan to enter. But she left him standing in the hall while she went in search of Miss Burnett. Jordan gazed about him in amazement. He had never been in any place like this before. The hall was wonderful enough, and through the open doors on either hand stretched vistas of lovely rooms that, to Jordan's eyes, looked like those of a palace.

"Gee whiz! How do they ever move around without knocking things over?"

Then Joscelyn Burnett came, and Jordan forgot everything else. This tall, beautiful woman, in her silken draperies, with a face like nothing Jordan had ever seen, or even dreamed about, — could this be Aunty Nan's little Joscelyn? Jordan's round, freckled countenance grew crimson. He felt horribly tongue-tied and embarrassed. What could he say to her? How could he say it?

Joscelyn Burnett looked at him with her large, dark eyes, — the eyes of a woman who had suffered much, and learned much, and won through struggle to victory.

"You have come from Aunty Nan?" she said. "Oh, I am so glad to hear from her. Is she well? Come in here and tell me all about her."

She turned toward one of those fairylike rooms, but Jordan interrupted her desperately.

"Oh, not in there, ma'am. I'd never get it out. Just let me blunder through it out here someways. Yes'm, Aunty Nan, she ain't very well. She's — she's dying, I guess. And she's longing for you night and day. Seems as if she couldn't die in peace without seeing you. She wanted to get to

Kensington to hear you sing, but that old cat of a Mrs. William — begging you pardon, ma'am — wouldn't let her come. She's always talking of you. If you can come out to Gull Point Farm and see her, I'll be most awful obliged to you, ma'am."

Joscelyn Burnett looked troubled. She had not forgotten Gull Point Farm, nor Aunt Nan; but for years the memory had been dim, crowded into the background of consciousness by the more exciting events of her busy life. Now it came back with a rush. She recalled it all tenderly — the peace and beauty and love of that olden summer, and sweet Aunt Nan, so very wise in the lore of all things simple and good and true. For the moment Joscelyn Burnett was a lonely, hungry-hearted little girl again, seeking for love and finding it not, until Aunt Nan had taken her into her great mother-heart and taught her its meaning.

"Oh, I don't know," she said perplexedly. "If you had come sooner — I leave on the 11:30 train tonight. I **MUST** leave by then or I shall not reach Montreal in time to fill a very important engagement. And yet I must see Aunt Nan, too. I have been careless and neglectful. I might have gone to see her before. How can we manage it?"

"I'll bring you back to Kensington in time to catch that train," said Jordan eagerly. "There's nothing I wouldn't do for Aunt Nan — me and Dan. Yes, sir, you'll get back in time. Just think of Aunt Nan's face when she sees you!"

"I will come," said the great singer, gently.

It was sunset when they reached Gull Point Farm. An arc of warm gold was over the spruces behind the house. Mrs. William was out in the barnyard, milking, and the house was deserted, save for the sleeping baby in the kitchen and the little old woman with the watchful eyes in the upstairs room.

"This way, ma'am," said Jordan, inwardly congratulating himself that the coast was clear. "I'll take you right up to her room."

Upstairs, Joscelyn tapped at the half-open door and went in. Before it closed behind her, Jordan heard Aunt Nan say, “Joscelyn! Little Joscelyn!” in a tone that made him choke again. He stumbled thankfully downstairs, to be pounced upon by Mrs. William in the kitchen.

“Jordan Sloane, who was that stylish woman you drove into the yard with? And what have you done with her?”

“That was Miss Joscelyn Burnett,” said Jordan, expanding himself. This was his hour of triumph over Mrs. William. “I went to Kensington and brung her out to see Aunt Nan. She’s up with her now.”

“Dear me,” said Mrs. William helplessly. “And me in my milking rig! Jordan, for pity’s sake, hold the baby while I go and put on my black silk. You might have given a body some warning. I declare I don’t know which is the greatest idiot, you or Aunt Nan!”

As Mrs. William flounced out of the kitchen, Jordan took his satisfaction in a quiet laugh.

Upstairs in the little room was a great glory of sunset and gladness of human hearts. Joscelyn was kneeling by the bed, with her arms about Aunt Nan; and Aunt Nan, with her face all irradiated, was stroking Joscelyn’s dark hair fondly.

“O, little Joscelyn,” she murmured, “it seems too good to be true. It seems like a beautiful dream. I knew you the minute you opened the door, my dearie. You haven’t changed a bit. And you’re a famous singer now, little Joscelyn! I always knew you would be. Oh, I want you to sing a piece for me — just one, won’t you, dearie? Sing that piece people like to hear you sing best. I forget the name, but I’ve read about it in the papers. Sing it for me, little Joscelyn.”

And Joscelyn, standing by Aunt Nan’s bed, in the sunset light, sang the song she had sung to many a brilliant audience on many a noted concert-platform — sang it as even she had never sung before, while Aunt Nan lay and listened beatifically, and downstairs even Mrs. William held her

breath, entranced by the exquisite melody that floated through the old farmhouse.

“O, little Joscelyn!” breathed Aunty Nan in rapture, when the song ended.

Joscelyn knelt by her again and they had a long talk of old days. One by one they recalled the memories of that vanished summer. The past gave up its tears and its laughter. Heart and fancy alike went roaming through the ways of the long ago. Aunty Nan was perfectly happy. And then Joscelyn told her all the story of her struggles and triumphs since they had parted.

When the moonlight began to creep in through the low window, Aunty Nan put out her hand and touched Joscelyn’s bowed head.

“Little Joscelyn,” she whispered, “if it ain’t asking too much, I want you to sing just one other piece. Do you remember when you were here how we sung hymns in the parlour every Sunday night, and my favourite always was ‘The Sands of Time are Sinking?’ I ain’t never forgot how you used to sing that, and I want to hear it just once again, dearie. Sing it for me, little Joscelyn.”

Joscelyn rose and went to the window. Lifting back the curtain, she stood in the splendour of the moonlight, and sang the grand old hymn. At first Aunty Nan beat time to it feebly on the counterpane; but when Joscelyn came to the verse, “With mercy and with judgment,” she folded her hands over her breast and smiled.

When the hymn ended, Joscelyn came over to the bed.

“I am afraid I must say goodbye now, Aunty Nan,” she said.

Then she saw that Aunty Nan had fallen asleep. She would not waken her, but she took from her breast the cluster of crimson roses she wore and slipped them gently between the toil-worn fingers.

“Goodbye, dear, sweet mother-heart,” she murmured.

Downstairs she met Mrs. William splendid in rustling black silk, her broad, rubicund face smiling, overflowing with apologies and welcomes, which Joscelyn cut short coldly.

“Thank you, Mrs. Morrison, but I cannot possibly stay longer. No, thank you, I don’t care for any refreshments. Jordan is going to take me back to Kensington at once. I came out to see Aunty Nan.” “I’m certain she’d be delighted,” said Mrs. William effusively. “She’s been talking about you for weeks.”

“Yes, it has made her very happy,” said Joscelyn gravely. “And it has made me happy, too. I love Aunty Nan, Mrs. Morrison, and I owe her much. In all my life I have never met a woman so purely, unselfishly good and noble and true.”

“Fancy now,” said Mrs. William, rather overcome at hearing this great singer pronounce such an encomium on quiet, timid old Aunty Nan.

Jordan drove Joscelyn back to Kensington; and upstairs in her room Aunty Nan slept, with that rapt smile on her face and Joscelyn’s red roses in her hands. Thus it was that Mrs. William found her, going in the next morning with her breakfast. The sunlight crept over the pillow, lighting up the sweet old face and silver hair, and stealing downward to the faded red roses on her breast. Smiling and peaceful and happy lay Aunty Nan, for she had fallen on the sleep that knows no earthy wakening, while little Joscelyn sang.

The Winning of Lucinda

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The marriage of a Penhallow was always the signal for a gathering of the Penhallows. From the uttermost parts of the earth they would come — Penhallows by birth, and Penhallows by marriage and Penhallows by ancestry. East Grafton was the ancient habitat of the race, and Penhallow Grange, where “old” John Penhallow lived, was a Mecca to them.

As for the family itself, the exact kinship of all its various branches and ramifications was a hard thing to define. Old Uncle Julius Penhallow was looked upon as a veritable wonder because he carried it all in his head and could tell on sight just what relation any one Penhallow was to any other Penhallow. The rest made a blind guess at it, for the most part, and the younger Penhallows let it go at loose cousinship.

In this instance it was Alice Penhallow, daughter of “young” John Penhallow, who was to be married. Alice was a nice girl, but she and her wedding only pertain to this story in so far as they furnish a background for Lucinda; hence nothing more need be said of her.

On the afternoon of her wedding day — the Penhallows held to the good, old-fashioned custom of evening weddings with a rousing dance afterwards — Penhallow Grange was filled to overflowing with guests who had come there to have tea and rest themselves before going down to “young” John’s. Many of them had driven fifty miles. In the big autumnal orchard the younger fry foregathered and chatted and coquetted. Upstairs, in “old” Mrs. John’s bedroom, she and her married daughters held high conclave. “Old” John had established himself with his sons and sons-in-law in the parlour, and the three daughters-in-law were making themselves at home in the blue sitting-room, ear-deep in harmless family gossip. Lucinda and Romney Penhallow were also there.

Thin Mrs. Nathaniel Penhallow sat in a rocking chair and toasted her toes at the grate, for the brilliant autumn afternoon was slightly chilly and Lucinda, as usual, had the window open. She and plump Mrs. Frederick Penhallow did most of the talking. Mrs. George Penhallow being rather out of it by reason of her newness. She was George Penhallow's second wife, married only a year. Hence, her contributions to the conversation were rather spasmodic, hurled in, as it were, by dead reckoning, being sometimes appropriate and sometimes savouring of a point of view not strictly Penhallowesque.

Romney Penhallow was sitting in a corner, listening to the chatter of the women, with the inscrutable smile that always vexed Mrs. Frederick. Mrs. George wondered within herself what he did there among the women. She also wondered just where he belonged on the family tree. He was not one of the uncles, yet he could not be much younger than George.

"Forty, if he is a day," was Mrs. George's mental dictum, "but a very handsome and fascinating man. I never saw such a splendid chin and dimple."

Lucinda, with bronze-colored hair and the whitest of skins, defiant of merciless sunlight and revelling in the crisp air, sat on the sill of the open window behind the crimson vine leaves, looking out into the garden, where dahlias flamed and asters broke into waves of purple and snow. The ruddy light of the autumn afternoon gave a sheen to the waves of her hair and brought out the exceeding purity of her Greek outlines.

Mrs. George knew who Lucinda was — a cousin of the second generation, and, in spite of her thirty-five years, the acknowledged beauty of the whole Penhallow connection.

She was one of those rare women who keep their loveliness unmarred by the passage of years. She had ripened and matured, but she had not grown old. The older Penhallows were still inclined, from sheer force of habit, to look upon her as a girl, and the younger Penhallows hailed her as one of themselves. Yet Lucinda never aped girlishness; good taste and a strong sense of humour preserved her amid many temptations thereto. She was

simply a beautiful, fully developed woman, with whom Time had declared a truce, young with a mellow youth which had nothing to do with years.

Mrs. George liked and admired Lucinda. Now, when Mrs. George liked and admired any person, it was a matter of necessity with her to impart her opinions to the most convenient confidant. In this case it was Romney Penhallow to whom Mrs. George remarked sweetly:

“Really, don’t you think our Lucinda is looking remarkably well this fall?”

It seemed a very harmless, inane, wellmeant question. Poor Mrs. George might well be excused for feeling bewildered over the effect. Romney gathered his long legs together, stood up, and swept the unfortunate speaker a crushing Penhallow bow of state.

“Far be it from me to disagree with the opinion of a lady — especially when it concerns another lady,” he said, as he left the blue room.

Overcome by the mordant satire in his tone, Mrs. George glanced speechlessly at Lucinda. Behold, Lucinda had squarely turned her back on the party and was gazing out into the garden, with a very decided flush on the snowy curves of her neck and cheek. Then Mrs. George looked at her sisters-in-law. They were regarding her with the tolerant amusement they might bestow on a blundering child. Mrs. George experienced that subtle prescience whereby it is given us to know that we have put our foot in it. She felt herself turning an uncomfortable brick-red. What Penhallow skeleton had she unwittingly jangled? Why, oh, why, was it such an evident breach of the proprieties to praise Lucinda?

Mrs. George was devoutly thankful that a summons to the tea-table rescued her from her mire of embarrassment. The meal was spoiled for her, however; the mortifying recollection of her mysterious blunder conspired with her curiosity to banish appetite. As soon as possible after tea she decoyed Mrs. Frederick out into the garden and in the dahlia walk solemnly demanded the reason of it all.

Mrs. Frederick indulged in a laugh which put the mettle of her festal brown silk seams to the test.

“My dear Cecilia, it was SO amusing,” she said, a little patronizingly.

“But WHY!” cried Mrs. George, resenting the patronage and the mystery. “What was so dreadful in what I said? Or so funny? And WHO is this Romney Penhallow who mustn’t be spoken to?”

“Oh, Romney is one of the Charlottetown Penhallows,” explained Mrs. Frederick. “He is a lawyer there. He is a first cousin of Lucinda’s and a second of George’s — or is he? Oh, bother! You must go to Uncle John if you want the genealogy. I’m in a chronic muddle concerning Penhallow relationship. And, as for Romney, of course you can speak to him about anything you like except Lucinda. Oh, you innocent! To ask him if he didn’t think Lucinda was looking well! And right before her, too! Of course he thought you did it on purpose to tease him. That was what made him so savage and sarcastic.”

“But WHY?” persisted Mrs. George, sticking tenaciously to her point.

“Hasn’t George told you?”

“No,” said George’s wife in mild exasperation. “George has spent most of his time since we were married telling me odd things about the Penhallows, but he hasn’t got to that yet, evidently.”

“Why, my dear, it is our family romance. Lucinda and Romney are in love with each other. They have been in love with each other for fifteen years and in all that time they have never spoken to each other once!”

“Dear me!” murmured Mrs. George, feeling the inadequacy of mere language. Was this a Penhallow method of courtship? “But WHY?”

“They had a quarrel fifteen years ago,” said Mrs. Frederick patiently. “Nobody knows how it originated or anything about it except that Lucinda herself admitted it to us afterwards. But, in the first flush of her rage, she told Romney that she would never speak to him again as long as she lived. And HE said he would never speak to her until she spoke first — because, you see, as she was in the wrong she ought to make the first advance. And they never have spoken. Everybody in the connection, I suppose, has taken

turns trying to reconcile them, but nobody has succeeded. I don't believe that Romney has ever so much as THOUGHT of any other woman in his whole life, and certainly Lucinda has never thought of any other man. You will notice she still wears Romney's ring. They're practically engaged still, of course. And Romney said once that if Lucinda would just say one word, no matter what it was, even if it were something insulting, he would speak, too, and beg her pardon for his share in the quarrel — because then, you see, he would not be breaking his word. He hasn't referred to the matter for years, but I presume that he is of the same mind still. And they are just as much in love with each other as they ever were. He's always hanging about where she is — when other people are there, too, that is. He avoids her like a plague when she is alone. That was why he was stuck out in the blue room with us to-day. There doesn't seem to be a particle of resentment between them. If Lucinda would only speak! But that Lucinda will not do."

"Don't you think she will yet?" said Mrs. George.

Mrs. Frederick shook her crimped head sagely.

"Not now. The whole thing has hardened too long. Her pride will never let her speak. We used to hope she would be tricked into it by forgetfulness or accident — we used to lay traps for her — but all to no effect. It is such a shame, too. They were made for each other. Do you know, I get cross when I begin to thrash the whole silly affair over like this. Doesn't it sound as if we were talking of the quarrel of two schoolchildren? Of late years we have learned that it does not do to speak of Lucinda to Romney, even in the most commonplace way. He seems to resent it."

"HE ought to speak," cried Mrs. George warmly. "Even if she were in the wrong ten times over, he ought to overlook it and speak first."

"But he won't. And she won't. You never saw two such determined mortals. They get it from their grandfather on the mother's side — old Absalom Gordon. There is no such stubbornness on the Penhallow side. His obstinacy was a proverb, my dear — actually a proverb. What ever he said, he would stick to if the skies fell. He was a terrible old man to swear, too," added Mrs. Frederick, dropping into irrelevant reminiscence. "He

spent a long while in a mining camp in his younger days and he never got over it — the habit of swearing, I mean. It would have made your blood run cold, my dear, to have heard him go on at times. And yet he was a real good old man every other way. He couldn't help it somehow. He tried to, but he used to say that profanity came as natural to him as breathing. It used to mortify his family terribly. Fortunately, none of them took after him in that respect. But he's dead — and one shouldn't speak ill of the dead. I must go and get Mattie Penhallow to do my hair. I would burst these sleeves clean out if I tried to do it myself and I don't want to dress over again. You won't be likely to talk to Romney about Lucinda again, my dear Cecilia?"

"Fifteen years!" murmured Mrs. George helplessly to the dahlias. "Engaged for fifteen years and never speaking to each other! Dear heart and soul, think of it! Oh, these Penhallows!"

Meanwhile, Lucinda, serenely unconscious that her love story was being mouthed over by Mrs. Frederick in the dahlia garden, was dressing for the wedding. Lucinda still enjoyed dressing for a festivity, since the mirror still dealt gently with her. Moreover, she had a new dress. Now, a new dress — and especially one as nice as this — was a rarity with Lucinda, who belonged to a branch of the Penhallows noted for being chronically hard up. Indeed, Lucinda and her widowed mother were positively poor, and hence a new dress was an event in Lucinda's existence. An uncle had given her this one — a beautiful, perishable thing, such as Lucinda would never have dared to choose for herself, but in which she revelled with feminine delight.

It was of pale green voile — a colour which brought out admirably the ruddy gloss of her hair and the clear brilliance of her skin. When she had finished dressing she looked at herself in the mirror with frank delight. Lucinda was not vain, but she was quite well aware of the fact of her beauty and took an impersonal pleasure in it, as if she were looking at some finely painted picture by a master hand.

The form and face reflected in the glass satisfied her. The puffs and draperies of the green voile displayed to perfection the full, but not overfull, curves of her fine figure. Lucinda lifted her arm and touched a

red rose to her lips with the hand upon which shone the frosty glitter of Romney's diamond, looking at the graceful slope of her shoulder and the splendid line of chin and throat with critical approval.

She noted, too, how well the gown became her eyes, bringing out all the deeper colour in them. Lucinda had magnificent eyes. Once Romney had written a sonnet to them in which he compared their colour to ripe blueberries. This may not sound poetical to you unless you know or remember just what the tints of ripe blueberries are — dusky purple in some lights, clear slate in others, and yet again in others the misty hue of early meadow violets.

"You really look very well," remarked the real Lucinda to the mirrored Lucinda. "Nobody would think you were an old maid. But you are. Alice Penhallow, who is to be married tonight, was a child of five when you thought of being married fifteen years ago. That makes you an old maid, my dear. Well, it is your own fault, and it will continue to be your own fault, you stubborn offshoot of a stubborn breed!"

She flung her train out straight and pulled on her gloves.

"I do hope I won't get any spots on this dress tonight," she reflected. "It will have to do me for a gala dress for a year at least — and I have a creepy conviction that it is fearfully spottable. Bless Uncle Mark's good, uncalculating heart! How I would have detested it if he had given me something sensible and useful and ugly — as Aunt Emilia would have done."

They all went to "young" John Penhallow's at early moonrise. Lucinda drove over the two miles of hill and dale with a youthful second cousin, by name, Carey Penhallow. The wedding was quite a brilliant affair. Lucinda seemed to pervade the social atmosphere, and everywhere she went a little ripple of admiration trailed after her like a wave. She was undeniably a belle, yet she found herself feeling faintly bored and was rather glad than otherwise when the guests began to fray off.

"I'm afraid I'm losing my capacity for enjoyment," she thought, a little drearily. "Yes, I must be growing old. That is what it means when social

functions begin to bore you.”

It was that unlucky Mrs. George who blundered again. She was standing on the veranda when Carey Penhallow dashed up.

“Tell Lucinda that I can’t take her back to the Grange. I have to drive Mark and Cissy Penhallow to Bright River to catch the two o’clock express. There will be plenty of chances for her with the others.”

At this moment George Penhallow, holding his rearing horse with difficulty, shouted for his wife. Mrs. George, all in a flurry, dashed back into the still crowded hall. Exactly to whom she gave her message was never known to any of the Penhallows. But a tall, ruddy-haired girl, dressed in pale green organdy — Anne Shirley from Avonlea — told Marilla Cuthbert and Rachel Lynde as a joke the next morning how a chubby little woman in a bright pink fascinator had clutched her by the arm, and gasped out: “Carey Penhallow can’t take you — he says you’re to look out for someone else,” and was gone before she could answer or turn around.

Thus it was that Lucinda, when she came out to the veranda step, found herself unaccountably deserted. All the Grange Penhallows were gone; Lucinda realized this after a few moments of bewildered seeking, and she understood that if she were to get to the Grange that night she must walk. Plainly there was nobody to take her.

Lucinda was angry. It is not pleasant to find yourself forgotten and neglected. It is still less pleasant to walk home alone along a country road, at one o’clock in the morning, wearing a pale green voile. Lucinda was not prepared for such a walk. She had nothing on her feet save thin-soled shoes, and her only wraps were a flimsy fascinator and a short coat.

“What a guy I shall look, stalking home alone in this rig,” she thought crossly.

There was no help for it, unless she confessed her plight to some of the stranger guests and begged a drive home. Lucinda’s pride scorned such a request and the admission of neglect it involved. No, she would walk,

since that was all there was to it; but she would not go by the main road to be stared at by all and sundry who might pass her. There was a short cut by way of a lane across the fields; she knew every inch of it, although she had not traversed it for years.

She gathered up the green voile as trimly as possible, slipped around the house in the kindly shadows, picked her way across the side lawn, and found a gate which opened into a birch-bordered lane where the frosted trees shone with silvery-golden radiance in the moonlight. Lucinda flitted down the lane, growing angrier at every step as the realization of how shamefully she seemed to have been treated came home to her. She believed that nobody had thought about her at all, which was tenfold worse than premeditated neglect.

As she came to the gate at the lower end of the lane a man who was leaning over it started, with a quick intake of his breath, which, in any other man than Romney Penhallow, or for any other woman than Lucinda Penhallow, would have been an exclamation of surprise.

Lucinda recognized him with a great deal of annoyance and a little relief. She would not have to walk home alone. But with Romney Penhallow! Would he think she had contrived it so purposely?

Romney silently opened the gate for her, silently latched it behind her, and silently fell into step beside her. Down across a velvety sweep of field they went; the air was frosty, calm and still; over the world lay a haze of moonshine and mist that converted East Grafton's prosaic hills and fields into a shimmering fairyland. At first Lucinda felt angrier than ever. What a ridiculous situation! How the Penhallows would laugh over it!

As for Romney, he, too, was angry with the trick impish chance had played him. He liked being the butt of an awkward situation as little as most men; and certainly to be obliged to walk home over moonlit fields at one o'clock in the morning with the woman he had loved and never spoken to for fifteen years was the irony of fate with a vengeance. Would she think he had schemed for it? And how the deuce did she come to be walking home from the wedding at all?

By the time they had crossed the field and reached the wild cherry lane beyond it, Lucinda's anger was mastered by her saving sense of humour. She was even smiling a little maliciously under her fascinator.

The lane was a place of enchantment — a long, moonlit colonnade adown which beguiling wood nymphs might have footed it featly. The moonshine fell through the arching boughs and made a mosaic of silver light and clear-cut shadow for the unfriendly lovers to walk in. On either side was the hovering gloom of the woods, and around them was a great silence unstirred by wind or murmur.

Midway in the lane Lucinda was attacked by a sentimental recollection. She thought of the last time Romney and she had walked home together through this very lane, from a party at "young" John's. It had been moonlight then too, and — Lucinda checked a sigh — they had walked hand in hand. Just here, by the big gray beech, he had stopped her and kissed her. Lucinda wondered if he were thinking of it, too, and stole a look at him from under the lace border of her fascinator.

But he was striding moodily along with his hands in his pockets, and his hat pulled down over his eyes, passing the old beech without a glance at it. Lucinda checked another sigh, gathered up an escaped flutter of voile, and marched on.

Past the lane a range of three silvery harvest fields sloped down to Peter Penhallow's brook — a wide, shallow stream bridged over in the olden days by the mossy trunk of an ancient fallen tree. When Lucinda and Romney arrived at the brook they gazed at the brawling water blankly. Lucinda remembered that she must not speak to Romney just in time to prevent an exclamation of dismay. There was no tree! There was no bridge of any kind over the brook!

Here was a predicament! But before Lucinda could do more than despairingly ask herself what was to be done now, Romney answered — not in words, but in deeds. He coolly picked Lucinda up in his arms, as if she had been a child instead of a full grown woman of no mean avoirdupois, and began to wade with her through the water.

Lucinda gasped helplessly. She could not forbid him and she was so choked with rage over his presumption that she could not have spoken in any case. Then came the catastrophe. Romney's foot slipped on a treacherous round stone — there was a tremendous splash — and Romney and Lucinda Penhallow were sitting down in the middle of Peter Penhallow's brook.

Lucinda was the first to regain her feet. About her clung in heartbreaking limpness the ruined voile. The remembrance of all her wrongs that night rushed over her soul, and her eyes blazed in the moonlight. Lucinda Penhallow had never been so angry in her life.

“YOU D — D IDIOT!” she said, in a voice that literally shook with rage.

Romney meekly scrambled up the bank after her.

“I'm awfully sorry, Lucinda,” he said, striving with uncertain success to keep a suspicious quiver of laughter out of his tone. “It was wretchedly clumsy of me, but that pebble turned right under my foot. Please forgive me — for that — and for other things.”

Lucinda deigned no answer. She stood on a flat stone and wrung the water from the poor green voile. Romney surveyed her apprehensively.

“Hurry, Lucinda,” he entreated. “You will catch your death of cold.”

“I never take cold,” answered Lucinda, with chattering teeth. “And it is my dress I am thinking of — was thinking of. You have more need to hurry. You are sopping wet yourself and you know you are subject to colds. There — come.”

Lucinda picked up the stringy train, which had been so brave and buoyant five minutes before, and started up the field at a brisk rate. Romney came up to her and slipped his arm through hers in the old way. For a time they walked along in silence. Then Lucinda began to shake with inward laughter. She laughed silently for the whole length of the field; and at the line fence between Peter Penhallow's land and the Grange acres she

paused, threw back the fascinator from her face, and looked at Romney defiantly.

“You are thinking of — THAT,” she cried, “and I am thinking of it. And we will go on, thinking of it at intervals for the rest of our lives. But if you ever mention it to me I’ll never forgive you, Romney Penhallow!”

“I never will,” Romney promised. There was more than a suspicion of laughter in his voice this time, but Lucinda did not choose to resent it. She did not speak again until they reached the Grange gate. Then she faced him solemnly.

“It was a case of atavism,” she said. “Old Grandfather Gordon was to blame for it.”

At the Grange almost everybody was in bed. What with the guests straggling home at intervals and hurrying sleepily off to their rooms, nobody had missed Lucinda, each set supposing she was with some other set. Mrs. Frederick, Mrs. Nathaniel and Mrs. George alone were up. The perennially chilly Mrs. Nathaniel had kindled a fire of chips in the blue room grate to warm her feet before retiring, and the three women were discussing the wedding in subdued tones when the door opened and the stately form of Lucinda, stately even in the dragged voile, appeared, with the damp Romney behind her.

“Lucinda Penhallow!” gasped they, one and all.

“I was left to walk home,” said Lucinda coolly. “So Romney and I came across the fields. There was no bridge over the brook, and when he was carrying me over he slipped and we fell in. That is all. No, Cecilia, I never take cold, so don’t worry. Yes, my dress is ruined, but that is of no consequence. No, thank you, Cecilia, I do not care for a hot drink. Romney, do go and take off those wet clothes of yours immediately. No, Cecilia, I will NOT take a hot footbath. I am going straight to bed. Good night.”

When the door closed on the pair the three sisters-in-law stared at each other. Mrs. Frederick, feeling herself incapable of expressing her sensations originally, took refuge in a quotation:

“Do I sleep, do I dream, do I wonder and doubt? Is things what they seem, or is visions about?”

“There will be another Penhallow wedding soon,” said Mrs. Nathaniel, with a long breath. “Lucinda has spoken to Romney AT LAST.”

“Oh, WHAT do you suppose she said to him?” cried Mrs. George.

“My dear Cecilia,” said Mrs. Frederick, “we shall never know.”

They never did know.

Old Man Shaw's Girl

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“Day after tomorrow — day after tomorrow,” said Old Man Shaw, rubbing his long slender hands together gleefully. “I have to keep saying it over and over, so as to really believe it. It seems far too good to be true that I’m to have Blossom again. And everything is ready. Yes, I think everything is ready, except a bit of cooking. And won’t this orchard be a surprise to her! I’m just going to bring her out here as soon as I can, never saying a word. I’ll fetch her through the spruce lane, and when we come to the end of the path I’ll step back casual-like, and let her go out from under the trees alone, never suspecting. It’ll be worth ten times the trouble to see her big, brown eyes open wide and hear her say, ‘Oh, daddy! Why, daddy!’”

He rubbed his hands again and laughed softly to himself. He was a tall, bent old man, whose hair was snow white, but whose face was fresh and rosy. His eyes were a boy’s eyes, large, blue and merry, and his mouth had never got over a youthful trick of smiling at any provocation — and, oft-times, at no provocation at all.

To be sure, White Sands people would not have given you the most favourable opinion in the world of Old Man Shaw. First and foremost, they would have told you that he was “shiftless,” and had let his bit of a farm

run out while he pottered with flowers and bugs, or rambled aimlessly about in the woods, or read books along the shore. Perhaps it was true; but the old farm yielded him a living, and further than that Old Man Shaw had no ambition. He was as blithe as a pilgrim on a pathway climbing to the west. He had learned the rare secret that you must take happiness when you find it — that there is no use in marking the place and coming back to it at a more convenient season, because it will not be there then. And it is very easy to be happy if you know, as Old Man Shaw most thoroughly knew, how to find pleasure in little things. He enjoyed life, he had always enjoyed life and helped others to enjoy it; consequently his life was a success, whatever White Sands people might think of it. What if he had not “improved” his farm? There are some people to whom life will never be anything more than a kitchen garden; and there are others to whom it will always be a royal palace with domes and minarets of rainbow fancy.

The orchard of which he was so proud was as yet little more than the substance of things hoped for — a flourishing plantation of young trees which would amount to something later on. Old Man Shaw’s house was on the crest of a bare, sunny hill, with a few staunch old firs and spruces behind it — the only trees that could resist the full sweep of the winds that blew bitterly up from the sea at times. Fruit trees would never grow near it, and this had been a great grief to Sara.

“Oh, daddy, if we could just have an orchard!” she had been wont to say wistfully, when other farmhouses in White Sands were smothered whitely in apple bloom. And when she had gone away, and her father had nothing to look forward to save her return, he was determined she should find an orchard when she came back.

Over the southward hill, warmly sheltered by spruce woods and sloping to the sunshine, was a little field, so fertile that all the slack management of a lifetime had not availed to exhaust it. Here Old Man Shaw set out his orchard and saw it flourish, watching and tending it until he came to know each tree as a child and loved it. His neighbours laughed at him, and said that the fruit of an orchard so far away from the house would all be stolen. But as yet there was no fruit, and when the time came for bearing there would be enough and to spare.

“Blossom and me’ll get all we want, and the boys can have the rest, if they want ‘em worse’n they want a good conscience,” said that unworldly, unbusinesslike Old Man Shaw.

On his way back home from his darling orchard he found a rare fern in the woods and dug it up for Sara — she had loved ferns. He planted it at the shady, sheltered side of the house and then sat down on the old bench by the garden gate to read her last letter — the letter that was only a note, because she was coming home soon. He knew every word of it by heart, but that did not spoil the pleasure of rereading it every half-hour.

Old Man Shaw had not married until late in life, and had, so White Sands people said, selected a wife with his usual judgment — which, being interpreted, meant no judgment at all; otherwise, he would never have married Sara Glover, a mere slip of a girl, with big brown eyes like a frightened wood creature’s, and the delicate, fleeting bloom of a spring Mayflower.

“The last woman in the world for a farmer’s wife — no strength or get-up about her.”

Neither could White Sands folk understand what on earth Sara Glover had married him for.

“Well, the fool crop was the only one that never failed.”

Old Man Shaw — he was Old Man Shaw even then, although he was only forty — and his girl bride had troubled themselves not at all about White Sands opinions. They had one year of perfect happiness, which is always worth living for, even if the rest of life be a dreary pilgrimage, and then Old Man Shaw found himself alone again, except for little Blossom. She was christened Sara, after her dead mother, but she was always Blossom to her father — the precious little blossom whose plucking had cost the mother her life.

Sara Glover’s people, especially a wealthy aunt in Montreal, had wanted to take the child, but Old Man Shaw grew almost fierce over the suggestion. He would give his baby to no one. A woman was hired to look after the

house, but it was the father who cared for the baby in the main. He was as tender and faithful and deft as a woman. Sara never missed a mother's care, and she grew up into a creature of life and light and beauty, a constant delight to all who knew her. She had a way of embroidering life with stars. She was dowered with all the charming characteristics of both parents, with a resilient vitality and activity which had pertained to neither of them. When she was ten years old she had packed all hirelings off, and kept house for her father for six delightful years — years in which they were father and daughter, brother and sister, and “chums.” Sara never went to school, but her father saw to her education after a fashion of his own. When their work was done they lived in the woods and fields, in the little garden they had made on the sheltered side of the house, or on the shore, where sunshine and storm were to them equally lovely and beloved. Never was comradeship more perfect or more wholly satisfactory.

“Just wrapped up in each other,” said White Sands folk, half-enviously, half-disapprovingly.

When Sara was sixteen Mrs. Adair, the wealthy aunt aforesaid, pounced down on White Sands in a glamour of fashion and culture and outer worldliness. She bombarded Old Man Shaw with such arguments that he had to succumb. It was a shame that a girl like Sara should grow up in a place like White Sands, “with no advantages and no education,” said Mrs. Adair scornfully, not understanding that wisdom and knowledge are two entirely different things.

“At least let me give my dear sister's child what I would have given my own daughter if I had had one,” she pleaded tearfully. “Let me take her with me and send her to a good school for a few years. Then, if she wishes, she may come back to you, of course.”

Privately, Mrs. Adair did not for a moment believe that Sara would want to come back to White Sands, and her queer old father, after three years of the life she would give her.

Old Man Shaw yielded, influenced thereto not at all by Mrs. Adair's readily flowing tears, but greatly by his conviction that justice to Sara demanded it. Sara herself did not want to go; she protested and pleaded;

but her father, having become convinced that it was best for her to go, was inexorable. Everything, even her own feelings, must give way to that. But she was to come back to him without let or hindrance when her “schooling” was done. It was only on having this most clearly understood that Sara would consent to go at all. Her last words, called back to her father through her tears as she and her aunt drove down the lane, were,

“I’ll be back, daddy. In three years I’ll be back. Don’t cry, but just look forward to that.”

He had looked forward to it through the three long, lonely years that followed, in all of which he never saw his darling. Half a continent was between them and Mrs. Adair had vetoed vacation visits, under some specious pretense. But every week brought its letter from Sara. Old Man Shaw had every one of them, tied up with one of her old blue hair ribbons, and kept in her mother’s little rose-wood work-box in the parlour. He spent every Sunday afternoon rereading them, with her photograph before him. He lived alone, refusing to be pestered with kind help, but he kept the house in beautiful order.

“A better housekeeper than farmer,” said White Sands people. He would have nothing altered. When Sara came back she was not to be hurt by changes. It never occurred to him that she might be changed herself.

And now those three interminable years were gone, and Sara was coming home. She wrote him nothing of her aunt’s pleadings and reproaches and ready, futile tears; she wrote only that she would graduate in June and start for home a week later. Thenceforth Old Man Shaw went about in a state of beatitude, making ready for her homecoming. As he sat on the bench in the sunshine, with the blue sea sparkling and crinkling down at the foot of the green slope, he reflected with satisfaction that all was in perfect order. There was nothing left to do save count the hours until that beautiful, longed-for day after tomorrow. He gave himself over to a reverie, as sweet as a daydream in a haunted valley.

The red roses were out in bloom. Sara had always loved those red roses — they were as vivid as herself, with all her own fullness of life and joy of living. And, besides these, a miracle had happened in Old Man Shaw’s

garden. In one corner was a rosebush which had never bloomed, despite all the coaxing they had given it—"the sulky rosebush," Sara had been wont to call it. Lo! this summer had flung the hoarded sweetness of years into plentiful white blossoms, like shallow ivory cups with a haunting, spicy fragrance. It was in honour of Sara's homecoming — so Old Man Shaw liked to fancy. All things, even the sulky rosebush, knew she was coming back, and were making glad because of it.

He was gloating over Sara's letter when Mrs. Peter Blewett came. She told him she had run up to see how he was getting on, and if he wanted anything seen to before Sara came.

"No'm, thank you, ma'am. Everything is attended to. I couldn't let anyone else prepare for Blossom. Only to think, ma'am, she'll be home the day after tomorrow. I'm just filled clear through, body, soul, and spirit, with joy to think of having my little Blossom at home again."

Mrs. Blewett smiled sourly. When Mrs. Blewett smiled it foretokened trouble, and wise people had learned to have sudden business elsewhere before the smile could be translated into words. But Old Man Shaw had never learned to be wise where Mrs. Blewett was concerned, although she had been his nearest neighbour for years, and had pestered his life out with advice and "neighbourly turns."

Mrs. Blewett was one with whom life had gone awry. The effect on her was to render happiness to other people a personal insult. She resented Old Man Shaw's beaming delight in his daughter's return, and she "considered it her duty" to rub the bloom off straightway.

"Do you think Sary'll be contented in White Sands now?" she asked.

Old Man Shaw looked slightly bewildered.

"Of course she'll be contented," he said slowly. "Isn't it her home? And ain't I here?"

Mrs. Blewett smiled again, with double distilled contempt for such simplicity.

“Well, it’s a good thing you’re so sure of it, I suppose. If ‘twas my daughter that was coming back to White Sands, after three years of fashionable life among rich, stylish folks, and at a swell school, I wouldn’t have a minute’s peace of mind. I’d know perfectly well that she’d look down on everything here, and be discontented and miserable.”

“YOUR daughter might,” said Old Man Shaw, with more sarcasm than he had supposed he had possessed, “but Blossom won’t.”

Mrs. Blewett shrugged her sharp shoulders.

“Maybe not. It’s to be hoped not, for both your sakes, I’m sure. But I’d be worried if ‘twas me. Sary’s been living among fine folks, and having a gay, exciting time, and it stands to reason she’ll think White Sands fearful lonesome and dull. Look at Lauretta Bradley. She was up in Boston for just a month last winter and she’s never been able to endure White Sands since.”

“Lauretta Bradley and Sara Shaw are two different people,” said Sara’s father, trying to smile.

“And your house, too,” pursued Mrs. Blewett ruthlessly. “It’s such a queer, little, old place. What’ll she think of it after her aunt’s? I’ve heard tell Mrs. Adair lives in a perfect palace. I’ll just warn you kindly that Sary’ll probably look down on you, and you might as well be prepared for it. Of course, I suppose she kind of thinks she has to come back, seeing she promised you so solemn she would. But I’m certain she doesn’t want to, and I don’t blame her either.”

Even Mrs. Blewett had to stop for breath, and Old Man Shaw found his opportunity. He had listened, dazed and shrinking, as if she were dealing him physical blows, but now a swift change swept over him. His blue eyes flashed ominously, straight into Mrs. Blewett’s straggling, ferrety gray orbs.

“If you’ve said your say, Martha Blewett, you can go,” he said passionately. “I’m not going to listen to another such word. Take yourself out of my sight, and your malicious tongue out of my hearing!”

Mrs. Blewett went, too dumfounded by such an unheard-of outburst in mild Old Man Shaw to say a word of defence or attack. When she had gone Old Man Shaw, the fire all faded from his eyes, sank back on his bench. His delight was dead; his heart was full of pain and bitterness. Martha Blewett was a warped and ill-natured woman, but he feared there was altogether too much truth in what she said. Why had he never thought of it before? Of course White Sands would seem dull and lonely to Blossom; of course the little gray house where she was born would seem a poor abode after the splendours of her aunt's home. Old Man Shaw walked through his garden and looked at everything with new eyes. How poor and simple everything was! How sagging and weather-beaten the old house! He went in, and upstairs to Sara's room. It was neat and clean, just as she had left it three years ago. But it was small and dark; the ceiling was discoloured, the furniture old-fashioned and shabby; she would think it a poor, mean place. Even the orchard over the hill brought him no comfort now. Blossom would not care for orchards. She would be ashamed of her stupid old father and the barren farm. She would hate White Sands, and chafe at the dull existence, and look down on everything that went to make up his uneventful life.

Old Man Shaw was unhappy enough that night to have satisfied even Mrs. Blewett had she known. He saw himself as he thought White Sands folk must see him — a poor, shiftless, foolish old man, who had only one thing in the world worthwhile, his little girl, and had not been of enough account to keep her.

“Oh, Blossom, Blossom!” he said, and when he spoke her name it sounded as if he spoke the name of one dead.

After a little the worst sting passed away. He refused to believe long that Blossom would be ashamed of him; he knew she would not. Three years could not so alter her loyal nature — no, nor ten times three years. But she would be changed — she would have grown away from him in those three busy, brilliant years. His companionship could no longer satisfy her. How simple and childish he had been to expect it! She would be sweet and kind — Blossom could never be anything else. She would not show open discontent or dissatisfaction; she would not be like Laretta Bradley; but it

would be there, and he would divine it, and it would break his heart. Mrs. Blewett was right. When he had given Blossom up he should not have made a half-hearted thing of his sacrifice — he should not have bound her to come back to him.

He walked about in his little garden until late at night, under the stars, with the sea crooning and calling to him down the slope. When he finally went to bed he did not sleep, but lay until morning with tear-wet eyes and despair in his heart. All the forenoon he went about his usual daily work absently. Frequently he fell into long reveries, standing motionless wherever he happened to be, and looking dully before him. Only once did he show any animation. When he saw Mrs. Blewett coming up the lane he darted into the house, locked the door, and listened to her knocking in grim silence. After she had gone he went out, and found a plate of fresh doughnuts, covered with a napkin, placed on the bench at the door. Mrs. Blewett meant to indicate thus that she bore him no malice for her curt dismissal the day before; possibly her conscience gave her some twinges also. But her doughnuts could not minister to the mind she had diseased. Old Man Shaw took them up; carried them to the pig-pen, and fed them to the pigs. It was the first spiteful thing he had done in his life, and he felt a most immoral satisfaction in it.

In mid-afternoon he went out to the garden, finding the new loneliness of the little house unbearable. The old bench was warm in the sunshine. Old Man Shaw sat down with a long sigh, and dropped his white head wearily on his breast. He had decided what he must do. He would tell Blossom that she might go back to her aunt and never mind about him — he would do very well by himself and he did not blame her in the least.

He was still sitting broodingly there when a girl came up the lane. She was tall and straight, and walked with a kind of uplift in her motion, as if it would be rather easier to fly than not. She was dark, with a rich dusky sort of darkness, suggestive of the bloom on purple plums, or the glow of deep red apples among bronze leaves. Her big brown eyes lingered on everything in sight, and little gurgles of sound now and again came through her parted lips, as if inarticulate joy were thus expressing itself.

At the garden gate she saw the bent figure on the old bench, and the next minute she was flying along the rose walk.

“Daddy!” she called, “daddy!”

Old Man Shaw stood up in hasty bewilderment; then a pair of girlish arms were about his neck, and a pair of warm red lips were on his; girlish eyes, full of love, were looking up into his, and a never-forgotten voice, tingling with laughter and tears blended into one delicious chord, was crying,

“Oh, daddy, is it really you? Oh, I can’t tell you how good it is to see you again!”

Old Man Shaw held her tightly in a silence of amazement and joy too deep for wonder. Why, this was his Blossom — the very Blossom who had gone away three years ago! A little taller, a little more womanly, but his own dear Blossom, and no stranger. There was a new heaven and a new earth for him in the realization.

“Oh, Baby Blossom!” he murmured, “Little Baby Blossom!”

Sara rubbed her cheek against the faded coat sleeve.

“Daddy darling, this moment makes up for everything, doesn’t it?”

“But — but — where did you come from?” he asked, his senses beginning to struggle out of their bewilderment of surprise. “I didn’t expect you till tomorrow. You didn’t have to walk from the station, did you? And your old daddy not there to welcome you!”

Sara laughed, swung herself back by the tips of her fingers and danced around him in the childish fashion of long ago.

“I found I could make an earlier connection with the C.P.A. yesterday and get to the Island last night. I was in such a fever to get home that I jumped at the chance. Of course I walked from the station — it’s only two miles and every step was a benediction. My trunks are over there. We’ll go after them tomorrow, daddy, but just now I want to go straight to every one of the dear old nooks and spots at once.”

“You must get something to eat first,” he urged fondly. “And there ain’t much in the house, I’m afraid. I was going to bake tomorrow morning. But I guess I can forage you out something, darling.”

He was sorely repenting having given Mrs. Blewett’s doughnuts to the pigs, but Sara brushed all such considerations aside with a wave of her hand.

“I don’t want anything to eat just now. By and by we’ll have a snack; just as we used to get up for ourselves whenever we felt hungry. Don’t you

remember how scandalized White Sands folks used to be at our irregular hours? I'm hungry; but it's soul hunger, for a glimpse of all the dear old rooms and places. Come — there are four hours yet before sunset, and I want to cram into them all I've missed out of these three years. Let us begin right here with the garden. Oh, daddy, by what witchcraft have you coaxed that sulky rosebush into bloom?"

"No witchcraft at all — it just bloomed because you were coming home, baby," said her father.

They had a glorious afternoon of it, those two children. They explored the garden and then the house. Sara danced through every room, and then up to her own, holding fast to her father's hand.

"Oh, it's lovely to see my little room again, daddy. I'm sure all my old hopes and dreams are waiting here for me."

She ran to the window and threw it open, leaning out.

"Daddy, there's no view in the world so beautiful as that curve of sea between the headlands. I've looked at magnificent scenery — and then I'd shut my eyes and conjure up that picture. Oh, listen to the wind keening in the trees! How I've longed for that music!"

He took her to the orchard and followed out his crafty plan of surprise perfectly. She rewarded him by doing exactly what he had dreamed of her doing, clapping her hands and crying out:

"Oh, daddy! Why, daddy!"

They finished up with the shore, and then at sunset they came back and sat down on the old garden bench. Before them a sea of splendour, burning like a great jewel, stretched to the gateways of the west. The long headlands on either side were darkly purple, and the sun left behind him a vast, cloudless arc of fiery daffodil and elusive rose. Back over the orchard in a cool, green sky glimmered a crystal planet, and the night poured over them a clear wine of dew from her airy chalice. The spruces were rejoicing

in the wind, and even the battered firs were singing of the sea. Old memories trooped into their hearts like shining spirits.

“Baby Blossom,” said Old Man Shaw falteringly, “are you quite sure you’ll be contented here? Out there” — with a vague sweep of his hand towards horizons that shut out a world far removed from White Sands — “there’s pleasure and excitement and all that. Won’t you miss it? Won’t you get tired of your old father and White Sands?”

Sara patted his hand gently.

“The world out there is a good place,” she said thoughtfully, “I’ve had three splendid years and I hope they’ll enrich my whole life. There are wonderful things out there to see and learn, fine, noble people to meet, beautiful deeds to admire; but,” she wound her arm about his neck and laid her cheek against his — “there is no daddy!”

And Old Man Shaw looked silently at the sunset — or, rather, through the sunset to still grander and more radiant splendours beyond, of which the things seen were only the pale reflections, not worthy of attention from those who had the gift of further sight.

Aunt Olivia’s Bea u

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Aunt Olivia told Peggy and me about him on the afternoon we went over to help her gather her late roses for potpourri. We found her strangely quiet and preoccupied. As a rule she was fond of mild fun, alert to hear East Grafton gossip, and given to sudden little trills of almost girlish laughter, which for the time being dispelled the atmosphere of gentle old-maidishness which seemed to hang about her as a garment. At such moments we did not find it hard to believe — as we did at other times — that Aunt Olivia had once been a girl herself.

This day she picked the roses absently, and shook the fairy petals into her little sweetgrass basket with the air of a woman whose thoughts were far away. We said nothing, knowing that Aunt Olivia's secrets always came our way in time. When the roseleaves were picked, we carried them in and upstairs in single file, Aunt Olivia bringing up the rear to pick up any stray roseleaf we might drop. In the southwest room, where there was no carpet to fade, we spread them on newspapers on the floor. Then we put our sweetgrass baskets back in the proper place in the proper closet in the proper room. What would have happened to us, or to the sweetgrass baskets, if this had not been done I do not know. Nothing was ever permitted to remain an instant out of place in Aunt Olivia's house.

When we went downstairs, Aunt Olivia asked us to go into the parlour. She had something to tell us, she said, and as she opened the door a delicate pink flush spread over her face. I noted it, with surprise, but no inkling of the truth came to me — for nobody ever connected the idea of possible lovers or marriage with this prim little old maid, Olivia Sterling.

Aunt Olivia's parlour was much like herself — painfully neat. Every article of furniture stood in exactly the same place it had always stood. Nothing was ever suffered to be disturbed. The tassels of the crazy cushion lay just so over the arm of the sofa, and the crochet antimacassar was always spread at precisely the same angle over the horsehair rocking chair. No speck of dust was ever visible; no fly ever invaded that sacred apartment.

Aunt Olivia pulled up a blind, to let in what light could sift finely through the vine leaves, and sat down in a high-backed old chair that had appertained to her great-grandmother. She folded her hands in her lap, and looked at us with shy appeal in her blue-gray eyes. Plainly she found it hard to tell us her secret, yet all the time there was an air of pride and exultation about her; somewhat, also, of a new dignity. Aunt Olivia could never be self-assertive, but if it had been possible that would have been her time for it.

“Have you ever heard me speak of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson?” asked Aunt Olivia.

We had never heard her, or anybody else, speak of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson; but volumes of explanation could not have told us more about him than did Aunt Olivia's voice when she pronounced his name. We knew, as if it had been proclaimed to us in trumpet tones, that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson must be Aunt Olivia's beau, and the knowledge took away our breath. We even forgot to be curious, so astonished were we.

And there sat Aunt Olivia, proud and shy and exulting and shamefaced, all at once!

"He is a brother of Mrs. John Seaman's across the bridge," explained Aunt Olivia with a little simper. "Of course you don't remember him. He went out to British Columbia twenty years ago. But he is coming home now — and — and — tell your father, won't you — I — I — don't like to tell him — Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I are going to be married."

"Married!" gasped Peggy. And "married!" I echoed stupidly.

Aunt Olivia bridled a little.

"There is nothing unsuitable in that, is there?" she asked, rather crisply.

"Oh, no, no," I hastened to assure her, giving Peggy a surreptitious kick to divert her thoughts from laughter. "Only you must realize, Aunt Olivia, that this is a very great surprise to us." "I thought it would be so," said Aunt Olivia complacently. "But your father will know — he will remember. I do hope he won't think me foolish. He did not think Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was a fit person for me to marry once. But that was long ago, when Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was very poor. He is in very comfortable circumstances now."

"Tell us about it, Aunt Olivia," said Peggy. She did not look at me, which was my salvation. Had I caught Peggy's eye when Aunt Olivia said "Mr. Malcolm MacPherson" in that tone I must have laughed, willy-nilly.

"When I was a girl the MacPhersons used to live across the road from here. Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was my beau then. But my family — and your father especially — dear me, I do hope he won't be very cross —

were opposed to his attentions and were very cool to him. I think that was why he never said anything to me about getting married then. And after a time he went away, as I have said, and I never heard anything from him directly for many a year. Of course, his sister sometimes gave me news of him. But last June I had a letter from him. He said he was coming home to settle down for good on the old Island, and he asked me if I would marry him. I wrote back and said I would. Perhaps I ought to have consulted your father, but I was afraid he would think I ought to refuse Mr. Malcolm MacPherson.”

“Oh, I don’t think father will mind,” said Peggy reassuringly.

“I hope not, because, of course, I would consider it my duty in any case to fulfil the promise I have given to Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. He will be in Grafton next week, the guest of his sister, Mrs. John Seaman, across the bridge.”

Aunt Olivia said that exactly as if she were reading it from the personal column of the Daily Enterprise.

“When is the wedding to be?” I asked.

“Oh!” Aunt Olivia blushed distressfully. “I do not know the exact date. Nothing can be definitely settled until Mr. Malcolm MacPherson comes. But it will not be before September, at the earliest. There will be so much to do. You will tell your father, won’t you?”

We promised that we would, and Aunt Olivia arose with an air of relief. Peggy and I hurried over home, stopping, when we were safely out of earshot, to laugh. The romances of the middle-aged may be to them as tender and sweet as those of youth, but they are apt to possess a good deal of humour for onlookers. Only youth can be sentimental without being mirth-provoking. We loved Aunt Olivia and were glad for her late, new-blossoming happiness; but we felt amused over it also. The recollection of her “Mr. Malcolm MacPherson” was too much for us every time we thought of it.

Father pooh-poohed incredulously at first, and, when we had convinced him, guffawed with laughter. Aunt Olivia need not have dreaded any more opposition from her cruel family.

“MacPherson was a good fellow enough, but horribly poor,” said father. “I hear he has done very well out west, and if he and Olivia have a notion of each other they are welcome to marry as far as I am concerned. Tell Olivia she mustn’t take a spasm if he tracks some mud into her house once in a while.”

Thus it was all arranged, and, before we realized it at all, Aunt Olivia was mid-deep in marriage preparations, in all of which Peggy and I were quite indispensable. She consulted us in regard to everything, and we almost lived at her place in those days preceding the arrival of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson.

Aunt Olivia plainly felt very happy and important. She had always wished to be married; she was not in the least strong-minded and her old-maidhood had always been a sore point with her. I think she looked upon it as somewhat of a disgrace. And yet she was a born old maid; looking at her, and taking all her primness and little set ways into consideration, it was quite impossible to picture her as the wife of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson, or anybody else.

We soon discovered that, to Aunt Olivia, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson represented a merely abstract proposition — the man who was to confer on her the long-withheld dignity of matronhood. Her romance began and ended there, although she was quite unconscious of this herself, and believed that she was deeply in love with him.

“What will be the result, Mary, when he arrives in the flesh and she is compelled to deal with ‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’ as a real, live man, instead of a nebulous ‘party of the second part’ in the marriage ceremony?” queried Peggy, as she hemmed table-napkins for Aunt Olivia, sitting on her well-scoured sandstone steps, and carefully putting all thread-clippings and ravellings into the little basket which Aunt Olivia had placed there for that purpose.

“It may transform her from a self-centered old maid into a woman for whom marriage does not seem such an incongruous thing,” I said.

The day on which Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was expected Peggy and I went over. We had planned to remain away, thinking that the lovers would prefer their first meeting to be unwitnessed, but Aunt Olivia insisted on our being present. She was plainly nervous; the abstract was becoming concrete. Her little house was in spotless, speckless order from top to bottom. Aunt Olivia had herself scrubbed the garret floor and swept the cellar steps that very morning with as much painstaking care as if she expected that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson would hasten to inspect each at once and she must stand or fall by his opinion of them.

Peggy and I helped her to dress. She insisted on wearing her best black silk, in which she looked unnaturally fine. Her soft muslin became her much better, but we could not induce her to wear it. Anything more prim and bandboxy than Aunt Olivia when her toilet was finished it has never been my lot to see. Peggy and I watched her as she went downstairs, her skirt held stiffly up all around her that it might not brush the floor.

“‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’ will be inspired with such awe that he will only be able to sit back and gaze at her,” whispered Peggy. “I wish he would come and have it over. This is getting on my nerves.”

Aunt Olivia went into the parlour, settled herself in the old carved chair, and folded her hands. Peggy and I sat down on the stairs to await his coming in a crisping suspense. Aunt Olivia’s kitten, a fat, bewhiskered creature, looking as if it were cut out of black velvet, shared our vigil and purred in maddening peace of mind.

We could see the garden path and gate through the hall window, and therefore supposed we should have full warning of the approach of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. It was no wonder, therefore, that we positively jumped when a thunderous knock crashed against the front door and reechoed through the house. Had Mr. Malcolm MacPherson dropped from the skies?

We afterwards discovered that he had come across lots and around the house from the back, but just then his sudden advent was almost uncanny. I ran downstairs and opened the door. On the step stood a man about six feet two in height, and proportionately broad and sinewy. He had splendid shoulders, a great crop of curly black hair, big, twinkling blue eyes, and a tremendous crinkly black beard that fell over his breast in shining waves. In brief, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was what one would call instinctively, if somewhat tritely, “a magnificent specimen of manhood.”

In one hand he carried a bunch of early goldenrod and smoke-blue asters.

“Good afternoon,” he said in a resonant voice which seemed to take possession of the drowsy summer afternoon. “Is Miss Olivia Sterling in? And will you please tell her that Malcolm MacPherson is here?”

I showed him into the parlour. Then Peggy and I peeped through the crack of the door. Anyone would have done it. We would have scorned to excuse ourselves. And, indeed, what we saw would have been worth several conscience spasms if we had felt any.

Aunt Olivia arose and advanced primly, with outstretched hand.

“Mr. MacPherson, I am very glad to see you,” she said formally.

“It’s yourself, Nillie!” Mr. Malcolm MacPherson gave two strides.

He dropped his flowers on the floor, knocked over a small table, and sent the ottoman spinning against the wall. Then he caught Aunt Olivia in his arms and — smack, smack, smack! Peggy sank back upon the stair-step with her handkerchief stuffed in her mouth. Aunt Olivia was being kissed!

Presently, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson held her back at arm’s length in his big paws and looked her over. I saw Aunt Olivia’s eyes roam over his arm to the inverted table and the litter of asters and goldenrod. Her sleek crimps were all ruffled up, and her lace fichu twisted half around her neck. She looked distressed.

“It’s not a bit changed you are, Nillie,” said Mr. Malcolm MacPherson admiringly. “And it’s good I’m feeling to see you again. Are you glad to see me, Nillie?”

“Oh, of course,” said Aunt Olivia.

She twisted herself free and went to set up the table. Then she turned to the flowers, but Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had already gathered them up, leaving a goodly sprinkling of leaves and stalks on the carpet.

“I picked these for you in the river field, Nillie,” he said. “Where will I be getting something to stick them in? Here, this will do.”

He grasped a frail, painted vase on the mantel, stuffed the flowers in it, and set it on the table. The look on Aunt Olivia’s face was too much for me at last. I turned, caught Peggy by the shoulder and dragged her out of the house.

“He will horrify the very soul out of Aunt Olivia’s body if he goes on like this,” I gasped. “But he’s splendid — and he thinks the world of her — and, oh, Peggy, did you EVER hear such kisses? Fancy Aunt Olivia!”

It did not take us long to get well acquainted with Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. He almost haunted Aunt Olivia’s house, and Aunt Olivia insisted on our staying with her most of the time. She seemed to be very shy of finding herself alone with him. He horrified her a dozen times in an hour; nevertheless, she was very proud of him, and liked to be teased about him, too. She was delighted that we admired him.

“Though, to be sure, he is very different in his looks from what he used to be,” she said. “He is so dreadfully big! And I do not like a beard, but I have not the courage to ask him to shave it off. He might be offended. He has bought the old Lynde place in Avonlea and wants to be married in a month. But, dear me, that is too soon. It — it would be hardly proper.”

Peggy and I liked Mr. Malcolm MacPherson very much. So did father. We were glad that he seemed to think Aunt Olivia perfection. He was as happy as the day was long; but poor Aunt Olivia, under all her surface pride and

importance, was not. Amid all the humour of the circumstances Peggy and I snuffed tragedy compounded with the humour.

Mr. Malcolm MacPherson could never be trained to old-maidishness, and even Aunt Olivia seemed to realize this. He never stopped to clear his boots when he came in, although she had an ostentatiously new scraper put at each door for his benefit. He seldom moved in the house without knocking some of Aunt Olivia's treasures over. He smoked cigars in her parlour and scattered the ashes over the floor. He brought her flowers every day and stuck them into whatever receptacle came handiest. He sat on her cushions and rolled her antimacassars up into balls. He put his feet on her chair rungs — and all with the most distracting unconsciousness of doing anything out of the way. He never noticed Aunt Olivia's fluttering nervousness at all. Peggy and I laughed more than was good for us those days. It was so funny to see Aunt Olivia hovering anxiously around, picking up flower stems, and smoothing out tidies, and generally following him about to straighten out things. Once she even got a wing and dustpan and swept the cigar ashes under his very eyes.

“Now don't be worrying yourself over that, Nillie,” he protested. “Why, I don't mind a litter, bless you!”

How good and jolly he was, that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson! Such songs as he sang, such stories as he told, such a breezy, unconventional atmosphere as he brought into that prim little house, where stagnant dullness had reigned for years! He worshipped Aunt Olivia, and his worship took the concrete form of presents galore. He brought her a present almost every visit — generally some article of jewelry. Bracelets, rings, chains, eardrops, lockets, bangles, were showered upon our precise little aunt; she accepted them deprecatingly, but never wore them. This hurt him a little, but she assured him she would wear them all sometimes.

“I am not used to jewelry, Mr. MacPherson,” she would tell him.

Her engagement ring she did wear — it was a rather “loud” combination of engraved gold and opals. Sometimes we caught her turning it on her finger with a very troubled face.

“I would be sorry for Mr. Malcolm MacPherson if he were not so much in love with her,” said Peggy. “But as he thinks that she is perfection he doesn’t need sympathy.”

“I am sorry for Aunt Olivia,” I said. “Yes, Peggy, I am. Mr. MacPherson is a splendid man, but Aunt Olivia is a born old maid, and it is outraging her very nature to be anything else. Don’t you see how it’s hurting her? His big, splendid man-ways are harrowing her very soul up — she can’t get out of her little, narrow groove, and it is killing her to be pulled out.”

“Nonsense!” said Peggy. Then she added with a laugh,

“Mary, did you ever see anything so funny as Aunt Olivia sitting on ‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’s’ knee?”

It WAS funny. Aunt Olivia thought it very unbecoming to sit there before us, but he made her do it. He would say, with his big, jolly laugh, “Don’t be minding the little girls,” and pull her down on his knee and hold her there. To my dying day I shall never forget the expression on the poor little woman’s face.

But, as the days went by and Mr. Malcolm MacPherson began to insist on a date being set for the wedding, Aunt Olivia grew to have a strangely disturbed look. She became very quiet, and never laughed except under protest. Also, she showed signs of petulance when any of us, but especially father, teased her about her beau. I pitied her, for I think I understood better than the others what her feelings really were. But even I was not prepared for what did happen. I would not have believed that Aunt Olivia could do it. I thought that her desire for marriage in the abstract would outweigh the disadvantages of the concrete. But one can never reckon with real, bred-in-the-bone old-maidism.

One morning Mr. Malcolm MacPherson told us all that he was coming up that evening to make Aunt Olivia set the day. Peggy and I laughingly approved, telling him that it was high time for him to assert his authority, and he went off in great good humour across the river field, whistling a Highland strathspey. But Aunt Olivia looked like a martyr. She had a fierce

attack of housecleaning that day, and put everything in flawless order, even to the corners.

“As if there was going to be a funeral in the house,” sniffed Peggy.

Peggy and I were up in the southwest room at dusk that evening, piecing a quilt, when we heard Mr. Malcolm MacPherson shouting out in the hall below to know if anyone was home. I ran out to the landing, but as I did so Aunt Olivia came out of her room, brushed past me, and flitted downstairs.

“Mr. MacPherson,” I heard her say with double-distilled primness, “will you please come into the parlour? I have something to say to you.”

They went in, and I returned to the southwest room.

“Peg, there’s trouble brewing,” I said. “I’m sure of it by Aunt Olivia’s face, it was GRAY. And she has gone down ALONE — and shut the door.”

“I am going to hear what she says to him,” said Peggy resolutely. “It is her own fault — she has spoiled us by always insisting that we should be present at their interviews. That poor man has had to do his courting under our very eyes. Come on, Mary.”

The southwest room was directly over the parlour and there was an open stovepipe-hole leading up therefrom. Peggy removed the hat box that was on it, and we both deliberately and shamelessly crouched down and listened with all our might.

It was easy enough to hear what Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was saying.

“I’ve come up to get the date settled, Nillie, as I told you. Come now, little woman, name the day.”

SMACK!

“Don’t, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia. She spoke as a woman who has keyed herself up to the doing of some very distasteful task and is anxious to have it over and done with as soon as possible. “There is something I must say to you. I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson.”

There was a pause. I would have given much to have seen the pair of them. When Mr. Malcolm MacPherson spoke his voice was that of blank, uncomprehending amazement.

“Nillie, what is it you are meaning?” he said.

“I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson,” repeated Aunt Olivia.

“Why not?” Surprise was giving way to dismay.

“I don’t think you will understand, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia, faintly. “You don’t realize what it means for a woman to give up everything — her own home and friends and all her past life, so to speak, and go far away with a stranger.”

“Why, I suppose it will be rather hard. But, Nillie, Avonlea isn’t very far away — not more than twelve miles, if it will be that.”

“Twelve miles! It might as well be at the other side of the world to all intents and purposes,” said Aunt Olivia obstinately. “I don’t know a living soul there, except Rachel Lynde.”

“Why didn’t you say so before I bought the place, then? But it’s not too late. I can be selling it and buying right here in East Grafton if that will please you — though there isn’t half as nice a place to be had. But I’ll fix it up somehow!”

“No, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia firmly, “that doesn’t cover the difficulty. I knew you would not understand. My ways are not your ways and I cannot make them over. For — you track mud in — and — and — you don’t care whether things are tidy or not.”

Poor Aunt Olivia had to be Aunt Olivia; if she were being burned at the stake I verily believe she would have dragged some grotesqueness into the tragedy of the moment.

“The devil!” said Mr. Malcolm MacPherson — not profanely or angrily, but as in sheer bewilderment. Then he added, “Nillie, you must be joking.

It's careless enough I am — the west isn't a good place to learn finicky ways — but you can teach me. You're not going to throw me over because I track mud in!"

"I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson," said Aunt Olivia again.

"You can't be meaning it!" he exclaimed, because he was beginning to understand that she did mean it, although it was impossible for his man mind to understand anything else about the puzzle. "Nillie, it's breaking my heart you are! I'll do anything — go anywhere — be anything you want — only don't be going back on me like this."

"I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson," said Aunt Olivia for the fourth time.

"Nillie!" exclaimed Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. There was such real agony in his tone that Peggy and I were suddenly stricken with contrition. What were we doing? We had no right to be listening to this pitiful interview. The pain and protest in his voice had suddenly banished all the humour from it, and left naught but the bare, stark tragedy. We rose and tiptoed out of the room, wholesomely ashamed of ourselves.

When Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had gone, after an hour of useless pleading, Aunt Olivia came up to us, pale and prim and determined, and told us that there was to be no wedding. We could not pretend surprise, but Peggy ventured a faint protest.

"Oh, Aunt Olivia, do you think you have done right?"

"It was the only thing I could do," said Aunt Olivia stonily. "I could not marry Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I told him so. Please tell your father — and kindly say nothing more to me about the matter."

Then Aunt Olivia went downstairs, got a broom, and swept up the mud Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had tracked over the steps.

Peggy and I went home and told father. We felt very flat, but there was nothing to be done or said. Father laughed at the whole thing, but I could

not laugh. I was sorry for Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and, though I was angry with her, I was sorry for Aunt Olivia, too. Plainly she felt badly enough over her vanished hopes and plans, but she had developed a strange and baffling reserve which nothing could pierce.

“It’s nothing but a chronic case of old-maidism,” said father impatiently.

Things were very dull for a week. We saw no more of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and we missed him dreadfully. Aunt Olivia was inscrutable, and worked with fierceness at superfluous tasks.

One evening father came home with some news. “Malcolm MacPherson is leaving on the 7:30 train for the west,” he said. “He has rented the Avonlea place and he’s off. They say he is mad as a hatter at the trick Olivia played on him.”

After tea Peggy and I went over to see Aunt Olivia, who had asked our advice about a wrapper. She was sewing as for dear life, and her face was primmer and colder than ever. I wondered if she knew of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’s departure. Delicacy forbade me to mention it but Peggy had no such scruples.

“Well, Aunt Olivia, your beau is off,” she announced cheerfully. “You won’t be bothered with him again. He is leaving on the mail train for the west.”

Aunt Olivia dropped her sewing and stood up. I have never seen anything like the transformation that came over her. It was so thorough and sudden as to be almost uncanny. The old maid vanished completely, and in her place was a woman, full to the lips with primitive emotion and pain.

“What shall I do?” she cried in a terrible voice. “Mary — Peggy — what shall I do?”

It was almost a shriek. Peggy turned pale.

“Do you care?” she said stupidly.

“Care! Girls, I shall DIE if Malcolm MacPherson goes away! I have been mad — I must have been mad. I have almost died of loneliness since I sent him away. But I thought he would come back! I must see him — there is time to reach the station before the train goes if I go by the fields.”

She took a wild step towards the door, but I caught her back with a sudden mind-vision of Aunt Olivia flying bareheaded and distraught across the fields.

“Wait a moment, Aunt Olivia. Peggy, run home and get father to harness Dick in the buggy as quickly as he can. We’ll drive Aunt Olivia to the station. We’ll get you there in time, Aunty.”

Peggy flew, and Aunt Olivia dashed upstairs. I lingered behind to pick up her sewing, and when I got to her room she had her hat and cape on. Spread out on the bed were all the boxes of gifts which Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had brought her, and Aunt Olivia was stringing their contents feverishly about her person. Rings, three brooches, a locket, three chains and a watch all went on — anyway and anyhow. A wonderful sight it was to see Aunt Olivia bedizened like that!

“I would never wear them before — but I’ll put them all on now to show him I’m sorry,” she gasped, with trembling lips.

When the three of us crowded into the buggy, Aunt Olivia grasped the whip before we could prevent her and, leaning out, gave poor Dick such a lash as he had never felt in his life before. He went tearing down the steep, stony, fast-darkening road in a fashion which made Peggy and me cry out in alarm. Aunt Olivia was usually the most timid of women, but now she didn’t seem to know what fear was. She kept whipping and urging poor Dick the whole way to the station, quite oblivious to our assurances that there was plenty of time. The people who met us that night must have thought we were quite mad. I held on the reins, Peggy gripped the swaying side of the buggy, and Aunt Olivia bent forward, hat and hair blowing back from her set face with its strangely crimson cheeks, and plied the whip. In such a guise did we whirl through the village and over the two-mile station road.

When we drove up to the station, where the train was shunting amid the shadows, Aunt Olivia made a flying leap from the buggy and ran along the platform, with her cape streaming behind her and all her brooches and chains glittering in the lights. I tossed the reins to a boy standing near and we followed. Just under the glare of the station lamp we saw Mr. Malcolm MacPherson, grip in hand. Fortunately no one else was very near, but it would have been all the same had they been the centre of a crowd. Aunt Olivia fairly flung herself against him.

“Malcolm,” she cried, “don’t go — don’t go — I’ll marry you — I’ll go anywhere — and I don’t care how much mud you bring in!”

That truly Aunt Olivia touch relieved the tension of the situation a little. Mr. MacPherson put his arm about her and drew her back into the shadows.

“There, there,” he soothed. “Of course I won’t be going. Don’t cry, Nillie-girl.”

“And you’ll come right back with me now?” implored Aunt Olivia, clinging to him as if she feared he would be whisked away from her yet if she let go for a moment.

“Of course, of course,” he said.

Peggy got a chance home with a friend, and Aunt Olivia and Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I drove back in the buggy. Mr. MacPherson held Aunt Olivia on his knee because there was no room, but she would have sat there, I think, had there been a dozen vacant seats. She clung to him in the most barefaced fashion, and all her former primness and reserve were swept away completely. She kissed him a dozen times or more and told him she loved him — and I did not even smile, nor did I want to. Somehow, it did not seem in the least funny to me then, nor does it now, although it doubtless will to others. There was too much real intensity of feeling in it all to leave any room for the ridiculous. So wrapped up in each other were they that I did not even feel superfluous.

I set them safely down in Aunt Olivia's yard and turned homeward, completely forgotten by the pair. But in the moonlight, which flooded the front of the house, I saw something that testified eloquently to the transformation in Aunt Olivia. It had rained that afternoon and the yard was muddy. Nevertheless, she went in at her front door and took Mr. Malcolm MacPherson in with her without even a glance at the scraper!

The Quarantine at Alexander Abraham' s

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I refused to take that class in Sunday School the first time I was asked. It was not that I objected to teaching in the Sunday School. On the contrary I rather liked the idea; but it was the Rev. Mr. Allan who asked me, and it had always been a matter of principle with me never to do anything a man asked me to do if I could help it. I was noted for that. It saves a great deal of trouble and it simplifies everything beautifully. I had always disliked men. It must have been born in me, because, as far back as I can remember, an antipathy to men and dogs was one of my strongest characteristics. I was noted for that. My experiences through life only served to deepen it. The more I saw of men, the more I liked cats.

So, of course, when the Rev. Allan asked me if I would consent to take a class in Sunday School, I said no in a fashion calculated to chasten him wholesomely. If he had sent his wife the first time, as he did the second, it would have been wiser. People generally do what Mrs. Allan asks them to do because they know it saves time.

Mrs. Allan talked smoothly for half an hour before she mentioned the Sunday School, and paid me several compliments. Mrs. Allan is famous for her tact. Tact is a faculty for meandering around to a given point instead of making a bee-line. I have no tact. I am noted for that. As soon as Mrs. Allan's conversation came in sight of the Sunday School, I, who knew all along whither it was tending, said, straight out,

“What class do you want me to teach?”

Mrs. Allan was so surprised that she forgot to be tactful, and answered plainly for once in her life,

“There are two classes — one of boys and one of girls — needing a teacher. I have been teaching the girls' class, but I shall have to give it up

for a little time on account of the baby's health. You may have your choice, Miss MacPherson."

"Then I shall take the boys," I said decidedly. I am noted for my decision. "Since they have to grow up to be men it's well to train them properly betimes. Nuisances they are bound to become under any circumstances; but if they are taken in hand young enough they may not grow up to be such nuisances as they otherwise would and that will be some unfortunate woman's gain." Mrs. Allan looked dubious. I knew she had expected me to choose the girls.

"They are a very wild set of boys," she said.

"I never knew boys who weren't," I retorted.

"I — I — think perhaps you would like the girls best," said Mrs. Allan hesitatingly. If it had not been for one thing — which I would never in this world have admitted to Mrs. Allan — I might have liked the girls' class best myself. But the truth was, Anne Shirley was in that class; and Anne Shirley was the one living human being that I was afraid of. Not that I disliked her. But she had such a habit of asking weird, unexpected questions, which a Philadelphia lawyer couldn't answer. Miss Rogerson had that class once and Anne routed her, horse, foot and artillery. I wasn't going to undertake a class with a walking interrogation point in it like that. Besides, I thought Mrs. Allan required a slight snub. Ministers' wives are rather apt to think they can run everything and everybody, if they are not wholesomely corrected now and again.

"It is not what I like best that must be considered, Mrs. Allan," I said rebukingly. "It is what is best for those boys. I feel that I shall be best for THEM."

"Oh, I've no doubt of that, Miss MacPherson," said Mrs. Allan amiably. It was a fib for her, minister's wife though she was. She HAD doubt. She thought I would be a dismal failure as teacher of a boys' class.

But I was not. I am not often a dismal failure when I make up my mind to do a thing. I am noted for that.

“It is wonderful what a reformation you have worked in that class, Miss MacPherson — wonderful,” said the Rev. Mr. Allan some weeks later. He didn’t mean to show how amazing a thing he thought it that an old maid noted for being a man hater should have managed it, but his face betrayed him.

“Where does Jimmy Spencer live?” I asked him crisply. “He came one Sunday three weeks ago and hasn’t been back since. I mean to find out why.”

Mr. Allan coughed.

“I believe he is hired as handy boy with Alexander Abraham Bennett, out on the White Sands road,” he said.

“Then I am going out to Alexander Abraham Bennett’s on the White Sands road to see why Jimmy Spencer doesn’t come to Sunday school,” I said firmly.

Mr. Allan’s eyes twinkled ever so slightly. I have always insisted that if that man were not a minister he would have a sense of humour.

“Possibly Mr. Bennett will not appreciate your kind interest! He has — ah — a singular aversion to your sex, I understand. No woman has ever been known to get inside of Mr. Bennett’s house since his sister died twenty years ago.”

“Oh, he is the one, is he?” I said, remembering. “He is the woman hater who threatens that if a woman comes into his yard he’ll chase her out with a pitchfork. Well, he will not chase ME out!”

Mr. Allan gave a chuckle — a ministerial chuckle, but still a chuckle. It irritated me slightly, because it seemed to imply that he thought Alexander Abraham Bennett would be one too many for me. But I did not show Mr. Allan that he annoyed me. It is always a great mistake to let a man see that he can vex you.

The next afternoon I harnessed my sorrel pony to the buggy and drove down to Alexander Abraham Bennett's. As usual, I took William Adolphus with me for company. William Adolphus is my favourite among my six cats. He is black, with a white dicky and beautiful white paws. He sat up on the seat beside me and looked far more like a gentleman than many a man I've seen in a similar position.

Alexander Abraham's place was about three miles along the White Sands road. I knew the house as soon as I came to it by its neglected appearance. It needed paint badly; the blinds were crooked and torn; weeds grew up to the very door. Plainly, there was no woman about THAT place. Still, it was a nice house, and the barns were splendid. My father always said that when a man's barns were bigger than his house it was a sign that his income exceeded his expenditure. So it was all right that they should be bigger; but it was all wrong that they should be trimmer and better painted. Still, thought I, what else could you expect of a woman hater?

"But Alexander Abraham evidently knows how to run a farm, even if he is a woman hater," I remarked to William Adolphus as I got out and tied the pony to the railing.

I had driven up to the house from the back way and now I was opposite a side door opening on the veranda. I thought I might as well go to it, so I tucked William Adolphus under my arm and marched up the path. Just as I was halfway up, a dog swooped around the front corner and made straight for me. He was the ugliest dog I had ever seen; and he didn't even bark — just came silently and speedily on, with a businesslike eye.

I never stop to argue matters with a dog that doesn't bark. I know when discretion is the better part of valour. Firmly clasping William Adolphus, I ran — not to the door, because the dog was between me and it, but to a big, low-branching cherry tree at the back corner of the house. I reached it in time and no more. First thrusting William Adolphus on to a limb above my head, I scrambled up into that blessed tree without stopping to think how it might look to Alexander Abraham if he happened to be watching.

My time for reflection came when I found myself perched half way up the tree with William Adolphus beside me. William Adolphus was quite calm

and unruffled. I can hardly say with truthfulness what I was. On the contrary, I admit that I felt considerably upset.

The dog was sitting on his haunches on the ground below, watching us, and it was quite plain to be seen, from his leisurely manner, that it was not his busy day. He bared his teeth and growled when he caught my eye.

“You LOOK like a woman hater’s dog,” I told him. I meant it for an insult; but the beast took it for a compliment.

Then I set myself to solving the question, “How am I to get out of this predicament?”

It did not seem easy to solve it.

“Shall I scream, William Adolphus?” I demanded of that intelligent animal. William Adolphus shook his head. This is a fact. And I agreed with him.

“No, I shall not scream, William Adolphus,” I said. “There is probably no one to hear me except Alexander Abraham, and I have my painful doubts about his tender mercies. Now, it is impossible to go down. Is it, then, William Adolphus, possible to go up?”

I looked up. Just above my head was an open window with a tolerably stout branch extending right across it.

“Shall we try that way, William Adolphus?” I asked.

William Adolphus, wasting no words, began to climb the tree. I followed his example. The dog ran in circles about the tree and looked things not lawful to be uttered. It probably would have been a relief to him to bark if it hadn’t been so against his principles.

I got in by the window easily enough, and found myself in a bedroom the like of which for disorder and dust and general awfulness I had never seen in all my life. But I did not pause to take in details. With William

Adolphus under my arm I marched downstairs, fervently hoping I should meet no one on the way.

I did not. The hall below was empty and dusty. I opened the first door I came to and walked boldly in. A man was sitting by the window, looking moodily out. I should have known him for Alexander Abraham anywhere. He had just the same uncared-for, ragged appearance that the house had; and yet, like the house, it seemed that he would not be bad looking if he were trimmed up a little. His hair looked as if it had never been combed, and his whiskers were wild in the extreme.

He looked at me with blank amazement in his countenance.

“Where is Jimmy Spencer?” I demanded. “I have come to see him.”

“How did he ever let you in?” asked the man, staring at me.

“He didn’t let me in,” I retorted. “He chased me all over the lawn, and I only saved myself from being torn piecemeal by scrambling up a tree. You ought to be prosecuted for keeping such a dog! Where is Jimmy?”

Instead of answering Alexander Abraham began to laugh in a most unpleasant fashion.

“Trust a woman for getting into a man’s house if she has made up her mind to,” he said disagreeably.

Seeing that it was his intention to vex me I remained cool and collected.

“Oh, I wasn’t particular about getting into your house, Mr. Bennett,” I said calmly. “I had but little choice in the matter. It was get in lest a worse fate befall me. It was not you or your house I wanted to see — although I admit that it is worth seeing if a person is anxious to find out how dirty a place CAN be. It was Jimmy. For the third and last time — where is Jimmy?”

“Jimmy is not here,” said Mr. Bennett gruffly — but not quite so assuredly. “He left last week and hired with a man over at Newbridge.”

“In that case,” I said, picking up William Adolphus, who had been exploring the room with a disdainful air, “I won’t disturb you any longer. I shall go.”

“Yes, I think it would be the wisest thing,” said Alexander Abraham — not disagreeably this time, but reflectively, as if there was some doubt about the matter. “I’ll let you out by the back door. Then the — ahem! — the dog will not interfere with you. Please go away quietly and quickly.”

I wondered if Alexander Abraham thought I would go away with a whoop. But I said nothing, thinking this the most dignified course of conduct, and I followed him out to the kitchen as quickly and quietly as he could have wished. Such a kitchen!

Alexander Abraham opened the door — which was locked — just as a buggy containing two men drove into the yard.

“Too late!” he exclaimed in a tragic tone. I understood that something dreadful must have happened, but I did not care, since, as I fondly supposed, it did not concern me. I pushed out past Alexander Abraham — who was looking as guilty as if he had been caught burglarizing — and came face to face with the man who had sprung from the buggy. It was old Dr. Blair, from Carmody, and he was looking at me as if he had found me shoplifting.

“My dear Peter,” he said gravely, “I am VERY sorry to see you here — very sorry indeed.”

I admit that this exasperated me. Besides, no man on earth, not even my own family doctor, has any right to “My dear Peter” me!

“There is no loud call for sorrow, doctor,” I said loftily. “If a woman, forty-eight years of age, a member of the Presbyterian church in good and regular standing, cannot call upon one of her Sunday School scholars without wrecking all the proprieties, how old must she be before she can?”

The doctor did not answer my question. Instead, he looked reproachfully at Alexander Abraham.

“Is this how you keep your word, Mr. Bennett?” he said. “I thought that you promised me that you would not let anyone into the house.”

“I didn’t let her in,” growled Mr. Bennett. “Good heavens, man, she climbed in at an upstairs window, despite the presence on my grounds of a policeman and a dog! What is to be done with a woman like that?”

“I do not understand what all this means,” I said addressing myself to the doctor and ignoring Alexander Abraham entirely, “but if my presence here is so extremely inconvenient to all concerned, you can soon be relieved of it. I am going at once.”

“I am very sorry, my dear Peter,” said the doctor impressively, “but that is just what I cannot allow you to do. This house is under quarantine for smallpox. You will have to stay here.”

Smallpox! For the first and last time in my life, I openly lost my temper with a man. I wheeled furiously upon Alexander Abraham.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” I cried.

“Tell you!” he said, glaring at me. “When I first saw you it was too late to tell you. I thought the kindest thing I could do was to hold my tongue and let you get away in happy ignorance. This will teach you to take a man’s house by storm, madam!”

“Now, now, don’t quarrel, my good people,” interposed the doctor seriously — but I saw a twinkle in his eye. “You’ll have to spend some time together under the same roof and you won’t improve the situation by disagreeing. You see, Peter, it was this way. Mr. Bennett was in town yesterday — where, as you are aware, there is a bad outbreak of smallpox — and took dinner in a boardinghouse where one of the maids was ill. Last night she developed unmistakable symptoms of smallpox. The Board of Health at once got after all the people who were in the house yesterday, so far as they could locate them, and put them under quarantine. I came down here this morning and explained the matter to Mr. Bennett. I brought Jeremiah Jeffries to guard the front of the house and Mr. Bennett gave me his word of honour that he would not let anyone in by the back way while I

went to get another policeman and make all the necessary arrangements. I have brought Thomas Wright and have secured the services of another man to attend to Mr. Bennett's barn work and bring provisions to the house. Jacob Green and Cleophas Lee will watch at night. I don't think there is much danger of Mr. Bennett's taking the smallpox, but until we are sure you must remain here, Peter."

While listening to the doctor I had been thinking. It was the most distressing predicament I had ever got into in my life, but there was no sense in making it worse.

"Very well, doctor," I said calmly. "Yes, I was vaccinated a month ago, when the news of the smallpox first came. When you go back through Avonlea kindly go to Sarah Pye and ask her to live in my house during my absence and look after things, especially the cats. Tell her to give them new milk twice a day and a square inch of butter apiece once a week. Get her to put my two dark print wrappers, some aprons, and some changes of underclothing in my third best valise and have it sent down to me. My pony is tied out there to the fence. Please take him home. That is all, I think."

"No, it isn't all," said Alexander Abraham grumpily. "Send that cat home, too. I won't have a cat around the place — I'd rather have smallpox."

I looked Alexander Abraham over gradually, in a way I have, beginning at his feet and traveling up to his head. I took my time over it; and then I said, very quietly.

"You may have both. Anyway, you'll have to have William Adolphus. He is under quarantine as well as you and I. Do you suppose I am going to have my cat ranging at large through Avonlea, scattering smallpox germs among innocent people? I'll have to put up with that dog of yours. You will have to endure William Adolphus."

Alexander Abraham groaned, but I could see that the way I had looked him over had chastened him considerably.

The doctor drove away, and I went into the house, not choosing to linger outside and be grinned at by Thomas Wright. I hung my coat up in the hall and laid my bonnet carefully on the sitting-room table, having first dusted a clean place for it with my handkerchief. I longed to fall upon that house at once and clean it up, but I had to wait until the doctor came back with my wrapper. I could not clean house in my new suit and a silk shirtwaist.

Alexander Abraham was sitting on a chair looking at me. Presently he said,

“I am NOT curious — but will you kindly tell me why the doctor called you Peter?”

“Because that is my name, I suppose,” I answered, shaking up a cushion for William Adolphus and thereby disturbing the dust of years.

Alexander Abraham coughed gently.

“Isn’t that — ahem! — rather a peculiar name for a woman?”

“It is,” I said, wondering how much soap, if any, there was in the house.

“I am NOT curious,” said Alexander Abraham, “but would you mind telling me how you came to be called Peter?”

“If I had been a boy my parents intended to call me Peter in honour of a rich uncle. When I — fortunately — turned out to be a girl my mother insisted that I should be called Angelina. They gave me both names and called me Angelina, but as soon as I grew old enough I decided to be called Peter. It was bad enough, but not so bad as Angelina.”

“I should say it was more appropriate,” said Alexander Abraham, intending, as I perceived, to be disagreeable.

“Precisely,” I agreed calmly. “My last name is MacPherson, and I live in Avonlea. As you are NOT curious, that will be all the information you will need about me.”

“Oh!” Alexander Abraham looked as if a light had broken in on him. “I’ve heard of you. You — ah — pretend to dislike men.”

Pretend! Goodness only knows what would have happened to Alexander Abraham just then if a diversion had not taken place. But the door opened and a dog came in — THE dog. I suppose he had got tired waiting under the cherry tree for William Adolphus and me to come down. He was even uglier indoors than out.

“Oh, Mr. Riley, Mr. Riley, see what you have let me in for,” said Alexander Abraham reproachfully.

But Mr. Riley — since that was the brute’s name — paid no attention to Alexander Abraham. He had caught sight of William Adolphus curled up on the cushion, and he started across the room to investigate him. William Adolphus sat up and began to take notice.

“Call off that dog,” I said warningly to Alexander Abraham.

“Call him off yourself,” he retorted. “Since you’ve brought that cat here you can protect him.”

“Oh, it wasn’t for William Adolphus’ sake I spoke,” I said pleasantly. “William Adolphus can protect himself.”

William Adolphus could and did. He humped his back, flattened his ears, swore once, and then made a flying leap for Mr. Riley. William Adolphus landed squarely on Mr. Riley’s brindled back and promptly took fast hold, spitting and clawing and caterwauling.

You never saw a more astonished dog than Mr. Riley. With a yell of terror he bolted out to the kitchen, out of the kitchen into the hall, through the hall into the room, and so into the kitchen and round again. With each circuit he went faster and faster, until he looked like a brindled streak with a dash of black and white on top. Such a racket and commotion I never heard, and I laughed until the tears came into my eyes. Mr. Riley flew around and around, and William Adolphus held on grimly and clawed. Alexander Abraham turned purple with rage.

“Woman, call off that infernal cat before he kills my dog,” he shouted above the din of yelps and yowls.

“Oh, he won’t kill him,” I said reassuringly, “and he’s going too fast to hear me if I did call him. If you can stop the dog, Mr. Bennett, I’ll guarantee to make William Adolphus listen to reason, but there’s no use trying to argue with a lightning flash.”

Alexander Abraham made a frantic lunge at the brindled streak as it whirled past him, with the result that he overbalanced himself and went sprawling on the floor with a crash. I ran to help him up, which only seemed to enrage him further.

“Woman,” he spluttered viciously, “I wish you and your fiend of a cat were in — in—”

“In Avonlea,” I finished quickly, to save Alexander Abraham from committing profanity. “So do I, Mr. Bennett, with all my heart. But since we are not, let us make the best of it like sensible people. And in future you will kindly remember that my name is Miss MacPherson, NOT Woman!”

With this the end came and I was thankful, for the noise those two animals made was so terrific that I expected the policeman would be rushing in, smallpox or no smallpox, to see if Alexander Abraham and I were trying to murder each other. Mr. Riley suddenly veered in his mad career and bolted into a dark corner between the stove and the woodbox, William Adolphus let go just in time.

There never was any more trouble with Mr. Riley after that. A meeker, more thoroughly chastened dog you could not find. William Adolphus had the best of it and he kept it.

Seeing that things had calmed down and that it was five o’clock I decided to get tea. I told Alexander Abraham that I would prepare it, if he would show me where the eatables were.

“You needn’t mind,” said Alexander Abraham. “I’ve been in the habit of getting my own tea for twenty years.”

“I daresay. But you haven’t been in the habit of getting mine,” I said firmly. “I wouldn’t eat anything you cooked if I starved to death. If you want some occupation, you’d better get some salve and anoint the scratches on that poor dog’s back.”

Alexander Abraham said something that I prudently did not hear. Seeing that he had no information to hand out I went on an exploring expedition into the pantry. The place was awful beyond description, and for the first time a vague sentiment of pity for Alexander Abraham glimmered in my breast. When a man had to live in such surroundings the wonder was, not that he hated women, but that he didn’t hate the whole human race.

But I got up a supper somehow. I am noted for getting up suppers. The bread was from the Carmody bakery and I made good tea and excellent toast; besides, I found a can of peaches in the pantry which, as they were bought, I wasn’t afraid to eat.

That tea and toast mellowed Alexander Abraham in spite of himself. He ate the last crust, and didn’t growl when I gave William Adolphus all the cream that was left. Mr. Riley did not seem to want anything. He had no appetite.

By this time the doctor’s boy had arrived with my valise. Alexander Abraham gave me quite civilly to understand that there was a spare room across the hall and that I might take possession of it. I went to it and put on a wrapper. There was a set of fine furniture in the room, and a comfortable bed. But the dust! William Adolphus had followed me in and his paws left marks everywhere he walked.

“Now,” I said briskly, returning to the kitchen, “I’m going to clean up and I shall begin with this kitchen. You’d better betake yourself to the sitting-room, Mr. Bennett, so as to be out of the way.”

Alexander Abraham glared at me.

“I’m not going to have my house meddled with,” he snapped. “It suits me. If you don’t like it you can leave it.”

“No, I can’t. That is just the trouble,” I said pleasantly. “If I could leave it I shouldn’t be here for a minute. Since I can’t, it simply has to be cleaned. I can tolerate men and dogs when I am compelled to, but I cannot and will not tolerate dirt and disorder. Go into the sitting-room.”

Alexander Abraham went. As he closed the door, I heard him say, in capitals, “WHAT AN AWFUL WOMAN!”

I cleared that kitchen and the pantry adjoining. It was ten o’clock when I got through, and Alexander Abraham had gone to bed without deigning further speech. I locked Mr. Riley in one room and William Adolphus in another and went to bed, too. I had never felt so dead tired in my life before. It had been a hard day.

But I got up bright and early the next morning and got a tiptop breakfast, which Alexander Abraham condescended to eat. When the provision man came into the yard I called to him from the window to bring me a box of soap in the afternoon, and then I tackled the sitting-room.

It took me the best part of a week to get that house in order, but I did it thoroughly. I am noted for doing things thoroughly. At the end of the time it was clean from garret to cellar. Alexander Abraham made no comments on my operations, though he groaned loud and often, and said caustic things to poor Mr. Riley, who hadn’t the spirit to answer back after his drubbing by William Adolphus. I made allowances for Alexander Abraham because his vaccination had taken and his arm was real sore; and I cooked elegant meals, not having much else to do, once I had got things scoured up. The house was full of provisions — Alexander Abraham wasn’t mean about such things, I will say that for him. Altogether, I was more comfortable than I had expected to be. When Alexander Abraham wouldn’t talk I let him alone; and when he would I just said as sarcastic things as he did, only I said them smiling and pleasant. I could see he had a wholesome awe for me. But now and then he seemed to forget his disposition and talked like a human being. We had one or two real interesting conversations. Alexander Abraham was an intelligent man,

though he had got terribly warped. I told him once I thought he must have been nice when he was a boy.

One day he astonished me by appearing at the dinner table with his hair brushed and a white collar on. We had a tiptop dinner that day, and I had made a pudding that was far too good for a woman hater. When Alexander Abraham had disposed of two large platefuls of it, he sighed and said,

“You can certainly cook. It’s a pity you are such a detestable crank in other respects.”

“It’s kind of convenient being a crank,” I said. “People are careful how they meddle with you. Haven’t you found that out in your own experience?”

“I am NOT a crank,” growled Alexander Abraham resentfully. “All I ask is to be let alone.”

“That’s the very crankiest kind of crank,” I said. “A person who wants to be let alone flies in the face of Providence, who decreed that folks for their own good were not to be let alone. But cheer up, Mr. Bennett. The quarantine will be up on Tuesday and then you’ll certainly be let alone for the rest of your natural life, as far as William Adolphus and I are concerned. You may then return to your wallowing in the mire and be as dirty and comfortable as of yore.”

Alexander Abraham growled again. The prospect didn’t seem to cheer him up as much as I should have expected. Then he did an amazing thing. He poured some cream into a saucer and set it down before William Adolphus. William Adolphus lapped it up, keeping one eye on Alexander Abraham lest the latter should change his mind. Not to be outdone, I handed Mr. Riley a bone.

Neither Alexander Abraham nor I had worried much about the smallpox. We didn’t believe he would take it, for he hadn’t even seen the girl who was sick. But the very next morning I heard him calling me from the upstairs landing.

“Miss MacPherson,” he said in a voice so uncommonly mild that it gave me an uncanny feeling, “what are the symptoms of smallpox?”

“Chills and flushes, pain in the limbs and back, nausea and vomiting,” I answered promptly, for I had been reading them up in a patent medicine almanac.

“I’ve got them all,” said Alexander Abraham hollowly.

I didn’t feel as much scared as I should have expected. After enduring a woman hater and a brindled dog and the early disorder of that house — and coming off best with all three — smallpox seemed rather insignificant. I went to the window and called to Thomas Wright to send for the doctor.

The doctor came down from Alexander Abraham’s room looking grave.

“It’s impossible to pronounce on the disease yet,” he said. “There is no certainty until the eruption appears. But, of course, there is every likelihood that it is the smallpox. It is very unfortunate. I am afraid that it will be difficult to get a nurse. All the nurses in town who will take smallpox cases are overbusy now, for the epidemic is still raging there. However, I’ll go into town tonight and do my best. Meanwhile, at present, you must not go near him, Peter.”

I wasn’t going to take orders from any man, and as soon as the doctor had gone I marched straight up to Alexander Abraham’s room with some dinner for him on a tray. There was a lemon cream I thought he could eat even if he had the smallpox.

“You shouldn’t come near me,” he growled. “You are risking your life.”

“I am not going to see a fellow creature starve to death, even if he is a man,” I retorted.

“The worst of it all,” groaned Alexander Abraham, between mouthfuls of lemon cream, “is that the doctor says I’ve got to have a nurse. I’ve got so kind of used to you being in the house that I don’t mind you, but the

thought of another woman coming here is too much. Did you give my poor dog anything to eat?"

"He has had a better dinner than many a Christian," I said severely.

Alexander Abraham need not have worried about another woman coming in. The doctor came back that night with care on his brow.

"I don't know what is to be done," he said. "I can't get a soul to come here."

"I shall nurse Mr. Bennett," I said with dignity. "It is my duty and I never shirk my duty. I am noted for that. He is a man, and he has smallpox, and he keeps a vile dog; but I am not going to see him die for lack of care for all that."

"You're a good soul, Peter," said the doctor, looking relieved, manlike, as soon as he found a woman to shoulder the responsibility.

I nursed Alexander Abraham through the smallpox, and I didn't mind it much. He was much more amiable sick than well, and he had the disease in a very mild form. Below stairs I reigned supreme and Mr. Riley and William Adolphus lay down together like the lion and the lamb. I fed Mr. Riley regularly, and once, seeing him looking lonesome, I patted him gingerly. It was nicer than I thought it would be. Mr. Riley lifted his head and looked at me with an expression in his eyes which cured me of wondering why on earth Alexander Abraham was so fond of the beast.

When Alexander Abraham was able to sit up, he began to make up for the time he'd lost being pleasant. Anything more sarcastic than that man in his convalescence you couldn't imagine. I just laughed at him, having found out that that could be depended on to irritate him. To irritate him still further I cleaned the house all over again. But what vexed him most of all was that Mr. Riley took to following me about and wagging what he had of a tail at me.

"It wasn't enough that you should come into my peaceful home and turn it upside down, but you have to alienate the affections of my dog,"

complained Alexander Abraham.

“He’ll get fond of you again when I go home,” I said comfortingly. “Dogs aren’t very particular that way. What they want is bones. Cats now, they love disinterestedly. William Adolphus has never swerved in his allegiance to me, although you do give him cream in the pantry on the sly.”

Alexander Abraham looked foolish. He hadn’t thought I knew that.

I didn’t take the smallpox and in another week the doctor came out and sent the policeman home. I was disinfected and William Adolphus was fumigated, and then we were free to go.

“Goodbye, Mr. Bennett,” I said, offering to shake hands in a forgiving spirit. “I’ve no doubt that you are glad to be rid of me, but you are no gladder than I am to go. I suppose this house will be dirtier than ever in a month’s time, and Mr. Riley will have discarded the little polish his manners have taken on. Reformation with men and dogs never goes very deep.”

With this Parthian shaft I walked out of the house, supposing that I had seen the last of it and Alexander Abraham.

I was glad to get back home, of course; but it did seem queer and lonesome. The cats hardly knew me, and William Adolphus roamed about forlornly and appeared to feel like an exile. I didn’t take as much pleasure in cooking as usual, for it seemed kind of foolish to be fussing over oneself. The sight of a bone made me think of poor Mr. Riley. The neighbours avoided me pointedly, for they couldn’t get rid of the fear that I might erupt into smallpox at any moment. My Sunday School class had been given to another woman, and altogether I felt as if I didn’t belong anywhere.

I had existed like this for a fortnight when Alexander Abraham suddenly appeared. He walked in one evening at dusk, but at first sight I didn’t know him he was so spruced and barbered up. But William Adolphus knew him.

Will you believe it, William Adolphus, my own William Adolphus, rubbed up against that man's trouser leg with an undisguised purr of satisfaction.

"I had to come, Angelina," said Alexander Abraham. "I couldn't stand it any longer."

"My name is Peter," I said coldly, although I was feeling ridiculously glad about something.

"It isn't," said Alexander Abraham stubbornly. "It is Angelina for me, and always will be. I shall never call you Peter. Angelina just suits you exactly; and Angelina Bennett would suit you still better. You must come back, Angelina. Mr. Riley is moping for you, and I can't get along without somebody to appreciate my sarcasms, now that you have accustomed me to the luxury."

"What about the other five cats?" I demanded.

Alexander Abraham sighed.

"I suppose they'll have to come too," he sighed, "though no doubt they'll chase poor Mr. Riley clean off the premises. But I can live without him, and I can't without you. How soon can you be ready to marry me?"

"I haven't said that I was going to marry you at all, have I?" I said tartly, just to be consistent. For I wasn't feeling tart.

"No, but you will, won't you?" said Alexander Abraham anxiously. "Because if you won't, I wish you'd let me die of the smallpox. Do, dear Angelina."

To think that a man should dare to call me his "dear Angelina!" And to think that I shouldn't mind!

"Where I go, William Adolphus goes," I said, "but I shall give away the other five cats for — for the sake of Mr. Riley."

Pa Sloane's Purchase

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"I guess the molasses is getting low, ain't it?" said Pa Sloane insinuatingly. "S'pose I'd better drive up to Carmody this afternoon and get some more."

"There's a good half-gallon of molasses in the jug yet," said ma Sloane ruthlessly.

"That so? Well, I noticed the kerosene demijohn wasn't very hefty the last time I filled the can. Reckon it needs replenishing."

"We have kerosene enough to do for a fortnight yet." Ma continued to eat her dinner with an impassive face, but a twinkle made itself apparent in her eye. Lest Pa should see it, and feel encouraged thereby, she looked immovably at her plate.

Pa Sloane sighed. His invention was giving out.

"Didn't I hear you say day before yesterday that you were out of nutmegs?" he queried, after a few moments' severe reflection.

"I got a supply of them from the egg-pedlar yesterday," responded Ma, by a great effort preventing the twinkle from spreading over her entire face. She wondered if this third failure would squelch Pa. But Pa was not to be squelched.

"Well, anyway," he said, brightening up under the influence of a sudden saving inspiration. "I'll have to go up to get the sorrel mare shod. So, if you've any little errands you want done at the store, Ma, just make a memo of them while I hitch up."

The matter of shoeing the sorrel mare was beyond Ma's province, although she had her own suspicions about the sorrel mare's need of shoes.

“Why can’t you give up beating about the bush, Pa?” she demanded, with contemptuous pity. “You might as well own up what’s taking you to Carmody. I can see through your design. You want to get away to the Garland auction. That is what is troubling you, Pa Sloane.”

“I dunno but what I might step over, seeing it’s so handy. But the sorrel mare really does need shoeing, Ma,” protested Pa.

“There’s always something needing to be done if it’s convenient,” retorted Ma. “Your mania for auctions will be the ruin of you yet, Pa. A man of fifty-five ought to have grown out of such a hankering. But the older you get the worse you get. Anyway, if I wanted to go to auctions, I’d select them as was something like, and not waste my time on little one-horse affairs like this of Garland’s.”

“One might pick up something real cheap at Garland’s,” said Pa defensively.

“Well, you are not going to pick up anything, cheap or otherwise, Pa Sloane, because I’m going with you to see that you don’t. I know I can’t stop you from going. I might as well try to stop the wind from blowing. But I shall go, too, out of self-defence. This house is so full now of old clutter and truck that you’ve brought home from auctions that I feel as if I was made up out of pieces and left overs.”

Pa Sloane sighed again. It was not exhilarating to attend an auction with Ma. She would never let him bid on anything. But he realized that Ma’s mind was made up beyond the power of mortal man’s persuasion to alter it, so he went out to hitch up.

Pa Sloane’s dissipation was going to auctions and buying things that nobody else would buy. Ma Sloane’s patient endeavours of over thirty years had been able to effect only a partial reform. Sometimes Pa heroically refrained from going to an auction for six months at a time; then he would break out worse than ever, go to all that took place for miles around, and come home with a wagonful of misfits. His last exploit had been to bid on an old dasher churn for five dollars — the boys “ran things up” on Pa Sloane for the fun of it — and bring it home to outraged Ma,

who had made her butter for fifteen years in the very latest, most up-to-date barrel churn. To add insult to injury this was the second dasher churn Pa had bought at auction. That settled it. Ma decreed that henceforth she would chaperon Pa when he went to auctions.

But this was the day of Pa's good angel. When he drove up to the door where Ma was waiting, a breathless, hatless imp of ten flew into the yard, and hurled himself between Ma and the wagon-step.

"Oh, Mrs. Sloane, won't you come over to our house at once?" he gasped. "The baby, he's got colic, and ma's just wild, and he's all black in the face."

Ma went, feeling that the stars in their courses fought against a woman who was trying to do her duty by her husband. But first she admonished Pa.

"I shall have to let you go alone. But I charge you, Pa, not to bid on anything — on ANYTHING, do you hear?"

Pa heard and promised to heed, with every intention of keeping his promise. Then he drove away joyfully. On any other occasion Ma would have been a welcome companion. But she certainly spoiled the flavour of an auction.

When Pa arrived at the Carmody store, he saw that the little yard of the Garland place below the hill was already full of people. The auction had evidently begun; so, not to miss any more of it, Pa hurried down. The sorrel mare could wait for her shoes until afterwards.

Ma had been within bounds when she called the Garland auction a "one-horse affair." It certainly was very paltry, especially when compared to the big Donaldson auction of a month ago, which Pa still lived over in happy dreams.

Horace Garland and his wife had been poor. When they died within six weeks of each other, one of consumption and one of pneumonia, they left nothing but debts and a little furniture. The house had been a rented one.

The bidding on the various poor articles of household gear put up for sale was not brisk, but had an element of resigned determination. Carmody people knew that these things had to be sold to pay the debts, and they could not be sold unless they were bought. Still, it was a very tame affair.

A woman came out of the house carrying a baby of about eighteen months in her arms, and sat down on the bench beneath the window.

“There’s Marthy Blair with the Garland Baby,” said Robert Lawson to Pa. “I’d like to know what’s to become of that poor young one!”

“Ain’t there any of the father’s or mother’s folks to take him?” asked Pa.

“No. Horace had no relatives that anybody ever heard of. Mrs. Horace had a brother; but he went to Mantioba years ago, and nobody knows where he is now. Somebody’ll have to take the baby and nobody seems anxious to. I’ve got eight myself, or I’d think about it. He’s a fine little chap.”

Pa, with Ma’s parting admonition ringing in his ears, did not bid on anything, although it will never be known how great was the heroic self-restraint he put on himself, until just at the last, when he did bid on a collection of flower-pots, thinking he might indulge himself to that small extent. But Josiah Sloane had been commissioned by his wife to bring those flower-pots home to her; so Pa lost them.

“There, that’s all,” said the auctioneer, wiping his face, for the day was very warm for October.

“There’s nothing more unless we sell the baby.”

A laugh went through the crowd. The sale had been a dull affair, and they were ready for some fun. Someone called out, “Put him up, Jacob.” The joke found favour and the call was repeated hilariously.

Jacob Blair took little Teddy Garland out of Martha’s arms and stood him up on the table by the door, steadying the small chap with one big brown hand. The baby had a mop of yellow curls, and a pink and white face, and

big blue eyes. He laughed out at the men before him and waved his hands in delight. Pa Sloane thought he had never seen so pretty a baby.

“Here’s a baby for sale,” shouted the auctioneer. “A genuine article, pretty near as good as brand-new. A real live baby, warranted to walk and talk a little. Who bids? A dollar? Did I hear anyone mean enough to bid a dollar? No, sir, babies don’t come as cheap as that, especially the curly-headed brand.”

The crowd laughed again. Pa Sloane, by way of keeping on the joke, cried, “Four dollars!”

Everybody looked at him. The impression flashed through the crowd that Pa was in earnest, and meant thus to signify his intention of giving the baby a home. He was well-to-do, and his only son was grown up and married.

“Six,” cried out John Clarke from the other side of the yard. John Clarke lived at White Sands and he and his wife were childless.

That bid of John Clarke’s was Pa’s undoing. Pa Sloane could not have an enemy; but a rival he had, and that rival was John Clarke. Everywhere at auctions John Clarke was wont to bid against Pa. At the last auction he had outbid Pa in everything, not having the fear of his wife before his eyes. Pa’s fighting blood was up in a moment; he forgot Ma Sloane; he forgot what he was bidding for; he forgot everything except a determination that John Clarke should not be victor again.

“Ten,” he called shrilly.

“Fifteen,” shouted Clarke.

“Twenty,” vociferated Pa.

“Twenty-five,” bellowed Clarke.

“Thirty,” shrieked Pa. He nearly bust a blood-vessel in his shrieking, but he had won. Clarke turned off with a laugh and a shrug, and the baby was

knocked down to Pa Sloane by the auctioneer, who had meanwhile been keeping the crowd in roars of laughter by a quick fire of witticisms. There had not been such fun at an auction in Carmody for many a long day.

Pa Sloane came, or was pushed, forward. The baby was put into his arms; he realized that he was expected to keep it, and he was too dazed to refuse; besides, his heart went out to the child.

The auctioneer looked doubtfully at the money which Pa laid mutely down.

“I s’pose that part was only a joke,” he said.

“Not a bit of it,” said Robert Lawson. “All the money won’t be too much to pay the debts. There’s a doctor’s bill, and this will just about pay it.”

Pa Sloane drove back home, with the sorrel mare still unshod, the baby, and the baby’s meager bundle of clothes. The baby did not trouble him much; it had become well used to strangers in the past two months, and promptly fell asleep on his arm; but Pa Sloane did not enjoy that drive; at the end of it; he mentally saw Ma Sloane.

Ma was there, too, waiting for him on the back doorstep as he drove into the yard at sunset. Her face, when she saw the baby, expressed the last degree of amazement.

“Pa Sloane,” she demanded, “whose is that young one, and there did you get it?”

“I — I — bought it at the auction, Ma,” said Pa feebly. Then he waited for the explosion. None came. This last exploit of Pa’s was too much for Ma.

With a gasp she snatched the baby from Pa’s arms, and ordered him to go out and put the mare in. When Pa returned to the kitchen Ma had set the baby on the sofa, fenced him around with chairs so that he couldn’t fall off and given him a molassed cooky.

“Now, Pa Sloane, you can explain,” she said.

Pa explained. Ma listened in grim silence until he had finished. Then she said sternly:

“Do you reckon we’re going to keep this baby?”

“I — I — dunno,” said Pa. And he didn’t.

“Well, we’re NOT. I brought up one boy and that’s enough. I don’t calculate to be pestered with any more. I never was much struck on children as children, anyhow. You say that Mary Garland had a brother out in Mantioba? Well, we shall just write to him and tell him he’s got to look out for his nephew.”

“But how can you do that, Ma, when nobody knows his address?” objected Pa, with a wistful look at that delicious, laughing baby.

“I’ll find out his address if I have to advertise in the papers for him,” retorted Ma. “As for you, Pa Sloane, you’re not fit to be out of a lunatic asylum. The next auction you’ll be buying a wife, I s’pose?”

Pa, quite crushed by Ma’s sarcasm, pulled his chair in to supper. Ma picked up the baby and sat down at the head of the table. Little Teddy laughed and pinched her face — Ma’s face! Ma looked very grim, but she fed him his supper as skilfully as if it had not been thirty years since she had done such a thing. But then, the woman who once learns the mother knack never forgets it.

After tea Ma despatched Pa over to William Alexander’s to borrow a high chair. When Pa returned in the twilight, the baby was fenced in on the sofa again, and Ma was stepping briskly about the garret. She was bringing down the little cot bed her own boy had once occupied, and setting it up in their room for Teddy. Then she undressed the baby and rocked him to sleep, crooning an old lullaby over him. Pa Sloane sat quietly and listened, with very sweet memories of the long ago, when he and Ma had been young and proud, and the bewhiskered William Alexander had been a curly-headed little fellow like this one.

Ma was not driven to advertising for Mrs. Garland's brother. That personage saw the notice of his sister's death in a home paper and wrote to the Carmody postmaster for full information. The letter was referred to Ma and Ma answered it.

She wrote that they had taken in the baby, pending further arrangements, but had no intention of keeping it; and she calmly demanded of its uncle what was to be done with it. Then she sealed and addressed the letter with an unfaltering hand; but, when it was done, she looked across the table at Pa Sloane, who was sitting in the armchair with the baby on his knee. They were having a royal good time together. Pa had always been dreadfully foolish about babies. He looked ten years younger. Ma's keen eyes softened a little as she watched them.

A prompt answer came to her letter. Teddy's uncle wrote that he had six children of his own, but was nevertheless willing and glad to give his little nephew a home. But he could not come after him. Josiah Spencer, of White Sands, was going out to Manitoba in the spring. If Mr. and Mrs. Sloane could only keep the baby till then he could be sent out with the Spencers. Perhaps they would see a chance sooner.

"There'll be no chance sooner," said Pa Sloane in a tone of satisfaction.

"No, worse luck!" retorted Ma crisply.

The winter passed by. Little Teddy grew and throve, and Pa Sloane worshipped him. Ma was very good to him, too, and Teddy was just as fond of her as of Pa.

Nevertheless, as the spring drew near, Pa became depressed. Sometimes he sighed heavily, especially when he heard casual references to the Josiah Spencer emigration.

One warm afternoon in early May Josiah Spencer arrived. He found Ma knitting placidly in the kitchen, while Pa nodded over his newspaper and the baby played with the cat on the floor.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Sloane,” said Josiah with a flourish. “I just dropped in to see about this young man here. We are going to leave next Wednesday; so you’d better send him down to our place Monday or Tuesday, so that he can get used to us, and—”

“Oh, Ma,” began Pa, rising imploringly to his feet.

Ma transfixed him with her eye.

“Sit down, Pa,” she commanded.

Unhappy Pa sat.

Then Ma glared at the smiling Josiah, who instantly felt as guilty as if he had been caught stealing sheep red-handed.

“We are much obliged to you, Mr. Spencer,” said Ma icily, “but this baby is OURS. We bought him, and we paid for him. A bargain is a bargain. When I pay cash down for babies, I propose to get my money’s worth. We are going to keep this baby in spite of any number of uncles in Manitoba. Have I made this sufficiently clear to your understanding, Mr. Spencer?”

“Certainly, certainly,” stammered the unfortunate man, feeling guiltier than ever, “but I thought you didn’t want him — I thought you’d written to his uncle — I thought—”

“I really wouldn’t think quite so much if I were you,” said Ma kindly. “It must be hard on you. Won’t you stay and have tea with us?”

But, no, Josiah would not stay. He was thankful to make his escape with such rags of self-respect as remained to him.

Pa Sloane arose and came around to Ma’s chair. He laid a trembling hand on her shoulder.

“Ma, you’re a good woman,” he said softly.

“Go ‘long, Pa,” said Ma.

The Courting of Prissy Strong

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I WASN'T able to go to prayer meeting that evening because I had neuralgia in my face; but Thomas went, and the minute he came home I knew by the twinkle in his eye that he had some news.

"Who do you s'pose Stephen Clark went home with from meeting tonight?" he said, chuckling.

"Jane Miranda Blair," I said promptly. Stephen Clark's wife had been dead for two years and he hadn't taken much notice of anybody, so far as was known. But Carmody had Jane Miranda all ready for him, and really I don't know why she didn't suit him, except for the reason that a man never does what he is expected to do when it comes to marrying.

Thomas chuckled again.

"Wrong. He stepped up to Prissy Strong and walked off with her. Cold soup warmed over."

"Prissy Strong!" I just held up my hands. Then I laughed. "He needn't try for Prissy," I said. "Emmeline nipped that in the bud twenty years ago, and she'll do it again."

"Em'line is an old crank," growled Thomas. He detested Emmeline Strong, and always did.

"She's that, all right," I agreed, "and that is just the reason she can turn poor Prissy any way she likes. You mark my words, she'll put her foot right down on this as soon as she finds it out."

Thomas said that I was probably right. I lay awake for a long time after I went to bed that night, thinking of Prissy and Stephen. As a general rule, I

don't concern my head about other people's affairs, but Prissy was such a helpless creature I couldn't get her off my mind.

Twenty years ago Stephen Clark had tried to go with Prissy Strong. That was pretty soon after Prissy's father had died. She and Emmeline were living alone together. Emmeline was thirty, ten years older than Prissy, and if ever there were two sisters totally different from each other in every way, those two were Emmeline and Prissy Strong.

Emmeline took after her father; she was big and dark and homely, and she was the most domineering creature that ever stepped on shoe leather. She simply ruled poor Prissy with a rod of iron.

Prissy herself was a pretty girl — at least most people thought so. I can't honestly say I ever admired her style much myself. I like something with more vim and snap to it. Prissy was slim and pink, with soft, appealing blue eyes, and pale gold hair all clinging in baby rings around her face. She was just as meek and timid as she looked and there wasn't a bit of harm in her. I always liked Prissy, even if I didn't admire her looks as much as some people did.

Anyway, it was plain her style suited Stephen Clark. He began to drive her, and there wasn't a speck of doubt that Prissy liked him. Then Emmeline just put a stopper on the affair. It was pure cantankerousness in her. Stephen was a good match and nothing could be said against him. But Emmeline was just determined that Prissy shouldn't marry. She couldn't get married herself, and she was sore enough about it.

Of course, if Prissy had had a spark of spirit she wouldn't have given in. But she hadn't a mite; I believe she would have cut off her nose if Emmeline had ordered her to do it. She was just her mother over again. If ever a girl belied her name, Prissy Strong did. There wasn't anything strong about her.

One night, when prayer meeting came out, Stephen stepped up to Prissy as usual and asked if he might see her home. Thomas and I were just behind — we weren't married ourselves then — and we heard it all. Prissy gave

one scared, appealing look at Emmeline and then said, “No, thank you, not tonight.”

Stephen just turned on his heel and went. He was a high-spirited fellow and I knew he would never overlook a public slight like that. If he had had as much sense as he ought to have had he would have known that Emmeline was at the bottom of it; but he didn’t, and he began going to see Althea Gillis, and they were married the next year. Althea was a rather nice girl, though giddy, and I think she and Stephen were happy enough together. In real life things are often like that.

Nobody ever tried to go with Prissy again. I suppose they were afraid of Emmeline. Prissy’s beauty soon faded. She was always kind of sweet looking, but her bloom went, and she got shy and limper every year of her life. She wouldn’t have dared put on her second best dress without asking Emmeline’s permission. She was real fond of cats and Emmeline wouldn’t let her keep one. Emmeline even cut the serial out of the religious weekly she took before she would give it to Prissy, because she didn’t believe in reading novels. It used to make me furious to see it all. They were my next door neighbours after I married Thomas, and I was often in and out. Sometimes I’d feel real vexed at Prissy for giving in the way she did; but, after all, she couldn’t help it — she was born that way.

And now Stephen was going to try his luck again. It certainly did seem funny.

Stephen walked home with Prissy from prayer meeting four nights before Emmeline found it out. Emmeline hadn’t been going to prayer meeting all that summer because she was mad at Mr. Leonard. She had expressed her disapproval to him because he had buried old Naomi Clark at the harbour “just as if she was a Christian,” and Mr. Leonard had said something to her she couldn’t get over for a while. I don’t know what it was, but I know that when Mr. Leonard WAS roused to rebuke anyone the person so rebuked remembered it for a spell.

All at once I knew she must have discovered about Stephen and Prissy, for Prissy stopped going to prayer meeting.

I felt real worried about it, someway, and although Thomas said for goodness' sake not to go poking my fingers into other people's pies, I felt as if I ought to do something. Stephen Clark was a good man and Prissy would have a beautiful home; and those two little boys of Althea's needed a mother if ever boys did. Besides, I knew quite well that Prissy, in her secret soul, was hankering to be married. So was Emmeline, too — but nobody wanted to help HER to a husband.

The upshot of my meditations was that I asked Stephen down to dinner with us from church one day. I had heard a rumour that he was going to see Lizzie Pye over at Avonlea, and I knew it was time to be stirring, if anything were to be done. If it had been Jane Miranda I don't know that I'd have bothered; but Lizzie Pye wouldn't have done for a stepmother for Althea's boys at all. She was too bad-tempered, and as mean as second skimmings besides.

Stephen came. He seemed dull and moody, and not much inclined to talk. After dinner I gave Thomas a hint. I said,

“You go to bed and have your nap. I want to talk to Stephen.”

Thomas shrugged his shoulders and went. He probably thought I was brewing up lots of trouble for myself, but he didn't say anything. As soon as he was out of the way I casually remarked to Stephen that I understood that he was going to take one of my neighbours away and that I couldn't be sorry, though she was an excellent neighbour and I would miss her a great deal.

“You won't have to miss her much, I reckon,” said Stephen grimly. “I've been told I'm not wanted there.”

I was surprised to hear Stephen come out so plump and plain about it, for I hadn't expected to get at the root of the matter so easily. Stephen wasn't the confidential kind. But it really seemed to be a relief to him to talk about it; I never saw a man feeling so sore about anything. He told me the whole story.

Prissy had written him a letter — he fished it out of his pocket and gave it to me to read. It was in Prissy's prim, pretty little writing, sure enough, and it just said that his attentions were "unwelcome," and would he be "kind enough to refrain from offering them." Not much wonder the poor man went to see Lizzie Pye!

"Stephen, I'm surprised at you for thinking that Prissy Strong wrote that letter," I said.

"It's in her handwriting," he said stubbornly.

"Of course it is. 'The hand is the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob,'" I said, though I wasn't sure whether the quotation was exactly appropriate. "Emmeline composed that letter and made Prissy copy it out. I know that as well as if I'd seen her do it, and you ought to have known it, too."

"If I thought that I'd show Emmeline I could get Prissy in spite of her," said Stephen savagely. "But if Prissy doesn't want me I'm not going to force my attentions on her."

Well, we talked it over a bit, and in the end I agreed to sound Prissy, and find out what she really thought about it. I didn't think it would be hard to do; and it wasn't. I went over the very next day because I saw Emmeline driving off to the store. I found Prissy alone, sewing carpet rags. Emmeline kept her constantly at that — because Prissy hated it I suppose. Prissy was crying when I went in, and in a few minutes I had the whole story.

Prissy wanted to get married — and she wanted to get married to Stephen — and Emmeline wouldn't let her.

"Prissy Strong," I said in exasperation, "you haven't the spirit of a mouse! Why on earth did you write him such a letter?"

"Why, Emmeline made me," said Prissy, as if there couldn't be any appeal from that; and I knew there couldn't — for Prissy. I also knew that if Stephen wanted to see Prissy again Emmeline must know nothing of it,

and I told him so when he came down the next evening — to borrow a hoe, he said. It was a long way to come for a hoe.

“Then what am I to do?” he said. “It wouldn’t be any use to write, for it would likely fall into Emmeline’s hands. She won’t let Prissy go anywhere alone after this, and how am I to know when the old cat is away?”

“Please don’t insult cats,” I said. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. You can see the ventilator on our barn from your place, can’t you? You’d be able to make out a flag or something tied to it, wouldn’t you, through that spyglass of yours?”

Stephen thought he could.

“Well, you take a squint at it every now and then,” I said. “Just as soon as Emmeline leaves Prissy alone I’ll hoist the signal.”

The chance didn’t come for a whole fortnight. Then, one evening, I saw Emmeline striding over the field below our house. As soon as she was out of sight I ran through the birch grove to Prissy.

“Yes, Em’line’s gone to sit up with Jane Lawson tonight,” said Prissy, all fluttered and trembling.

“Then you put on your muslin dress and fix your hair,” I said. “I’m going home to get Thomas to tie something to that ventilator.”

But do you think Thomas would do it? Not he. He said he owed something to his position as elder in the church. In the end I had to do it myself, though I don’t like climbing ladders. I tied Thomas’ long red woollen scarf to the ventilator, and prayed that Stephen would see it. He did, for in less than an hour he drove down our lane and put his horse in our barn. He was all spruced up, and as nervous and excited as a schoolboy. He went right over to Prissy, and I began to tuft my new comfort with a clear conscience. I shall never know why it suddenly came into my head to go up to the garret and make sure that the moths hadn’t got into my box of blankets; but I always believed that it was a special interposition of Providence. I

went up and happened to look out of the east window; and there I saw Emmeline Strong coming home across our pond field.

I just flew down those garret stairs and out through the birches. I burst into the Strong kitchen, where Stephen and Prissy were sitting as cozy as you please.

“Stephen, come quick! Emmeline’s nearly here,” I cried.

Prissy looked out of the window and wrung her hands.

“Oh, she’s in the lane now,” she gasped. “He can’t get out of the house without her seeing him. Oh, Rosanna, what shall we do?”

I really don’t know what would have become of those two people if I hadn’t been in existence to find ideas for them.

“Take Stephen up to the garret and hide him there, Prissy,” I said firmly, “and take him quick.”

Prissy took him quick, but she had barely time to get back to the kitchen before Emmeline marched in — mad as a wet hen because somebody had been ahead of her offering to sit up with Jane Lawson, and so she lost the chance of poking and prying into things while Jane was asleep. The minute she clapped eyes on Prissy she suspected something. It wasn’t any wonder, for there was Prissy, all dressed up, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. She was all in a quiver of excitement, and looked ten years younger.

“Priscilla Strong, you’ve been expecting Stephen Clark here this evening!” burst out Emmeline. “You wicked, deceitful, underhanded, ungrateful creature!”

And she went on storming at Prissy, who began to cry, and looked so weak and babyish that I was frightened she would betray the whole thing.

“This is between you and Prissy, Emmeline,” I struck in, “and I’m not going to interfere. But I want to get you to come over and show me how to

tuft my comfort that new pattern you learned in Avonlea, and as it had better be done before dark I wish you'd come right away."

"I s'pose I'll go," said Emmeline ungraciously, "but Priscilla shall come, too, for I see that she isn't to be trusted out of my sight after this."

I hoped Stephen would see us from the garret window and make good his escape. But I didn't dare trust to chance, so when I got Emmeline safely to work on my comfort I excused myself and slipped out. Luckily my kitchen was on the off side of the house, but I was a nervous woman as I rushed across to the Strong place and dashed up Emmeline's garret stairs to Stephen. It was fortunate I had come, for he didn't know we had gone. Prissy had hidden him behind the loom and he didn't dare move for fear Emmeline would hear him on that creaky floor. He was a sight with cobwebs.

I got him down and smuggled him into our barn, and he stayed there until it was dark and the Strong girls had gone home. Emmeline began to rage at Prissy the moment they were outside my door.

Then Stephen came in and we talked things over. He and Prissy had made good use of their time, short as it had been. Prissy had promised to marry him, and all that remained was to get the ceremony performed.

"And that will be no easy matter," I warned him. "Now that Emmeline's suspicions are aroused she'll never let Prissy out of her sight until you're married to another woman, if it's years. I know Emmeline Strong. And I know Prissy. If it was any other girl in the world she'd run away, or manage it somehow, but Prissy never will. She's too much in the habit of obeying Emmeline. You'll have an obedient wife, Stephen — if you ever get her."

Stephen looked as if he thought that wouldn't be any drawback. Gossip said that Althea had been pretty bossy. I don't know. Maybe it was so.

"Can't you suggest something, Rosanna?" he implored. "You've helped us so far, and I'll never forget it."

“The only thing I can think of is for you to have the license ready, and speak to Mr. Leonard, and keep an eye on our ventilator,” I said. “I’ll watch here and signal whenever there’s an opening.”

Well, I watched and Stephen watched, and Mr. Leonard was in the plot, too. Prissy was always a favourite of his, and he would have been more than human, saint as he is, if he’d had any love for Emmeline, after the way she was always trying to brew up strife in the church.

But Emmeline was a match for us all. She never let Prissy out of her sight. Everywhere she went she toted Prissy, too. When a month had gone by, I was almost in despair. Mr. Leonard had to leave for the Assembly in another week and Stephen’s neighbours were beginning to talk about him. They said that a man who spent all his time hanging around the yard with a spyglass, and trusting everything to a hired boy, couldn’t be altogether right in his mind.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw Emmeline driving away one day alone. As soon as she was out of sight I whisked over, and Anne Shirley and Diana Barry went with me.

They were visiting me that afternoon. Diana’s mother was my second cousin, and, as we visited back and forth frequently, I’d often seen Diana. But I’d never seen her chum, Anne Shirley, although I’d heard enough about her to drive anyone frantic with curiosity. So when she came home from Redmond College that summer I asked Diana to take pity on me and bring her over some afternoon.

I wasn’t disappointed in her. I considered her a beauty, though some people couldn’t see it. She had the most magnificent red hair and the biggest, shiningest eyes I ever saw in a girl’s head. As for her laugh, it made me feel young again to hear it. She and Diana both laughed enough that afternoon, for I told them, under solemn promise of secrecy, all about poor Prissy’s love affair. So nothing would do them but they must go over with me.

The appearance of the house amazed me. All the shutters were closed and the door locked. I knocked and knocked, but there was no answer. Then I

walked around the house to the only window that hadn't shutters — a tiny one upstairs. I knew it was the window in the closet off the room where the girls slept. I stopped under it and called Prissy. Before long Prissy came and opened it. She was so pale and woebegone looking that I pitied her with all my heart.

"Prissy, where has Emmeline gone?" I asked.

"Down to Avonlea to see the Roger Pyes. They're sick with measles, and Emmeline couldn't take me because I've never had measles."

Poor Prissy! She had never had anything a body ought to have.

"Then you just come and unfasten a shutter, and come right over to my house," I said exultantly. "We'll have Stephen and the minister here in no time."

"I can't — Em'line has locked me in here," said Prissy woefully.

I was posed. No living mortal bigger than a baby could have got in or out of that closet window.

"Well," I said finally, "I'll put the signal up for Stephen anyhow, and we'll see what can be done when he gets here."

I didn't know how I was ever to get the signal up on that ventilator, for it was one of the days I take dizzy spells; and if I took one up on the ladder there'd probably be a funeral instead of a wedding. But Anne Shirley said she'd put it up for me, and she did. I had never seen that girl before, and I've never seen her since, but it's my opinion that there wasn't much she couldn't do if she made up her mind to do it.

Stephen wasn't long in getting there and he brought the minister with him. Then we all, including Thomas — who was beginning to get interested in the affair in spite of himself — went over and held council of war beneath the closet window.

Thomas suggested breaking in doors and carrying Prissy off boldly, but I could see that Mr. Leonard looked very dubious over that, and even Stephen said he thought it could only be done as a last resort. I agreed with him. I knew Emmeline Strong would bring an action against him for housebreaking as likely as not. She'd be so furious she'd stick at nothing if we gave her any excuse. Then Anne Shirley, who couldn't have been more excited if she was getting married herself, came to the rescue again.

"Couldn't you put a ladder up to the closet window," she said, "And Mr. Clark can go up it and they can be married there. Can't they, Mr. Leonard?"

Mr. Leonard agreed that they could. He was always the most saintly looking man, but I know I saw a twinkle in his eye.

"Thomas, go over and bring our little ladder over here," I said.

Thomas forgot he was an elder, and he brought the ladder as quick as it was possible for a fat man to do it. After all it was too short to reach the window, but there was no time to go for another. Stephen went up to the top of it, and he reached up and Prissy reached down, and they could just barely clasp hands so. I shall never forget the look of Prissy. The window was so small she could only get her head and one arm out of it. Besides, she was almost frightened to death.

Mr. Leonard stood at the foot of the ladder and married them. As a rule, he makes a very long and solemn thing of the marriage ceremony, but this time he cut out everything that wasn't absolutely necessary; and it was well that he did, for just as he pronounced them man and wife, Emmeline drove into the lane.

She knew perfectly well what had happened when she saw the minister with his blue book in his hand. Never a word said she. She marched to the front door, unlocked it, and strode upstairs. I've always been convinced it was a mercy that closet window was so small, or I believe that she would have thrown Prissy out of it. As it was, she walked her downstairs by the arm and actually flung her at Stephen.

“There, take your wife,” she said, “and I’ll pack up every stitch she owns and send it after her; and I never want to see her or you again as long as I live.”

Then she turned to me and Thomas.

“As for you that have aided and abetted that weakminded fool in this, take yourselves out of my yard and never darken my door again.”

“Goodness, who wants to, you old spitfire?” said Thomas.

It wasn’t just the thing for him to say, perhaps, but we are all human, even elders.

The girls didn’t escape. Emmeline looked daggers at them.

“This will be something for you to carry back to Avonlea,” she said. “You gossips down there will have enough to talk about for a spell. That’s all you ever go out of Avonlea for — just to fetch and carry tales.”

Finally she finished up with the minister.

“I’m going to the Baptist church in Spencervale after this,” she said. Her tone and look said a hundred other things. She whirled into the house and slammed the door.

Mr. Leonard looked around on us with a pitying smile as Stephen put poor, half-fainting Prissy into the buggy.

“I am very sorry,” he said in that gently, saintly way of his, “for the Baptists.”

The Miracle at Carmody

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Salome looked out of the kitchen window, and a pucker of distress appeared on her smooth forehead.

“Dear, dear, what has Lionel Hezekiah been doing now?” she murmured anxiously.

Involuntarily she reached out for her crutch; but it was a little beyond her reach, having fallen on the floor, and without it Salome could not move a step.

“Well, anyway, Judith is bringing him in as fast as she can,” she reflected. “He must have been up to something terrible this time; for she looks very cross, and she never walks like that unless she is angry clear through. Dear me, I am sometimes tempted to think that Judith and I made a mistake in adopting the child. I suppose two old maids don’t know much about bringing up a boy properly. But he is NOT a bad child, and it really seems to me that there must be some way of making him behave better if we only knew what it was.”

Salome’s monologue was cut short by the entrance of her sister Judith, holding Lionel Hezekiah by his chubby wrist with a determined grip.

Judith Marsh was ten years older than Salome, and the two women were as different in appearance as night and day. Salome, in spite of her thirty-five years, looked almost girlish. She was small and pink and flowerlike, with little rings of pale golden hair clustering all over her head in a most unspinster-like fashion, and her eyes were big and blue, and mild as a dove’s. Her face was perhaps a weak one, but it was very sweet and appealing.

Judith Marsh was tall and dark, with a plain, tragic face and iron-gray hair. Her eyes were black and sombre, and every feature bespoke unyielding will and determination. Just now she looked, as Salome had said, “angry clear through,” and the baleful glances she cast on the small mortal she held would have withered a more hardened criminal than six happy-go-lucky years had made of Lionel Hezekiah.

Lionel Hezekiah, whatever his shortcomings, did not look bad. Indeed, he was as engaging an urchin as ever beamed out on a jolly good world through a pair of big, velvet-brown eyes. He was chubby and firm-limbed, with a mop of beautiful golden curls, which were the despair of his heart and the pride and joy of Salome’s; and his round face was usually a lurking-place for dimples and smiles and sunshine.

But just now Lionel Hezekiah was under a blight; he had been caught red-handed in guilt, and was feeling much ashamed of himself. He hung his head and squirmed his toes under the mournful reproach in Salome’s eyes. When Salome looked at him like that, Lionel Hezekiah always felt that he was paying more for his fun than it was worth.

“What do you suppose I caught him doing this time?” demanded Judith.

“I — I don’t know,” faltered Salome.

“Firing — at — a — mark — on — the — henhouse — door — with — new-laid — eggs,” said Judith with measured distinctness. “He has broken every egg that was laid to-day except three. And as for the state of that henhouse door—”

Judith paused, with an indignant gesture meant to convey that the state of the henhouse door must be left to Salome’s imagination, since the English language was not capable of depicting it.

“O Lionel Hezekiah, why will you do such things?” said Salome miserably.

“I — didn’t know it was wrong,” said Lionel Hezekiah, bursting into prompt tears. “I — I thought it would be bully fun. Seems’s if everything

what's fun 's wrong."

Salome's heart was not proof against tears, as Lionel Hezekiah very well knew. She put her arm about the sobbing culprit, and drew him to her side.

"He didn't know it was wrong," she said defiantly to Judith.

"He's got to be taught, then," was Judith's retort. "No, you needn't try to beg him off, Salome. He shall go right to bed without supper, and stay there till tomorrow morning."

"Oh! not without his supper," entreated Salome. "You — you won't improve the child's morals by injuring his stomach, Judith."

"Without his supper, I say," repeated Judith inexorably. "Lionel Hezekiah, go upstairs to the south room, and go to bed at once."

Lionel Hezekiah went upstairs, and went to bed at once. He was never sulky or disobedient. Salome listened to him as he stumped patiently upstairs with a sob at every step, and her own eyes filled with tears.

"Now don't for pity's sake go crying, Salome," said Judith irritably. "I think I've let him off very easily. He is enough to try the patience of a saint, and I never was that," she added with entire truth.

"But he isn't bad," pleaded Salome. "You know he never does anything the second time after he has been told it was wrong, never."

"What good does that do when he is certain to do something new and twice as bad? I never saw anything like him for originating ideas of mischief. Just look at what he has done in the past fortnight — in one fortnight, Salome. He brought in a live snake, and nearly frightened you into fits; he drank up a bottle of liniment, and almost poisoned himself; he took three toads to bed with him; he climbed into the henhouse loft, and fell through on a hen and killed her; he painted his face all over with your water-colours; and now comes THIS exploit. And eggs at twenty-eight cents a dozen! I tell you, Salome, Lionel Hezekiah is an expensive luxury."

“But we couldn’t do without him,” protested Salome.

“I could. But as you can’t, or think you can’t, we’ll have to keep him, I suppose. But the only way to secure any peace of mind for ourselves, as far as I can see, is to tether him in the yard, and hire somebody to watch him.”

“There must be some way of managing him,” said Salome desperately. She thought Judith was in earnest about the tethering. Judith was generally so terribly in earnest in all she said. “Perhaps it is because he has no other employment that he invents so many unheard-of things. If he had anything to occupy himself with — perhaps if we sent him to school—”

“He’s too young to go to school. Father always said that no child should go to school until it was seven, and I don’t mean Lionel Hezekiah shall. Well, I’m going to take a pail of hot water and a brush, and see what I can do to that henhouse door. I’ve got my afternoon’s work cut out for me.”

Judith stood Salome’s crutch up beside her, and departed to purify the henhouse door. As soon as she was safely out of the way, Salome took her crutch, and limped slowly and painfully to the foot of the stairs. She could not go up and comfort Lionel Hezekiah as she yearned to do, which was the reason Judith had sent him upstairs. Salome had not been upstairs for fifteen years. Neither did she dare to call him out on the landing, lest Judith return. Besides, of course he must be punished; he had been very naughty.

“But I wish I could smuggle a bit of supper up to him,” she mused, sitting down on the lowest step and listening. “I don’t hear a sound. I suppose he has cried himself to sleep, poor, dear baby. He certainly is dreadfully mischievous; but it seems to me that it shows an investigating turn of mind, and if it could only be directed into the proper channels — I wish Judith would let me have a talk with Mr. Leonard about Lionel Hezekiah. I wish Judith didn’t hate ministers so. I don’t mind so much her not letting me go to church, because I’m so lame that it would be painful anyhow; but I’d like to talk with Mr. Leonard now and then about some things. I can never believe that Judith and father were right; I am sure they were not. There is a God, and I’m afraid it’s terribly wicked not to go to church. But

there, nothing short of a miracle would convince Judith; so there is no use in thinking about it. Yes, Lionel Hezekiah must have gone to sleep.”

Salome pictured him so, with his long, curling lashes brushing his rosy, tearstained cheek and his chubby fists clasped tightly over his breast as was his habit; her heart grew warm and thrilling with the maternity the picture provoked.

A year previously Lionel Hezekiah’s parents, Abner and Martha Smith, had died, leaving a houseful of children and very little else. The children were adopted into various Carmody families, and Salome Marsh had amazed Judith by asking to be allowed to take the five-year-old “baby.” At first Judith had laughed at the idea; but, when she found that Salome was in earnest, she yielded. Judith always gave Salome her own way except on one point.

“If you want the child, I suppose you must have him,” she said finally. “I wish he had a civilized name, though. Hezekiah is bad, and Lionel is worse; but the two in combination, and tacked on to Smith at that, is something that only Martha Smith could have invented. Her judgment was the same clear through, from selecting husbands to names.”

So Lionel Hezekiah came into Judith’s home and Salome’s heart. The latter was permitted to love him all she pleased, but Judith overlooked his training with a critical eye. Possibly it was just as well, for Salome might otherwise have ruined him with indulgence. Salome, who always adopted Judith’s opinions, no matter how ill they fitted her, deferred to the former’s decrees meekly, and suffered far more than Lionel Hezekiah when he was punished.

She sat on the stairs until she fell asleep herself, her head pillowed on her arm. Judith found her there when she came in, severe and triumphant, from her bout with the henhouse door. Her face softened into marvelous tenderness as she looked at Salome.

“She’s nothing but a child herself in spite of her age,” she thought pityingly. “A child that’s had her whole life thwarted and spoiled through

no fault of her own. And yet folks say there is a God who is kind and good! If there is a God, he is a cruel, jealous tyrant, and I hate Him!”

Judith’s eyes were bitter and vindictive. She thought she had many grievances against the great Power that rules the universe, but the most intense was Salome’s helplessness — Salome, who fifteen years before had been the brightest, happiest of maidens, light of heart and foot, bubbling over with harmless, sparkling mirth and life. If Salome could only walk like other women, Judith told herself that she would not hate the great tyrannical Power.

Lionel Hezekiah was subdued and angelic for four days after that affair of the henhouse door. Then he broke out in a new place. One afternoon he came in sobbing, with his golden curls full of burrs. Judith was not in, but Salome dropped her crochet-work and gazed at him in dismay.

“Oh, Lionel Hezekiah, what have you gone and done now?”

“I — I just stuck the burrs in ‘cause I was playing I was a heathen chief,” sobbed Lionel Hezekiah. “It was great fun while it lasted; but, when I tried to take them out, it hurt awful.”

Neither Salome nor Lionel Hezekiah ever forgot the harrowing hour that followed. With the aid of comb and scissors, Salome eventually got the burrs out of Lionel Hezekiah’s crop of curls. It would be impossible to decide which of them suffered more in the process. Salome cried as hard as Lionel Hezekiah did, and every snip of the scissors or tug at the silken floss cut into her heart. She was almost exhausted when the performance was over; but she took the tired Lionel Hezekiah on her knee, and laid her wet cheek against his shining head.

“Oh, Lionel Hezekiah, what does make you get into mischief so constantly?” she sighed.

Lionel Hezekiah frowned reflectively.

“I don’t know,” he finally announced, “unless it’s because you don’t send me to Sunday school.”

Salome started as if an electric shock had passed through her frail body.

“Why, Lionel Hezekiah,” she stammered, “what put such an idea into your head?”

“Well, all the other boys go,” said Lionel Hezekiah defiantly; “and they’re all better’n me; so I guess that must be the reason. Teddy Markham says that all little boys should go to Sunday school, and that if they don’t they’re sure to go to the bad place. I don’t see how you can ‘spect me to behave well when you won’t send me to Sunday school.

“Would you like to go?” asked Salome, almost in a whisper.

“I’d like it bully,” said Lionel Hezekiah frankly and succinctly.

“Oh, don’t use such dreadful words,” sighed Salome helplessly. “I’ll see what can be done. Perhaps you can go. I’ll ask your Aunt Judith.”

“Oh, Aunt Judith won’t let me go,” said Lionel Hezekiah despondingly. “Aunt Judith doesn’t believe there is any God or any bad place. Teddy Markham says she doesn’t. He says she’s an awful wicked woman ‘cause she never goes to church. So you must be wicked too, Aunt Salome, ‘cause you never go. Why don’t you?”

“Your — your Aunt Judith won’t let me go,” faltered Salome, more perplexed than she had ever been before in her life.

“Well, it doesn’t seem to me that you have much fun on Sundays,” remarked Lionel Hezekiah ponderingly. “I’d have more if I was you. But I s’pose you can’t ‘cause you’re ladies. I’m glad I’m a man. Look at Abel Blair, what splendid times he has on Sundays. He never goes to church, but he goes fishing, and has cock-fights, and gets drunk. When I grow up, I’m going to do that on Sundays too, since I won’t be going to church. I don’t want to go to church, but I’d like to go to Sunday school.”

Salome listened in agony. Every word of Lionel Hezekiah’s stung her conscience unbearably. So this was the result of her weak yielding to Judith; this innocent child looked upon her as a wicked woman, and, worse

still, regarded old, depraved Abel Blair as a model to be imitated. Oh! was it too late to undo the evil? When Judith returned, Salome blurted out the whole story. "Lionel Hezekiah must go to Sunday school," she concluded appealingly.

Judith's face hardened until it was as if cut in stone.

"No, he shall not," she said stubbornly. "No one living in my household shall ever go to church or Sunday school. I gave in to you when you wanted to teach him to say his prayers, though I knew it was only foolish superstition, but I sha'n't yield another inch. You know exactly how I feel on this subject, Salome; I believe just as father did. You know he hated churches and churchgoing. And was there ever a better, kinder, more lovable man?"

"Mother believed in God; mother always went to church," pleaded Salome.

"Mother was weak and superstitious, just as you are," retorted Judith inflexibly. "I tell you, Salome, I don't believe there is a God. But, if there is, He is cruel and unjust, and I hate Him."

"Judith!" gasped Salome, aghast at the impiety. She half expected to see her sister struck dead at her feet.

"Don't 'Judith' me!" said Judith passionately, in the strange anger that any discussion of the subject always roused in her. "I mean every word I say. Before you got lame I didn't feel much about it one way or another; I'd just as soon have gone with mother as with father. But, when you were struck down like that, I knew father was right."

For a moment Salome quailed. She felt that she could not, dare not, stand out against Judith. For her own sake she could not have done so, but the thought of Lionel Hezekiah nerved her to desperation. She struck her thin, bleached little hands wildly together.

"Judith, I'm going to church tomorrow," she cried. "I tell you I am, I won't set Lionel Hezekiah a bad example one day longer. I'll not take him; I

won't go against you in that, for it is your bounty feeds and clothes him; but I'm going myself."

"If you do, Salome Marsh, I'll never forgive you," said Judith, her harsh face dark with anger; and then, not trusting herself to discuss the subject any longer, she went out.

Salome dissolved into her ready tears, and cried most of the night. But her resolution did not fail. Go to church she would, for that dear baby's sake.

Judith would not speak to her at breakfast, and this almost broke Salome's heart; but she dared not yield. After breakfast, she limped painfully into her room, and still more painfully dressed herself. When she was ready, she took a little old worn Bible out of her box. It had been her mother's, and Salome read a chapter in it every night, although she never dared to let Judith see her doing it.

When she limped out into the kitchen, Judith looked up with a hard face. A flame of sullen anger glowed in her dark eyes, and she went into the sitting-room and shut the door, as if by that act she were shutting her sister for evermore out of her heart and life. Salome, strung up to the last pitch of nervous tension, felt intuitively the significance of that closed door. For a moment she wavered — oh, she could not go against Judith! She was all but turning back to her room when Lionel Hezekiah came running in, and paused to look at her admiringly.

"You look just bully, Aunt Salome," he said. "Where are you going?"

"Don't use that word, Lionel Hezekiah," pleaded Salome. "I'm going to church."

"Take me with you," said Lionel Hezekiah promptly. Salome shook her head.

"I can't, dear. Your Aunt Judith wouldn't like it. Perhaps she will let you go after a while. Now do be a good boy while I am away, won't you? Don't do any naughty things." "I won't do them if I know they're naughty," conceded Lionel Hezekiah. "But that's just the trouble; I don't know

what's naughty and what ain't. Prob'ly if I went to Sunday school I'd find out."

Salome limped out of the yard and down the lane bordered by its asters and goldenrod. Fortunately the church was just outside the lane, across the main road; but Salome found it hard to cover even that short distance. She felt almost exhausted when she reached the church and toiled painfully up the aisle to her mother's old pew. She laid her crutch on the seat, and sank into the corner by the window with a sigh of relief.

She had elected to come early so that she might get there before the rest of the people. The church was as yet empty, save for a class of Sunday school children and their teacher in a remote corner, who paused midway in their lesson to stare with amazement at the astonishing sigh of Salome Marsh limping into church.

The big building, shadowy from the great elms around it, was very still. A faint murmur came from the closed room behind the pulpit where the rest of the Sunday school was assembled. In front of the pulpit was a stand bearing tall white geraniums in luxuriant blossom. The light fell through the stained-glass window in a soft tangle of hues upon the floor. Salome felt a sense of peace and happiness fill her heart. Even Judith's anger lost its importance. She leaned her head against the windowsill, and gave herself up to the flood of tender old recollections that swept over her.

Memory went back to the years of her childhood when she had sat in this pew every Sunday with her mother. Judith had come then, too, always seeming grown up to Salome by reason of her ten years' seniority. Her tall, dark, reserved father never came. Salome knew that the Carmody people called him an infidel, and looked upon him as a very wicked man. But he had not been wicked; he had been good and kind in his own odd way.

The gently little mother had died when Salome was ten years old, but so loving and tender was Judith's care that the child did not miss anything out of her life. Judith Marsh loved her little sister with an intensity that was maternal. She herself was a plain, repellent girl, liked by few, sought after by no man; but she was determined that Salome should have everything

that she had missed — admiration, friendship, love. She would have a vicarious youth in Salome's.

All went according to Judith's planning until Salome was eighteen, and then trouble after trouble came. Their father, whom Judith had understood and passionately loved, died; Salome's young lover was killed in a railroad accident; and finally Salome herself developed symptoms of the hip-disease which, springing from a trifling injury, eventually left her a cripple. Everything possible was done for her. Judith, falling heir to a snug little fortune by the death of the old aunt for whom she was named, spared nothing to obtain the best medical skill, and in vain. One and all, the great doctors failed.

Judith had borne her father's death bravely enough in spite of her agony of grief; she had watched her sister pining and fading with the pain of her broken heart without growing bitter; but when she knew at last that Salome would never walk again save as she hobbled painfully about on her crutch, the smouldering revolt in her soul broke its bounds, and overflowed her nature in a passionate rebellion against the Being who had sent, or had failed to prevent, these calamities. She did not rave or denounce wildly; that was not Judith's way; but she never went to church again, and it soon became an accepted fact in Carmody that Judith Marsh was as rank an infidel as her father had been before her; nay, worse, since she would not even allow Salome to go to church, and shut the door in the minister's face when he went to see her.

"I should have stood out against her for conscience' sake," reflected Salome in her pew self-reproachfully. "But, O dear, I'm afraid she'll never forgive me, and how can I live if she doesn't? But I must endure it for Lionel Hezekiah's sake; my weakness has perhaps done him great harm already. They say that what a child learns in the first seven years never leaves him; so Lionel Hezekiah has only another year to get set right about these things. Oh, if I've left it till too late!"

When the people began to come in, Salome felt painfully the curious glances directed at her. Look where she would, she met them, unless she looked out of the window; so out of the window she did look unswervingly, her delicate little face burning crimson with self-consciousness. She could

see her home and its back yard plainly, with Lionel Hezekiah making mud-pies joyfully in the corner. Presently she saw Judith come out of the house and stride away to the pine wood behind it. Judith always betook herself to the pines in time of mental stress and strain.

Salome could see the sunlight shining on Lionel Hezekiah's bare head as he mixed his pies. In the pleasure of watching him she forgot where she was and the curious eyes turned on her.

Suddenly Lionel Hezekiah ceased concocting pies, and betook himself to the corner of the summer kitchen, where he proceeded to climb up to the top of the storm-fence and from there to mount the sloping kitchen roof. Salome clasped her hands in agony. What if the child should fall? Oh! why had Judith gone away and left him alone? What if — what if — and then, while her brain with lightning-like rapidity pictured forth a dozen possible catastrophes, something really did happen. Lionel Hezekiah slipped, sprawled wildly, slid down, and fell off the roof, in a bewildering whirl of arms and legs, plump into the big rainwater hogshead under the spout, which was generally full to the brim with rainwater, a hogshead big and deep enough to swallow up half a dozen small boys who went climbing kitchen roofs on a Sunday.

Then something took place that is talked of in Carmody to this day, and even fiercely wrangled over, so many and conflicting are the opinions on the subject. Salome Marsh, who had not walked a step without assistance for fifteen years, suddenly sprang to her feet with a shriek, ran down the aisle, and out of the door!

Every man, woman, and child in the Carmody church followed her, even to the minister, who had just announced his text. When they got out, Salome was already halfway up her lane, running wildly. In her heart was room for but one agonized thought. Would Lionel Hezekiah be drowned before she reached him?

She opened the gate of the yard, and panted across it just as a tall, grim-faced woman came around the corner of the house and stood rooted to the ground in astonishment at the sight that met her eyes.

But Salome saw nobody. She flung herself against the hogshead and looked in, sick with terror at what she might see. What she did see was Lionel Hezekiah sitting on the bottom of the hogshead in water that came only to his waist. He was looking rather dazed and bewildered, but was apparently quite uninjured.

The yard was full of people, but nobody had as yet said a word; awe and wonder held everybody in spellbound silence. Judith was the first to speak. She pushed through the crowd to Salome. Her face was blanched to a deadly whiteness; and her eyes, as Mrs. William Blair afterwards declared, were enough to give a body the creeps.

“Salome,” she said in a high, shrill, unnatural voice, “where is your crutch?”

Salome came to herself at the question. For the first time, she realized that she had walked, nay, run, all that distance from the church alone and unaided. She turned pale, swayed, and would have fallen if Judith had not caught her.

Old Dr. Blair came forward briskly.

“Carry her in,” he said, “and don’t all of you come crowding in, either. She wants quiet and rest for a spell.”

Most of the people obediently returned to the church, their sudden loosened tongues clattering in voluble excitement. A few women assisted Judith to carry Salome in and lay her on the kitchen lounge, followed by the doctor and the dripping Lionel Hezekiah, whom the minister had lifted out of the hogshead and to whom nobody now paid the slightest attention.

Salome faltered out her story, and her hearers listened with varying emotions.

“It’s a miracle,” said Sam Lawson in an awed voice.

Dr. Blair shrugged his shoulders. “There is no miracle about it,” he said bluntly. “It’s all perfectly natural. The disease in the hip has evidently

been quite well for a long time; Nature does sometimes work cures like that when she is let alone. The trouble was that the muscles were paralyzed by long disuse. That paralysis was overcome by the force of a strong and instinctive effort. Salome, get up and walk across the kitchen.”

Salome obeyed. She walked across the kitchen and back, slowly, stiffly, falteringly, now that the stimulus of frantic fear was spent; but still she walked. The doctor nodded his satisfaction.

“Keep that up every day. Walk as much as you can without tiring yourself, and you’ll soon be as spry as ever. No more need of crutches for you, but there’s no miracle in the case.”

Judith Marsh turned to him. She had not spoken a word since her question concerning Salome’s crutch. Now she said passionately:

“It WAS a miracle. God has worked it to prove His existence for me, and I accept the proof.”

The old doctor shrugged his shoulders again. Being a wise man, he knew when to hold his tongue.

“Well, put Salome to bed, and let her sleep the rest of the day. She’s worn out. And for pity’s sake let some one take that poor child and put some dry clothes on him before he catches his death of cold.”

That evening, as Salome Marsh lay in her bed in a glory of sunset light, her heart filled with unutterable gratitude and happiness, Judith came into the room. She wore her best hat and dress, and she held Lionel Hezekiah by the hand. Lionel Hezekiah’s beaming face was scrubbed clean, and his curls fell in beautiful sleekness over the lace collar of his velvet suit.

“How do you feel now, Salome?” asked Judith gently.

“Better. I’ve had a lovely sleep. But where are you going, Judith?”

“I am going to church,” said Judith firmly, “and I am going to take Lionel Hezekiah with me.”

The End of a Quarre I

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Nancy Rogerson sat down on Louisa Shaw's front doorstep and looked about her, drawing a long breath of delight that seemed tinged with pain. Everything was very much the same; the square garden was as charming bodge-podge of fruit and flowers, and gooseberry bushes and tiger lilies, a gnarled old apple tree sticking up here and there, and a thick cherry copse at the foot. Behind was a row of pointed firs, coming out darkly against the swimming pink sunset sky, not looking a day older than they had looked twenty years ago, when Nancy had been a young girl walking and dreaming in their shadows. The old willow to the left was as big and sweeping and, Nancy thought with a little shudder, probably as caterpillary, as ever. Nancy had learned many things in her twenty years of exile from Avonlea, but she had never learned to conquer her dread of caterpillars.

"Nothing is much changed, Louisa," she said, propping her chin on her plump white hands, and sniffing at the delectable odour of the bruised mint upon which Louisa was trampling. "I'm glad; I was afraid to come back for fear you would have improved the old garden out of existence, or else into some prim, orderly lawn, which would have been worse. It's as magnificently untidy as ever, and the fence still wobbles. It CAN'T be the same fence, but it looks exactly like it. No, nothing is much changed. Thank you, Louisa."

Louisa had not the faintest idea what Nancy was thanking her for, but then she had never been able to fathom Nancy, much as she had always liked her in the old girlhood days that now seemed much further away to Louisa than they did to Nancy. Louisa was separated from them by the fulness of wifehood and motherhood, while Nancy looked back only over the narrow gap that empty years make.

“You haven’t changed much yourself, Nancy,” she said, looking admiringly at Nancy’s trim figure, in the nurse’s uniform she had donned to show Louisa what it was like, her firm, pink-and-white face and the the glossy waves of her golden brown hair. “You’ve held your own wonderfully well.”

“Haven’t I?” said Nancy complacently. “Modern methods of massage and cold cream have kept away the crowsfeet, and fortunately I had the Rogerson complexion to start with. You wouldn’t think I was really thirty-eight, would you? Thirty-eight! Twenty years ago I thought anybody who was thirty-eight was a perfect female Methuselah. And now I feel so horribly, ridiculously young, Louisa. Every morning when I get up I have to say solemnly to myself three times, ‘You’re an old maid, Nancy Rogerson,’ to tone myself down to anything like a becoming attitude for the day.”

“I guess you don’t mind being an old maid much,” said Louisa, shrugging her shoulders. She would not have been an old maid herself for anything; yet she inconsistently envied Nancy her freedom, her wide life in the world, her unlined brow, and carefree lightness of spirit.

“Oh, but I do mind,” said Nancy frankly. “I hate being an old maid.”

“Why don’t you get married, then?” asked Louisa, paying an unconscious tribute to Nancy’s perennial chance by her use of the present tense.

Nancy shook her head.

“No, that wouldn’t suit me either. I don’t want to be married. Do you remember that story Anne Shirley used to tell long ago of the pupil who wanted to be a widow because ‘if you were married your husband bossed you and if you weren’t married people called you an old maid?’ Well, that is precisely my opinion. I’d like to be a widow. Then I’d have the freedom of the unmarried, with the kudos of the married. I could eat my cake and have it, too. Oh, to be a widow!”

“Nancy!” said Louisa in a shocked tone.

Nancy laughed, a mellow gurgle that rippled through the garden like a brook.

“Oh, Louisa, I can shock you yet. That was just how you used to say ‘Nancy’ long ago, as if I’d broken all the commandments at once.”

“You do say such queer things,” protested Louisa, “and half the time I don’t know what you mean.”

“Bless you, dear coz, half the time I don’t myself. Perhaps the joy of coming back to the old spot has slightly turned my brain, I’ve found my lost girlhood here. I’m NOT thirty-eight in this garden — it is a flat impossibility. I’m sweet eighteen, with a waist line two inches smaller. Look, the sun is just setting. I see he has still his old trick of throwing his last beams over the Wright farmhouse. By the way, Louisa, is Peter Wright still living there?”

“Yes.” Louisa threw a sudden interested glance at the apparently placid Nancy.

“Married, I suppose, with half a dozen children?” said Nancy indifferently, pulling up some more sprigs of mint and pinning them on her breast. Perhaps the exertion of leaning over to do it flushed her face. There was more than the Rogerson colour in it, anyhow, and Louisa, slow though her mental processes might be in some respects, thought she understood the meaning of a blush as well as the next one. All the instinct of the matchmaker flamed up in her.

“Indeed he isn’t,” she said promptly. “Peter Wright has never married. He has been faithful to your memory, Nancy.”

“Ugh! You make me feel as if I were buried up there in the Avonlea cemetery and had a monument over me with a weeping willow carved on it,” shivered Nancy. “When it is said that a man has been faithful to a woman’s memory it generally means that he couldn’t get anyone else to take him.”

“That isn’t the case with Peter,” protested Louisa. “He is a good match, and many a woman would have been glad to take him, and would yet. He’s only forty-three. But he’s never taken the slightest interest in anyone since you threw him over, Nancy.”

“But I didn’t. He threw me over,” said Nancy, plaintively, looking afar over the lowlying fields and a feathery young spruce valley to the white buildings of the Wright farm, glowing rosily in the sunset light when all the rest of Avonlea was scarfing itself in shadows. There was laughter in her eyes. Louisa could not pierce beneath that laughter to find if there were anything under it.

“Fudge!” said Louisa. “What on earth did you and Peter quarrel about?” she added, curiously.

“I’ve often wondered,” parried Nancy.

“And you’ve never seen him since?” reflected Louisa.

“No. Has he changed much?”

“Well, some. He is gray and kind of tired-looking. But it isn’t to be wondered at — living the life he does. He hasn’t had a housekeeper for two years — not since his old aunt died. He just lives there alone and cooks his own meals. I’ve never been in the house, but folks say the disorder is something awful.”

“Yes, I shouldn’t think Peter was cut out for a tidy housekeeper,” said Nancy lightly, dragging up more mint. “Just think, Louisa, if it hadn’t been for that old quarrel I might be Mrs. Peter Wright at this very moment, mother to the aforesaid supposed half dozen, and vexing my soul over Peter’s meals and socks and cows.”

“I guess you are better off as you are,” said Louisa.

“Oh, I don’t know.” Nancy looked up at the white house on the hill again. “I have an awfully good time out of life, but it doesn’t seem to satisfy, somehow. To be candid — and oh, Louisa, candour is a rare thing among

women when it comes to talking of the men — I believe I'd rather be cooking Peter's meals and dusting his house. I wouldn't mind his bad grammar now. I've learned one or two valuable little things out yonder, and one is that it doesn't matter if a man's grammar is askew, so long as he doesn't swear at you. By the way, is Peter as ungrammatical as ever?"

"I — I don't know," said Louisa helplessly. "I never knew he WAS ungrammatical."

"Does he still say, 'I seen,' and 'them things'?" demanded Nancy.

"I never noticed," confessed Louisa.

"Enviably Louisa! Would that I had been born with that blessed faculty of never noticing! It stands a woman in better stead than beauty or brains. I used to notice Peter's mistakes. When he said 'I seen,' it jarred on me in my salad days. I tried, oh, so tactfully, to reform him in that respect. Peter didn't like being reformed — the Wrights always had a fairly good opinion of themselves, you know. It was really over a question of syntax we quarrelled. Peter told me I'd have to take him as he was, grammar and all, or go without him. I went without him — and ever since I've been wondering if I were really sorry, or if it were merely a pleasantly sentimental regret I was hugging to my heart. I daresay it's the latter. Now, Louisa, I see the beginning of the plot far down in those placid eyes of yours. Strangle it at birth, dear Louisa. There is no use in your trying to make up a match between Peter and me now — no, nor in slyly inviting him up here to tea some evening, as you are even this moment thinking of doing."

"Well, I must go and milk the cows," gasped Louisa, rather glad to make her escape. Nancy's power of thought-reading struck her as uncanny. She felt afraid to remain with her cousin any longer, lest Nancy should drag to light all the secrets of her being.

Nancy sat long on the steps after Louisa had gone — sat until the night came down, darkly and sweetly, over the garden, and the stars twinkled out above the firs. This had been her home in girlhood. Here she had lived and kept house for her father. When he died, Curtis Shaw, newly married to her

cousin Louisa, bought the farm from her and moved in. Nancy stayed on with them, expecting soon to go to a home of her own. She and Peter Wright were engaged.

Then came their mysterious quarrel, concerning the cause of which kith and kin on both sides were left in annoying ignorance. Of the results they were not ignorant. Nancy promptly packed up and left Avonlea seven hundred miles behind her. She went to a hospital in Montreal and studied nursing. In the twenty years that followed she had never even revisited Avonlea. Her sudden descent on it this summer was a whim born of a moment's homesick longing for this same old garden. She had not thought about Peter. In very truth, she had thought little about Peter for the last fifteen years. She supposed that she had forgotten him. But now, sitting on the old doorstep, where she had often sat in her courting days, with Peter lounging on a broad stone at her feet, something tugged at her heartstrings. She looked over the valley to the light in the kitchen of the Wright farmhouse, and pictured Peter sitting there, lonely and uncared for, with naught but the cold comfort of his own providing.

"Well, he should have got married," she said snappishly. "I am not going to worry because he is a lonely old bachelor when all these years I have supposed him a comfy Benedict. Why doesn't he hire him a housekeeper, at least? He can afford it; the place looks prosperous. Ugh! I've a fat bank account, and I've seen almost everything in the world worth seeing; but I've got several carefully hidden gray hairs and a horrible conviction that grammar isn't one of the essential things in life after all. Well, I'm not going to moon out here in the dew any longer. I'm going in to read the smartest, frilliest, frothiest society novel in my trunk."

In the week that followed Nancy enjoyed herself after her own fashion. She read and swung in the garden, having a hammock hung under the firs. She went far afield, in rambles to woods and lonely uplands.

"I like it much better than meeting people," she said, when Louisa suggested going to see this one and that one, "especially the Avonlea people. All my old chums are gone, or hopelessly married and changed, and the young set who have come up know not Joseph, and make me feel uncomfortably middle-aged. It's far worse to feel middle-aged than old,

you know. Away there in the woods I feel as eternally young as Nature herself. And oh, it's so nice not having to fuss with thermometers and temperatures and other people's whims. Let me indulge my own whims, Louisa dear, and punish me with a cold bite when I come in late for meals. I'm not even going to church again. It was horrible there yesterday. The church is so offensively spick-and-span brand new and modern."

"It's thought to be the prettiest church in these parts," protested Louisa, a little sorely.

"Churches shouldn't be pretty — they should at least be fifty years old and mellowed into beauty. New churches are an abomination."

"Did you see Peter Wright in church?" asked Louisa. She had been bursting to ask it.

Nancy nodded.

"Verily, yes. He sat right across from me in the corner pew. I didn't think him painfully changed. Iron-gray hair becomes him. But I was horribly disappointed in myself. I had expected to feel at least a romantic thrill, but all I felt was a comfortable interest, such as I might have taken in any old friend. Do my utmost, Louisa, I couldn't compass a thrill."

"Did he come to speak to you?" asked Louisa, who hadn't any idea what Nancy meant by her thrills.

"Alas, no. It wasn't my fault. I stood at the door outside with the most amiable expression I could assume, but Peter merely sauntered away without a glance in my direction. It would be some comfort to my vanity if I could believe it was on account of rankling spite or pride. But the honest truth, dear Weezy, is that it looked to me exactly as if he never thought of it. He was more interested in talking about the hay crop with Oliver Sloane — who, by the way, is more Oliver Sloaneish than ever."

"If you feel as you said you did the other night, why didn't you go and speak to him?" Louisa wanted to know.

“But I don’t feel that way now. That was just a mood. You don’t know anything about moods, dearie. You don’t know what it is to yearn desperately one hour for something you wouldn’t take if it were offered you the next.”

“But that is foolishness,” protested Louisa.

“To be sure it is — rank foolishness. But oh, it is so delightful to be foolish after being compelled to be unbrokenly sensible for twenty years. Well, I’m going picking strawberries this afternoon, Lou. Don’t wait tea for me. I probably won’t be back till dark. I’ve only four more days to stay and I want to make the most of them.”

Nancy wandered far and wide in her rambles that afternoon. When she had filled her jug she still roamed about with delicious aimlessness. Once she found herself in a wood lane skirting a field wherein a man was mowing hay. The man was Peter Wright. Nancy walked faster when she discovered this, with never a roving glance, and presently the green, ferny depths of the maple woods swallowed her up.

From old recollections, she knew that she was on Peter Morrison’s land, and calculated that if she kept straight on she would come out where the old Morrison house used to be. Her calculations proved correct, with a trifling variation. She came out fifty yards south of the old deserted Morrison house, and found herself in the yard of the Wright farm!

Passing the house — the house where she had once dreamed of reigning as mistress — Nancy’s curiosity overcame her. The place was not in view of any other near house. She deliberately went up to it intending — low be it spoken — to peep in at the kitchen window. But, seeing the door wide open, she went to it instead and halted on the step, looking about her keenly.

The kitchen was certainly pitiful in its disorder. The floor had apparently not been swept for a fortnight. On the bare deal table were the remnants of Peter’s dinner, a meal that could not have been very tempting at its best.

“What a miserable place for a human being to live in!” groaned Nancy. “Look at the ashes on that stove! And that table! Is it any wonder that Peter has got gray? He’ll work hard haymaking all the afternoon — and then come home to THIS!”

An idea suddenly darted into Nancy’s brain. At first she looked aghast. Then she laughed and glanced at her watch.

“I’ll do it — just for fun and a little pity. It’s halfpast two, and Peter won’t be home till four at the earliest. I’ll have a good hour to do it in, and still make my escape in good time. Nobody will ever know; nobody can see me here.”

Nancy went in, threw off her hat, and seized a broom. The first thing she did was to give the kitchen a thorough sweeping. Then she kindled a fire, put a kettle full of water on to heat, and attacked the dishes. From the number of them she rightly concluded that Peter hadn’t washed any for at least a week.

“I suppose he just uses the clean ones as long as they hold out, and then has a grand wash-up,” she laughed. “I wonder where he keeps his dish-towels, if he has any.”

Evidently Peter hadn’t any. At least, Nancy couldn’t find any. She marched boldly into the dusty sitting-room and explored the drawers of an old-fashioned sideboard, confiscating a towel she found there. As she worked, she hummed a song; her steps were light and her eyes bright with excitement. Nancy was enjoying herself thoroughly, there was no doubt of that. The spice of mischief in the adventure pleased her mightily.

The dishes washed, she hunted up a clean, but yellow and evidently long unused tablecloth out of the sideboard, and proceeded to set the table and get Peter’s tea. She found bread and butter in the pantry, a trip to the cellar furnished a pitcher of cream, and Nancy recklessly heaped the contents of her strawberry jug on Peter’s plate. The tea was made and set back to keep warm. And, as a finishing touch, Nancy ravaged the old neglected garden and set a huge bowl of crimson roses in the centre of the table.

“Now I must go,” she said aloud. “Wouldn’t it be fun to see Peter’s face when he comes in, though? Ha-hum! I’ve enjoyed doing this — but why? Nancy Rogerson, don’t be asking yourself conundrums. Put on your hat and proceed homeward, constructing on your way some reliable fib to account to Louisa for the absence of your strawberries.”

Nancy paused a moment and looked around wistfully. She had made the place look cheery and neat and homelike. She felt that queer tugging at her heartstrings again. Suppose she belonged here, and was waiting for Peter to come home to tea. Suppose — Nancy whirled around with a sudden horrible prescience of what she was going to see! Peter Wright was standing in the doorway.

Nancy’s face went crimson. For the first time in her life she had not a word to say for herself. Peter looked at her and then at the table, with its fruit and flowers.

“Thank you,” he said politely.

Nancy recovered herself. With a shamefaced laugh, she held out her hand.

“Don’t have me arrested for trespass, Peter. I came and looked in at your kitchen out of impertinent curiosity, and just for fun I thought I’d come in and get your tea. I thought you’d be so surprised — and I meant to go before you came home, of course.”

“I wouldn’t have been surprised,” said Peter, shaking hands. “I saw you go past the field and I tied the horses and followed you down through the woods. I’ve been sitting on the fence back yonder, watching your comings and goings.” “Why didn’t you come and speak to me at church yesterday, Peter?” demanded Nancy boldly.

“I was afraid I would say something ungrammatical,” answered Peter drily.

The crimson flamed over Nancy’s face again. She pulled her hand away.

“That’s cruel of you, Peter.”

Peter suddenly laughed. There was a note of boyishness in the laughter.

“So it is,” he said, “but I had to get rid of the accumulated malice and spite of twenty years somehow. It’s all gone now, and I’ll be as amiable as I know how. But since you have gone to the trouble of getting my supper for me, Nancy, you must stay and help me eat it. Them strawberries look good. I haven’t had any this summer — been too busy to pick them.”

Nancy stayed. She sat at the head of Peter’s table and poured his tea for him. She talked to him wittily of the Avonlea people and the changes in their old set. Peter followed her lead with an apparent absence of self-consciousness, eating his supper like a man whose heart and mind were alike on good terms with him. Nancy felt wretched — and, at the same time, ridiculously happy. It seemed the most grotesque thing in the world that she should be presiding there at Peter’s table, and yet the most natural. There were moments when she felt like crying — other moments when her laughter was as ready and spontaneous as a girl’s. Sentiment and humour had always waged an equal contest in Nancy’s nature.

When Peter had finished his strawberries he folded his arms on the table and looked admiringly at Nancy.

“You look well at the head of a table, Nancy,” he said critically. “How is it that you haven’t been presiding at one of your own long before this? I thought you’d meet a lots of men out in the world that you’d like — men who talked good grammar.”

“Peter, don’t!” said Nancy, wincing. “I was a goose.”

“No, you were quite right. I was a tetchy fool. If I’d had any sense, I’d have felt thankful you thought enough of me to want to improve me, and I’d have tried to kerrect my mistakes instead of getting mad. It’s too late now, I suppose.”

“Too late for what?” said Nancy, plucking up heart of grace at something in Peter’s tone and look.

“For — kerrecting mistakes.”

“Grammatical ones?”

“Not exactly. I guess them mistakes are past kerrecting in an old fellow like me. Worse mistakes, Nancy. I wonder what you would say if I asked you to forgive me, and have me after all.”

“I’d snap you up before you’d have time to change your mind,” said Nancy brazenly. She tried to look Peter in the face, but her blue eyes, where tears and mirth were blending, faltered down before his gray ones.

Peter stood up, knocking over his chair, and strode around the table to her.

“Nancy, my girl!” he said.

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INTRODUCTION

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It is no exaggeration to say that what Longfellow did for Acadia, Miss Montgomery has done for Prince Edward Island. More than a million readers, young people as well as their parents and uncles and aunts, possess in the picture-galleries of their memories the exquisite landscapes of Avonlea, limned with as poetic a pencil as Longfellow wielded when he told the ever-moving story of Grand Pre.

Only genius of the first water has the ability to conjure up such a character as Anne Shirley, the heroine of Miss Montgomery's first novel, "Anne of Green Gables," and to surround her with people so distinctive, so real, so true to psychology. Anne is as lovable a child as lives in all fiction. Natasha in Count Tolstoi's great novel, "War and Peace," dances into our ken, with something of the same buoyancy and naturalness; but into what a commonplace young woman she develops! Anne, whether as the gay little orphan in her conquest of the master and mistress of Green Gables, or as the maturing and self-forgetful maiden of Avonlea, keeps up to concert-pitch in her charm and her winsomeness. There is nothing in her to disappoint hope or imagination.

Part of the power of Miss Montgomery — and the largest part — is due to her skill in compounding humor and pathos. The humor is honest and golden; it never wearies the reader; the pathos is never sentimentalized, never degenerates into bathos, is never morbid. This combination holds throughout all her works, longer or shorter, and is particularly manifest in the present collection of fifteen short stories, which, together with those in

the first volume of the Chronicles of Avonlea, present a series of piquant and fascinating pictures of life in Prince Edward Island.

The humor is shown not only in the presentation of quaint and unique characters, but also in the words which fall from their mouths. Aunt Cynthia “always gave you the impression of a full-rigged ship coming gallantly on before a favorable wind;” no further description is needed — only one such personage could be found in Avonlea. You would recognize her at sight. Ismay Meade’s disposition is summed up when we are told that she is “good at having presentiments — after things happen.” What cleverer embodiment of innate obstinacy than in Isabella Spencer—”a wisp of a woman who looked as if a breath would sway her but was so set in her ways that a tornado would hardly have caused her to swerve an inch from her chosen path;” or than in Mrs. Eben Andrews (in “Sara’s Way”) who “looked like a woman whose opinions were always very decided and warranted to wear!”

This gift of characterization in a few words is lavished also on material objects, as, for instance; what more is needed to describe the forlornness of the home from which Anne was rescued than the statement that even the trees around it “looked like orphans”?

The poetic touch, too, never fails in the right place and is never too frequently introduced in her descriptions. They throw a glamor over that Northern land which otherwise you might imagine as rather cold and barren. What charming Springs they must have there! One sees all the fruit-trees clad in bridal garments of pink and white; and what a translucent sky smiles down on the ponds and the reaches of bay and cove!

“The Eastern sky was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings.”

“She was as slim and lithe as a young white-stemmed birch-tree; her hair was like a soft dusky cloud, and her eyes were as blue as Avonlea Harbor in a fair twilight, when all the sky is a-bloom over it.”

Sentiment with a humorous touch to it prevails in the first two stories of the present book. The one relates to the disappearance of a valuable white

Persian cat with a blue spot in its tail. "Fatima" is like the apple of her eye to the rich old aunt who leaves her with two nieces, with a stern injunction not to let her out of the house. Of course both Sue and Ismay detest cats; Ismay hates them, Sue loathes them; but Aunt Cynthia's favor is worth preserving. You become as much interested in Fatima's fate as if she were your own pet, and the climax is no less unexpected than it is natural, especially when it is made also the last act of a pretty comedy of love.

Miss Montgomery delights in depicting the romantic episodes hidden in the hearts of elderly spinsters as, for instance, in the case of Charlotte Holmes, whose maid Nancy would have sent for the doctor and subjected her to a porous plaster while waiting for him, had she known that up stairs there was a notebook full of original poems. Rather than bear the stigma of never having had a love-affair, this sentimental lady invents one to tell her mocking young friends. The dramatic and unexpected denouement is delightful fun.

Another notebook reveals a deeper romance in the case of Miss Emily; this is related by Anne of Green Gables, who once or twice flashes across the scene, though for the most part her friends and neighbors at White Sands or Newbridge or Grafton as well as at Avonlea are the persons involved.

In one story, the last, "Tannis of the Flats," the secret of Elinor Blair's spinsterhood is revealed in an episode which carries the reader from Avonlea to Saskatchewan and shows the unselfish devotion of a half-breed Indian girl. The story is both poignant and dramatic. Its one touch of humor is where Jerome Carey curses his fate in being compelled to live in that desolate land in "the picturesque language permissible in the far Northwest."

Self-sacrifice, as the real basis of happiness, is a favorite theme in Miss Montgomery's fiction. It is raised to the nth power in the story entitled, "In Her Selfless Mood," where an ugly, misshapen girl devotes her life and renounces marriage for the sake of looking after her weak and selfish half-brother. The same spirit is found in "Only a Common Fellow," who is haloed with a certain splendor by renouncing the girl he was to marry in

favor of his old rival, supposed to have been killed in France, but happily delivered from that tragic fate.

Miss Montgomery loves to introduce a little child or a baby as a solvent of old feuds or domestic quarrels. In “The Dream Child,” a foundling boy, drifting in through a storm in a dory, saves a heartbroken mother from insanity. In “Jane’s Baby,” a baby-cousin brings reconciliation between the two sisters, Rosetta and Carlotta, who had not spoken for twenty years because “the slack-twisted” Jacob married the younger of the two.

Happiness generally lights up the end of her stories, however tragic they may set out to be. In “The Son of His Mother,” Thyra is a stern woman, as “immovable as a stone image.” She had only one son, whom she worshipped; “she never wanted a daughter, but she pitied and despised all sonless women.” She demanded absolute obedience from Chester — not only obedience, but also utter affection, and she hated his dog because the boy loved him: “She could not share her love even with a dumb brute.” When Chester falls in love, she is relentless toward the beautiful young girl and forces Chester to give her up. But a terrible sorrow brings the old woman and the young girl into sympathy, and unspeakable joy is born of the trial.

Happiness also comes to “The Brother who Failed.” The Monroes had all been successful in the eyes of the world except Robert: one is a millionaire, another a college president, another a famous singer. Robert overhears the old aunt, Isabel, call him a total failure, but, at the family dinner, one after another stands up and tells how Robert’s quiet influence and unselfish aid had started them in their brilliant careers, and the old aunt, wiping the tears from her eyes, exclaims: “I guess there’s a kind of failure that’s the best success.”

In one story there is an element of the supernatural, when Hester, the hard older sister, comes between Margaret and her lover and, dying, makes her promise never to become Hugh Blair’s wife, but she comes back and unites them. In this, Margaret, just like the delightful Anne, lives up to the dictum that “nothing matters in all God’s universe except love.” The story of the revival at Avonlea has also a good moral.

There is something in these continued Chronicles of Avonlea, like the delicate art which has made "Cranford" a classic: the characters are so homely and homelike and yet tinged with beautiful romance! You feel that you are made familiar with a real town and its real inhabitants; you learn to love them and sympathize with them. Further Chronicles of Avonlea is a book to read; and to know.

NATHAN HASKELL DOLE.

AUNT CYNTHIA'S PERSIAN CAT

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Max always blesses the animal when it is referred to; and I don't deny that things have worked together for good after all. But when I think of the anguish of mind which Ismay and I underwent on account of that abominable cat, it is not a blessing that arises uppermost in my thoughts.

I never was fond of cats, although I admit they are well enough in their place, and I can worry along comfortably with a nice, matronly old tabby who can take care of herself and be of some use in the world. As for Ismay, she hates cats and always did.

But Aunt Cynthia, who adored them, never could bring herself to understand that any one could possibly dislike them. She firmly believed that Ismay and I really liked cats deep down in our hearts, but that, owing to some perverse twist in our moral natures, we would not own up to it, but willfully persisted in declaring we didn't.

Of all cats I loathed that white Persian cat of Aunt Cynthia's. And, indeed, as we always suspected and finally proved, Aunt herself looked upon the creature with more pride than affection. She would have taken ten times the comfort in a good, common puss that she did in that spoiled beauty. But a Persian cat with a recorded pedigree and a market value of one hundred dollars tickled Aunt Cynthia's pride of possession to such an extent that she deluded herself into believing that the animal was really the apple of her eye.

It had been presented to her when a kitten by a missionary nephew who had brought it all the way home from Persia; and for the next three years Aunt Cynthia's household existed to wait on that cat, hand and foot. It was snow-white, with a bluish-gray spot on the tip of its tail; and it was blue-eyed and deaf and delicate. Aunt Cynthia was always worrying lest it should take cold and die. Ismay and I used to wish that it would — we

were so tired of hearing about it and its whims. But we did not say so to Aunt Cynthia. She would probably never have spoken to us again and there was no wisdom in offending Aunt Cynthia. When you have an unencumbered aunt, with a fat bank account, it is just as well to keep on good terms with her, if you can. Besides, we really liked Aunt Cynthia very much — at times. Aunt Cynthia was one of those rather exasperating people who nag at and find fault with you until you think you are justified in hating them, and who then turn round and do something so really nice and kind for you that you feel as if you were compelled to love them dutifully instead.

So we listened meekly when she discoursed on Fatima — the cat's name was Fatima — and, if it was wicked of us to wish for the latter's decease, we were well punished for it later on.

One day, in November, Aunt Cynthia came sailing out to Spencervale. She really came in a phaeton, drawn by a fat gray pony, but somehow Aunt Cynthia always gave you the impression of a full rigged ship coming gallantly on before a favorable wind.

That was a Jonah day for us all through. Everything had gone wrong. Ismay had spilled grease on her velvet coat, and the fit of the new blouse I was making was hopelessly askew, and the kitchen stove smoked and the bread was sour. Moreover, Huldah Jane Keyson, our tried and trusty old family nurse and cook and general "boss," had what she called the "realagy" in her shoulder; and, though Huldah Jane is as good an old creature as ever lived, when she has the "realagy" other people who are in the house want to get out of it and, if they can't, feel about as comfortable as St. Lawrence on his gridiron.

And on top of this came Aunt Cynthia's call and request.

"Dear me," said Aunt Cynthia, sniffing, "don't I smell smoke? You girls must manage your range very badly. Mine never smokes. But it is no more than one might expect when two girls try to keep house without a man about the place."

“We get along very well without a man about the place,” I said loftily. Max hadn’t been in for four whole days and, though nobody wanted to see him particularly, I couldn’t help wondering why. “Men are nuisances.”

“I dare say you would like to pretend you think so,” said Aunt Cynthia, aggravatingly. “But no woman ever does really think so, you know. I imagine that pretty Anne Shirley, who is visiting Ella Kimball, doesn’t. I saw her and Dr. Irving out walking this afternoon, looking very well satisfied with themselves. If you dilly-dally much longer, Sue, you will let Max slip through your fingers yet.”

That was a tactful thing to say to ME, who had refused Max Irving so often that I had lost count. I was furious, and so I smiled most sweetly on my maddening aunt.

“Dear Aunt, how amusing of you,” I said, smoothly. “You talk as if I wanted Max.”

“So you do,” said Aunt Cynthia.

“If so, why should I have refused him time and again?” I asked, smilingly. Right well Aunt Cynthia knew I had. Max always told her.

“Goodness alone knows why,” said Aunt Cynthia, “but you may do it once too often and find yourself taken at your word. There is something very fascinating about this Anne Shirley.”

“Indeed there is,” I assented. “She has the loveliest eyes I ever saw. She would be just the wife for Max, and I hope he will marry her.”

“Humph,” said Aunt Cynthia. “Well, I won’t entice you into telling any more fibs. And I didn’t drive out here to-day in all this wind to talk sense into you concerning Max. I’m going to Halifax for two months and I want you to take charge of Fatima for me, while I am away.”

“Fatima!” I exclaimed.

“Yes. I don’t dare to trust her with the servants. Mind you always warm her milk before you give it to her, and don’t on any account let her run out of doors.”

I looked at Ismay and Ismay looked at me. We knew we were in for it. To refuse would mortally offend Aunt Cynthia. Besides, if I betrayed any unwillingness, Aunt Cynthia would be sure to put it down to grumpiness over what she had said about Max, and rub it in for years. But I ventured to ask, “What if anything happens to her while you are away?”

“It is to prevent that, I’m leaving her with you,” said Aunt Cynthia. “You simply must not let anything happen to her. It will do you good to have a little responsibility. And you will have a chance to find out what an adorable creature Fatima really is. Well, that is all settled. I’ll send Fatima out tomorrow.”

“You can take care of that horrid Fatima beast yourself,” said Ismay, when the door closed behind Aunt Cynthia. “I won’t touch her with a yard-stick. You had no business to say we’d take her.”

“Did I say we would take her?” I demanded, crossly. “Aunt Cynthia took our consent for granted. And you know, as well as I do, we couldn’t have refused. So what is the use of being grouchy?”

“If anything happens to her Aunt Cynthia will hold us responsible,” said Ismay darkly.

“Do you think Anne Shirley is really engaged to Gilbert Blythe?”
I asked curiously.

“I’ve heard that she was,” said Ismay, absently. “Does she eat anything but milk? Will it do to give her mice?”

“Oh, I guess so. But do you think Max has really fallen in love with her?”

“I dare say. What a relief it will be for you if he has.”

“Oh, of course,” I said, frostily. “Anne Shirley or Anne Anybody Else, is perfectly welcome to Max if she wants him. I certainly do not. Ismay Meade, if that stove doesn’t stop smoking I shall fly into bits. This is a detestable day. I hate that creature!”

“Oh, you shouldn’t talk like that, when you don’t even know her,” protested Ismay. “Every one says Anne Shirley is lovely—”

“I was talking about Fatima,” I cried in a rage.

“Oh!” said Ismay.

Ismay is stupid at times. I thought the way she said “Oh” was inexcusably stupid.

Fatima arrived the next day. Max brought her out in a covered basket, lined with padded crimson satin. Max likes cats and Aunt Cynthia. He explained how we were to treat Fatima and when Ismay had gone out of the room — Ismay always went out of the room when she knew I particularly wanted her to remain — he proposed to me again. Of course I said no, as usual, but I was rather pleased. Max had been proposing to me about every two months for two years. Sometimes, as in this case, he went three months, and then I always wondered why. I concluded that he could not be really interested in Anne Shirley, and I was relieved. I didn’t want to marry Max but it was pleasant and convenient to have him around, and we would miss him dreadfully if any other girl snapped him up. He was so useful and always willing to do anything for us — nail a shingle on the roof, drive us to town, put down carpets — in short, a very present help in all our troubles.

So I just beamed on him when I said no. Max began counting on his fingers. When he got as far as eight he shook his head and began over again.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I’m trying to count up how many times I have proposed to you,” he said. “But I can’t remember whether I asked you to marry me that day we dug

up the garden or not. If I did it makes—”

“No, you didn’t,” I interrupted.

“Well, that makes it eleven,” said Max reflectively. “Pretty near the limit, isn’t it? My manly pride will not allow me to propose to the same girl more than twelve times. So the next time will be the last, Sue darling.”

“Oh,” I said, a trifle flatly. I forgot to resent his calling me darling. I wondered if things wouldn’t be rather dull when Max gave up proposing to me. It was the only excitement I had. But of course it would be best — and he couldn’t go on at it forever, so, by the way of gracefully dismissing the subject, I asked him what Miss Shirley was like.

“Very sweet girl,” said Max. “You know I always admired those grayeyed girls with that splendid Titian hair.”

I am dark, with brown eyes. Just then I detested Max. I got up and said I was going to get some milk for Fatima.

I found Ismay in a rage in the kitchen. She had been up in the garret, and a mouse had run across her foot. Mice always get on Ismay’s nerves.

“We need a cat badly enough,” she fumed, “but not a useless, pampered thing, like Fatima. That garret is literally swarming with mice. You’ll not catch me going up there again.”

Fatima did not prove such a nuisance as we had feared. Huldah Jane liked her, and Ismay, in spite of her declaration that she would have nothing to do with her, looked after her comfort scrupulously. She even used to get up in the middle of the night and go out to see if Fatima was warm. Max came in every day and, being around, gave us good advice.

Then one day, about three weeks after Aunt Cynthia’s departure, Fatima disappeared — just simply disappeared as if she had been dissolved into thin air. We left her one afternoon, curled up asleep in her basket by the fire, under Huldah Jane’s eye, while we went out to make a call. When we came home Fatima was gone.

Huldah Jane wept and was as one whom the gods had made mad. She vowed that she had never let Fatima out of her sight the whole time, save once for three minutes when she ran up to the garret for some summer savory. When she came back the kitchen door had blown open and Fatima had vanished.

Ismay and I were frantic. We ran about the garden and through the outhouses, and the woods behind the house, like wild creatures, calling Fatima, but in vain. Then Ismay sat down on the front doorsteps and cried.

“She has got out and she’ll catch her death of cold and Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us.”

“I’m going for Max,” I declared. So I did, through the spruce woods and over the field as fast as my feet could carry me, thanking my stars that there was a Max to go to in such a predicament.

Max came over and we had another search, but without result. Days passed, but we did not find Fatima. I would certainly have gone crazy had it not been for Max. He was worth his weight in gold during the awful week that followed. We did not dare advertise, lest Aunt Cynthia should see it; but we inquired far and wide for a white Persian cat with a blue spot on its tail, and offered a reward for it; but nobody had seen it, although people kept coming to the house, night and day, with every kind of a cat in baskets, wanting to know if it was the one we had lost.

“We shall never see Fatima again,” I said hopelessly to Max and Ismay one afternoon. I had just turned away an old woman with a big, yellow tommy which she insisted must be ours—”cause it kem to our place, mem, a-yowling fearful, mem, and it don’t belong to nobody not down Grafton way, mem.”

“I’m afraid you won’t,” said Max. “She must have perished from exposure long ere this.”

“Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us,” said Ismay, dismally. “I had a presentiment of trouble the moment that cat came to this house.”

We had never heard of this presentiment before, but Ismay is good at having presentiments — after things happen.

“What shall we do?” I demanded, helplessly. “Max, can’t you find some way out of this scrape for us?”

“Advertise in the Charlottetown papers for a white Persian cat,” suggested Max. “Some one may have one for sale. If so, you must buy it, and palm it off on your good Aunt as Fatima. She’s very shortsighted, so it will be quite possible.”

“But Fatima has a blue spot on her tail,” I said.

“You must advertise for a cat with a blue spot on its tail,” said Max.

“It will cost a pretty penny,” said Ismay dolefully. “Fatima was valued at one hundred dollars.”

“We must take the money we have been saving for our new furs,” I said sorrowfully. “There is no other way out of it. It will cost us a good deal more if we lose Aunt Cynthia’s favor. She is quite capable of believing that we have made away with Fatima deliberately and with malice aforethought.”

So we advertised. Max went to town and had the notice inserted in the most important daily. We asked any one who had a white Persian cat, with a blue spot on the tip of its tail, to dispose of, to communicate with M. I., care of the Enterprise.

We really did not have much hope that anything would come of it, so we were surprised and delighted over the letter Max brought home from town four days later. It was a typewritten screed from Halifax stating that the writer had for sale a white Persian cat answering to our description. The price was a hundred and ten dollars, and, if M. I. cared to go to Halifax and inspect the animal, it would be found at 110 Hollis Street, by inquiring for “Persian.”

“Temper your joy, my friends,” said Ismay, gloomily. “The cat may not suit. The blue spot may be too big or too small or not in the right place. I consistently refuse to believe that any good thing can come out of this deplorable affair.”

Just at this moment there was a knock at the door and I hurried out. The postmaster’s boy was there with a telegram. I tore it open, glanced at it, and dashed back into the room.

“What is it now?” cried Ismay, beholding my face.

I held out the telegram. It was from Aunt Cynthia. She had wired us to send Fatima to Halifax by express immediately.

For the first time Max did not seem ready to rush into the breach with a suggestion. It was I who spoke first.

“Max,” I said, imploringly, “you’ll see us through this, won’t you? Neither Ismay nor I can rush off to Halifax at once. You must go tomorrow morning. Go right to 110 Hollis Street and ask for ‘Persian.’ If the cat looks enough like Fatima, buy it and take it to Aunt Cynthia. If it doesn’t — but it must! You’ll go, won’t you?”

“That depends,” said Max.

I stared at him. This was so unlike Max.

“You are sending me on a nasty errand,” he said, coolly. “How do I know that Aunt Cynthia will be deceived after all, even if she be shortsighted. Buying a cat in a joke is a huge risk. And if she should see through the scheme I shall be in a pretty mess.”

“Oh, Max,” I said, on the verge of tears.

“Of course,” said Max, looking meditatively into the fire, “if I were really one of the family, or had any reasonable prospect of being so, I would not mind so much. It would be all in the day’s work then. But as it is—”

Ismay got up and went out of the room.

“Oh, Max, please,” I said.

“Will you marry me, Sue?” demanded Max sternly. “If you will agree, I’ll go to Halifax and beard the lion in his den unflinchingly. If necessary, I will take a black street cat to Aunt Cynthia, and swear that it is Fatima. I’ll get you out of the scrape, if I have to prove that you never had Fatima, that she is safe in your possession at the present time, and that there never was such an animal as Fatima anyhow. I’ll do anything, say anything — but it must be for my future wife.”

“Will nothing else content you?” I said helplessly.

“Nothing.”

I thought hard. Of course Max was acting abominably — but — but — he was really a dear fellow — and this was the twelfth time — and there was Anne Shirley! I knew in my secret soul that life would be a dreadfully dismal thing if Max were not around somewhere. Besides, I would have married him long ago had not Aunt Cynthia thrown us so pointedly at each other’s heads ever since he came to Spencervale.

“Very well,” I said crossly.

Max left for Halifax in the morning. Next day we got a wire saying it was all right. The evening of the following day he was back in Spencervale. Ismay and I put him in a chair and glared at him impatiently.

Max began to laugh and laughed until he turned blue.

“I am glad it is so amusing,” said Ismay severely. “If Sue and I could see the joke it might be more so.”

“Dear little girls, have patience with me,” implored Max. “If you knew what it cost me to keep a straight face in Halifax you would forgive me for breaking out now.”

“We forgive you — but for pity’s sake tell us all about it,” I cried.

“Well, as soon as I arrived in Halifax I hurried to 110 Hollis Street, but — see here! Didn’t you tell me your Aunt’s address was 10 Pleasant Street?”

“So it is.”

“‘T isn’t. You look at the address on a telegram next time you get one. She went a week ago to visit another friend who lives at 110 Hollis.”

“Max!”

“It’s a fact. I rang the bell, and was just going to ask the maid for ‘Persian’ when your Aunt Cynthia herself came through the hall and pounced on me.”

“‘Max,’ she said, ‘have you brought Fatima?’

“‘No,’ I answered, trying to adjust my wits to this new development as she towed me into the library. ‘No, I — I — just came to Halifax on a little matter of business.’

“‘Dear me,’ said Aunt Cynthia, crossly, ‘I don’t know what those girls mean. I wired them to send Fatima at once. And she has not come yet and I am expecting a call every minute from some one who wants to buy her.’

“‘Oh!’ I murmured, mining deeper every minute.

“‘Yes,’ went on your aunt, ‘there is an advertisement in the Charlottetown Enterprise for a Persian cat, and I answered it. Fatima is really quite a charge, you know — and so apt to die and be a dead loss,’ — did your aunt mean a pun, girls?—’and so, although I am considerably attached to her, I have decided to part with her.’

“By this time I had got my second wind, and I promptly decided that a judicious mixture of the truth was the thing required.

“‘Well, of all the curious coincidences,’ I exclaimed. ‘Why, Miss Ridley, it was I who advertised for a Persian cat — on Sue’s behalf. She and Ismay have decided that they want a cat like Fatima for themselves.’

“You should have seen how she beamed. She said she knew you always really liked cats, only you would never own up to it. We clinched the dicker then and there. I passed her over your hundred and ten dollars — she took the money without turning a hair — and now you are the joint owners of Fatima. Good luck to your bargain!”

“Mean old thing,” sniffed Ismay. She meant Aunt Cynthia, and, remembering our shabby furs, I didn’t disagree with her.

“But there is no Fatima,” I said, dubiously. “How shall we account for her when Aunt Cynthia comes home?”

“Well, your aunt isn’t coming home for a month yet. When she comes you will have to tell her that the cat — is lost — but you needn’t say WHEN it happened. As for the rest, Fatima is your property now, so Aunt Cynthia can’t grumble. But she will have a poorer opinion than ever of your fitness to run a house alone.”

When Max left I went to the window to watch him down the path. He was really a handsome fellow, and I was proud of him. At the gate he turned to wave me good-by, and, as he did, he glanced upward. Even at that distance I saw the look of amazement on his face. Then he came bolting back.

“Ismay, the house is on fire!” I shrieked, as I flew to the door.

“Sue,” cried Max, “I saw Fatima, or her ghost, at the garret window a moment ago!”

“Nonsense!” I cried. But Ismay was already half way up the stairs and we followed. Straight to the garret we rushed. There sat Fatima, sleek and complacent, sunning herself in the window.

Max laughed until the rafters rang.

“She can’t have been up here all this time,” I protested, half tearfully. “We would have heard her meowing.”

“But you didn’t,” said Max.

“She would have died of the cold,” declared Ismay.

“But she hasn’t,” said Max.

“Or starved,” I cried.

“The place is alive with mice,” said Max. “No, girls, there is no doubt the cat has been here the whole fortnight. She must have followed Huldah Jane up here, unobserved, that day. It’s a wonder you didn’t hear her crying — if she did cry. But perhaps she didn’t, and, of course, you sleep downstairs. To think you never thought of looking here for her!”

“It has cost us over a hundred dollars,” said Ismay, with a malevolent glance at the sleek Fatima.

“It has cost me more than that,” I said, as I turned to the stairway.

Max held me back for an instant, while Ismay and Fatima pattered down.

“Do you think it has cost too much, Sue?” he whispered.

I looked at him sideways. He was really a dear. Niceness fairly exhaled from him.

“No-o-o,” I said, “but when we are married you will have to take care of Fatima, I won’t.”

“Dear Fatima,” said Max gratefully.

THE MATERIALIZING OF CECIL

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It had never worried me in the least that I wasn't married, although everybody in Avonlea pitied old maids; but it DID worry me, and I frankly confess it, that I had never had a chance to be. Even Nancy, my old nurse and servant, knew that, and pitied me for it. Nancy is an old maid herself, but she has had two proposals. She did not accept either of them because one was a widower with seven children, and the other a very shiftless, good-for-nothing fellow; but, if anybody twitted Nancy on her single condition, she could point triumphantly to those two as evidence that "she could an she would." If I had not lived all my life in Avonlea I might have had the benefit of the doubt; but I had, and everybody knew everything about me — or thought they did.

I had really often wondered why nobody had ever fallen in love with me. I was not at all homely; indeed, years ago, George Adoniram Maybrick had written a poem addressed to me, in which he praised my beauty quite extravagantly; that didn't mean anything because George Adoniram wrote poetry to all the goodlooking girls and never went with anybody but Flora King, who was cross-eyed and redhaired, but it proves that it was not my appearance that put me out of the running. Neither was it the fact that I wrote poetry myself — although not of George Adoniram's kind — because nobody ever knew that. When I felt it coming on I shut myself up in my room and wrote it out in a little blank book I kept locked up. It is nearly full now, because I have been writing poetry all my life. It is the only thing I have ever been able to keep a secret from Nancy. Nancy, in any case, has not a very high opinion of my ability to take care of myself; but I tremble to imagine what she would think if she ever found out about that little book. I am convinced she would send for the doctor posthaste and insist on mustard plasters while waiting for him.

Nevertheless, I kept on at it, and what with my flowers and my cats and my magazines and my little book, I was really very happy and contented.

But it DID sting that Adella Gilbert, across the road, who has a drunken husband, should pity “poor Charlotte” because nobody had ever wanted her. Poor Charlotte indeed! If I had thrown myself at a man’s head the way Adella Gilbert did at — but there, there, I must refrain from such thoughts. I must not be uncharitable.

The Sewing Circle met at Mary Gillespie’s on my fortieth birthday. I have given up talking about my birthdays, although that little scheme is not much good in Avonlea where everybody knows your age — or if they make a mistake it is never on the side of youth. But Nancy, who grew accustomed to celebrating my birthdays when I was a little girl, never gets over the habit, and I don’t try to cure her, because, after all, it’s nice to have some one make a fuss over you. She brought me up my breakfast before I got up out of bed — a concession to my laziness that Nancy would scorn to make on any other day of the year. She had cooked everything I like best, and had decorated the tray with roses from the garden and ferns from the woods behind the house. I enjoyed every bit of that breakfast, and then I got up and dressed, putting on my second best muslin gown. I would have put on my really best if I had not had the fear of Nancy before my eyes; but I knew she would never condone THAT, even on a birthday. I watered my flowers and fed my cats, and then I locked myself up and wrote a poem on June. I had given up writing birthday odes after I was thirty.

In the afternoon I went to the Sewing Circle. When I was ready for it I looked in my glass and wondered if I could really be forty. I was quite sure I didn’t look it. My hair was brown and wavy, my cheeks were pink, and the lines could hardly be seen at all, though possibly that was because of the dim light. I always have my mirror hung in the darkest corner of my room. Nancy cannot imagine why. I know the lines are there, of course; but when they don’t show very plain I forget that they are there.

We had a large Sewing Circle, young and old alike attending. I really cannot say I ever enjoyed the meetings — at least not up to that time — although I went religiously because I thought it my duty to go. The married women talked so much of their husbands and children, and of course I had to be quiet on those topics; and the young girls talked in

corner groups about their beaux, and stopped it when I joined them, as if they felt sure that an old maid who had never had a beau couldn't understand at all. As for the other old maids, they talked gossip about every one, and I did not like that either. I knew the minute my back was turned they would fasten into me and hint that I used hair-dye and declare it was perfectly ridiculous for a woman of FIFTY to wear a pink muslin dress with lace-trimmed frills.

There was a full attendance that day, for we were getting ready for a sale of fancy work in aid of parsonage repairs. The young girls were merrier and noisier than usual. Wilhelmina Mercer was there, and she kept them going. The Mercers were quite new to Avonlea, having come here only two months previously.

I was sitting by the window and Wilhelmina Mercer, Maggie Henderson, Susette Cross and Georgie Hall were in a little group just before me. I wasn't listening to their chatter at all, but presently Georgie exclaimed teasingly:

"Miss Charlotte is laughing at us. I suppose she thinks we are awfully silly to be talking about beaux."

The truth was that I was simply smiling over some very pretty thoughts that had come to me about the roses which were climbing over Mary Gillespie's sill. I meant to inscribe them in the little blank book when I went home. Georgie's speech brought me back to harsh realities with a jolt. It hurt me, as such speeches always did.

"Didn't you ever have a beau, Miss Holmes?" said Wilhelmina laughingly.

Just as it happened, a silence had fallen over the room for a moment, and everybody in it heard Wilhelmina's question.

I really do not know what got into me and possessed me. I have never been able to account for what I said and did, because I am naturally a truthful person and hate all deceit. It seemed to me that I simply could not say "No" to Wilhelmina before that whole roomful of women. It was TOO humiliating. I suppose all the prickles and stings and slurs I had endured

for fifteen years on account of never having had a lover had what the new doctor calls “a cumulative effect” and came to a head then and there.

“Yes, I had one once, my dear,” I said calmly.

For once in my life I made a sensation. Every woman in that room stopped sewing and stared at me. Most of them, I saw, didn’t believe me, but Wilhelmina did. Her pretty face lighted up with interest.

“Oh, won’t you tell us about him, Miss Holmes?” she coaxed, “and why didn’t you marry him?”

“That is right, Miss Mercer,” said Josephine Cameron, with a nasty little laugh. “Make her tell. We’re all interested. It’s news to us that Charlotte ever had a beau.”

If Josephine had not said that, I might not have gone on. But she did say it, and, moreover, I caught Mary Gillespie and Adella Gilbert exchanging significant smiles. That settled it, and made me quite reckless. “In for a penny, in for a pound,” thought I, and I said with a pensive smile:

“Nobody here knew anything about him, and it was all long, long ago.”

“What was his name?” asked Wilhelmina.

“Cecil Fenwick,” I answered promptly. Cecil had always been my favorite name for a man; it figured quite frequently in the blank book. As for the Fenwick part of it, I had a bit of newspaper in my hand, measuring a hem, with “Try Fenwick’s Porous Plasters” printed across it, and I simply joined the two in sudden and irrevocable matrimony.

“Where did you meet him?” asked Georgie.

I hastily reviewed my past. There was only one place to locate Cecil Fenwick. The only time I had ever been far enough away from Avonlea in my life was when I was eighteen and had gone to visit an aunt in New Brunswick.

“In Blakely, New Brunswick,” I said, almost believing that I had when I saw how they all took it in unsuspectingly. “I was just eighteen and he was twenty-three.”

“What did he look like?” Susette wanted to know.

“Oh, he was very handsome.” I proceeded glibly to sketch my ideal. To tell the dreadful truth, I was enjoying myself; I could see respect dawning in those girls’ eyes, and I knew that I had forever thrown off my reproach. Henceforth I should be a woman with a romantic past, faithful to the one love of her life — a very, very different thing from an old maid who had never had a lover.

“He was tall and dark, with lovely, curly black hair and brilliant, piercing eyes. He had a splendid chin, and a fine nose, and the most fascinating smile!”

“What was he?” asked Maggie.

“A young lawyer,” I said, my choice of profession decided by an enlarged crayon portrait of Mary Gillespie’s deceased brother on an easel before me. He had been a lawyer.

“Why didn’t you marry him?” demanded Susette.

“We quarreled,” I answered sadly. “A terribly bitter quarrel. Oh, we were both so young and so foolish. It was my fault. I vexed Cecil by flirting with another man” — wasn’t I coming on!—“and he was jealous and angry. He went out West and never came back. I have never seen him since, and I do not even know if he is alive. But — but — I could never care for any other man.”

“Oh, how interesting!” sighed Wilhelmina. “I do so love sad love stories. But perhaps he will come back some day yet, Miss Holmes.”

“Oh, no, never now,” I said, shaking my head. “He has forgotten all about me, I dare say. Or if he hasn’t, he has never forgiven me.”

Mary Gillespie's Susan Jane announced tea at this moment, and I was thankful, for my imagination was giving out, and I didn't know what question those girls would ask next. But I felt already a change in the mental atmosphere surrounding me, and all through supper I was thrilled with a secret exultation. Repentant? Ashamed? Not a bit of it! I'd have done the same thing over again, and all I felt sorry for was that I hadn't done it long ago.

When I got home that night Nancy looked at me wonderingly, and said:

"You look like a girl tonight, Miss Charlotte."

"I feel like one," I said laughing; and I ran to my room and did what I had never done before — wrote a second poem in the same day. I had to have some outlet for my feelings. I called it "In Summer Days of Long Ago," and I worked Mary Gillespie's roses and Cecil Fenwick's eyes into it, and made it so sad and reminiscent and minor-musicky that I felt perfectly happy.

For the next two months all went well and merrily. Nobody ever said anything more to me about Cecil Fenwick, but the girls all chattered freely to me of their little love affairs, and I became a sort of general confidant for them. It just warmed up the cockles of my heart, and I began to enjoy the Sewing Circle famously. I got a lot of pretty new dresses and the dearest hat, and I went everywhere I was asked and had a good time.

But there is one thing you can be perfectly sure of. If you do wrong you are going to be punished for it sometime, somehow and somewhere. My punishment was delayed for two months, and then it descended on my head and I was crushed to the very dust.

Another new family besides the Mercers had come to Avonlea in the spring — the Maxwells. There were just Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell; they were a middle-aged couple and very well off. Mr. Maxwell had bought the lumber mills, and they lived up at the old Spencer place which had always been "the" place of Avonlea. They lived quietly, and Mrs. Maxwell hardly ever went anywhere because she was delicate. She was out when I called and I was out when she returned my call, so that I had never met her.

It was the Sewing Circle day again — at Sarah Gardiner's this time. I was late; everybody else was there when I arrived, and the minute I entered the room I knew something had happened, although I couldn't imagine what. Everybody looked at me in the strangest way. Of course, Wilhelmina Mercer was the first to set her tongue going.

"Oh, Miss Holmes, have you seen him yet?" she exclaimed.

"Seen whom?" I said non-excitedly, getting out my thimble and patterns.

"Why, Cecil Fenwick. He's here — in Avonlea — visiting his sister, Mrs. Maxwell."

I suppose I did what they expected me to do. I dropped everything I held, and Josephine Cameron said afterwards that Charlotte Holmes would never be paler when she was in her coffin. If they had just known why I turned so pale!

"It's impossible!" I said blankly.

"It's really true," said Wilhelmina, delighted at this development, as she supposed it, of my romance. "I was up to see Mrs. Maxwell last night, and I met him."

"It — can't be — the same — Cecil Fenwick," I said faintly, because I had to say something.

"Oh, yes, it is. He belongs in Blakely, New Brunswick, and he's a lawyer, and he's been out West twenty-two years. He's oh! so handsome, and just as you described him, except that his hair is quite gray. He has never married — I asked Mrs. Maxwell — so you see he has never forgotten you, Miss Holmes. And, oh, I believe everything is going to come out all right."

I couldn't exactly share her cheerful belief. Everything seemed to me to be coming out most horribly wrong. I was so mixed up I didn't know what to do or say. I felt as if I were in a bad dream — it **MUST** be a dream — there couldn't really be a Cecil Fenwick! My feelings were simply

indescribable. Fortunately every one put my agitation down to quite a different cause, and they very kindly left me alone to recover myself. I shall never forget that awful afternoon. Right after tea I excused myself and went home as fast as I could go. There I shut myself up in my room, but NOT to write poetry in my blank book. No, indeed! I felt in no poetical mood.

I tried to look the facts squarely in the face. There was a Cecil Fenwick, extraordinary as the coincidence was, and he was here in Avonlea. All my friends — and foes — believed that he was the estranged lover of my youth. If he stayed long in Avonlea, one of two things was bound to happen. He would hear the story I had told about him and deny it, and I would be held up to shame and derision for the rest of my natural life; or else he would simply go away in ignorance, and everybody would suppose he had forgotten me and would pity me maddeningly. The latter possibility was bad enough, but it wasn't to be compared to the former; and oh, how I prayed — yes, I DID pray about it — that he would go right away. But Providence had other views for me.

Cecil Fenwick didn't go away. He stayed right on in Avonlea, and the Maxwells blossomed out socially in his honor and tried to give him a good time. Mrs. Maxwell gave a party for him. I got a card — but you may be very sure I didn't go, although Nancy thought I was crazy not to. Then every one else gave parties in honor of Mr. Fenwick and I was invited and never went. Wilhelmina Mercer came and pleaded and scolded and told me if I avoided Mr. Fenwick like that he would think I still cherished bitterness against him, and he wouldn't make any advances towards a reconciliation. Wilhelmina means well, but she hasn't a great deal of sense.

Cecil Fenwick seemed to be a great favorite with everybody, young and old. He was very rich, too, and Wilhelmina declared that half the girls were after him.

“If it wasn't for you, Miss Holmes, I believe I'd have a try for him myself, in spite of his gray hair and quick temper — for Mrs. Maxwell says he has a pretty quick temper, but it's all over in a minute,” said Wilhelmina, half in jest and wholly in earnest.

As for me, I gave up going out at all, even to church. I fretted and pined and lost my appetite and never wrote a line in my blank book. Nancy was half frantic and insisted on dosing me with her favorite patent pills. I took them meekly, because it is a waste of time and energy to oppose Nancy, but, of course, they didn't do me any good. My trouble was too deep-seated for pills to cure. If ever a woman was punished for telling a lie I was that woman. I stopped my subscription to the Weekly Advocate because it still carried that wretched porous plaster advertisement, and I couldn't bear to see it. If it hadn't been for that I would never have thought of Fenwick for a name, and all this trouble would have been averted.

One evening, when I was moping in my room, Nancy came up.

“There's a gentleman in the parlor asking for you, Miss Charlotte.”

My heart gave just one horrible bounce.

“What — sort of a gentleman, Nancy?” I faltered.

“I think it's that Fenwick man that there's been such a time about,” said Nancy, who didn't know anything about my imaginary escapades, “and he looks to be mad clean through about something, for such a scowl I never seen.”

“Tell him I'll be down directly, Nancy,” I said quite calmly.

As soon as Nancy had clumped downstairs again I put on my lace fichu and put two hankies in my belt, for I thought I'd probably need more than one. Then I hunted up an old Advocate for proof, and down I went to the parlor. I know exactly how a criminal feels going to execution, and I've been opposed to capital punishment ever since.

I opened the parlor door and went in, carefully closing it behind me, for Nancy has a deplorable habit of listening in the hall. Then my legs gave out completely, and I couldn't have walked another step to save my life. I just stood there, my hand on the knob, trembling like a leaf.

A man was standing by the south window looking out; he wheeled around as I went in, and, as Nancy said, he had a scowl on and looked angry clear through. He was very handsome, and his gray hair gave him such a distinguished look. I recalled this afterward, but just at the moment you may be quite sure I wasn't thinking about it at all.

Then all at once a strange thing happened. The scowl went right off his face and the anger out of his eyes. He looked astonished, and then foolish. I saw the color creeping up into his cheeks. As for me, I still stood there staring at him, not able to say a single word.

"Miss Holmes, I presume," he said at last, in a deep, thrilling voice. "I — I — oh, confound it! I have called — I heard some foolish stories and I came here in a rage. I've been a fool — I know now they weren't true. Just excuse me and I'll go away and kick myself."

"No," I said, finding my voice with a gasp, "you mustn't go until you've heard the truth. It's dreadful enough, but not as dreadful as you might otherwise think. Those — those stories — I have a confession to make. I did tell them, but I didn't know there was such a person as Cecil Fenwick in existence."

He looked puzzled, as well he might. Then he smiled, took my hand and led me away from the door — to the knob of which I was still holding with all my might — to the sofa.

"Let's sit down and talk it over 'comfy,'" he said.

I just confessed the whole shameful business. It was terribly humiliating, but it served me right. I told him how people were always twitting me for never having had a beau, and how I had told them I had; and then I showed him the porous plaster advertisement.

He heard me right through without a word, and then he threw back his big, curly, gray head and laughed.

"This clears up a great many mysterious hints I've been receiving ever since I came to Avonlea," he said, "and finally a Mrs. Gilbert came to my

sister this afternoon with a long farrago of nonsense about the love affair I had once had with some Charlotte Holmes here. She declared you had told her about it yourself. I confess I flamed up. I'm a peppery chap, and I thought — I thought — oh, confound it, it might as well out: I thought you were some lank old maid who was amusing herself telling ridiculous stories about me. When you came into the room I knew that, whoever was to blame, you were not."

"But I was," I said ruefully. "It wasn't right of me to tell such a story — and it was very silly, too. But who would ever have supposed that there could be real Cecil Fenwick who had lived in Blakely? I never heard of such a coincidence."

"It's more than a coincidence," said Mr. Fenwick decidedly. "It's predestination; that is what it is. And now let's forget it and talk of something else."

We talked of something else — or at least Mr. Fenwick did, for I was too ashamed to say much — so long that Nancy got restive and clumped through the hall every five minutes; but Mr. Fenwick never took the hint. When he finally went away he asked if he might come again.

"It's time we made up that old quarrel, you know," he said, laughing.

And I, an old maid of forty, caught myself blushing like a girl. But I felt like a girl, for it was such a relief to have that explanation all over. I couldn't even feel angry with Adella Gilbert. She was always a mischief maker, and when a woman is born that way she is more to be pitied than blamed. I wrote a poem in the blank book before I went to sleep; I hadn't written anything for a month, and it was lovely to be at it once more.

Mr. Fenwick did come again — the very next evening, but one. And he came so often after that that even Nancy got resigned to him. One day I had to tell her something. I shrank from doing it, for I feared it would make her feel badly.

"Oh, I've been expecting to hear it," she said grimly. "I felt the minute that man came into the house he brought trouble with him. Well, Miss

Charlotte, I wish you happiness. I don't know how the climate of California will agree with me, but I suppose I'll have to put up with it."

"But, Nancy," I said, "I can't expect you to go away out there with me. It's too much to ask of you."

"And where else would I be going?" demanded Nancy in genuine astonishment. "How under the canopy could you keep house without me? I'm not going to trust you to the mercies of a yellow Chinese with a pigtail. Where you go I go, Miss Charlotte, and there's an end of it."

I was very glad, for I hated to think of parting with Nancy even to go with Cecil. As for the blank book, I haven't told my husband about it yet, but I mean to some day. And I've subscribed for the Weekly Advocate again.

HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER

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“We must invite your Aunt Jane, of course,” said Mrs. Spencer.

Rachel made a protesting movement with her large, white, shapely hands — hands which were so different from the thin, dark, twisted ones folded on the table opposite her. The difference was not caused by hard work or the lack of it; Rachel had worked hard all her life. It was a difference inherent in temperament. The Spencers, no matter what they did, or how hard they labored, all had plump, smooth, white hands, with firm, supple fingers; the Chiswicks, even those who toiled not, neither did they spin, had hard, knotted, twisted ones. Moreover, the contrast went deeper than externals, and twined itself with the innermost fibers of life, and thought, and action.

“I don’t see why we must invite Aunt Jane,” said Rachel, with as much impatience as her soft, throaty voice could express. “Aunt Jane doesn’t like me, and I don’t like Aunt Jane.”

“I’m sure I don’t see why you don’t like her,” said Mrs. Spencer.

“It’s ungrateful of you. She has always been very kind to you.”

“She has always been very kind with one hand,” smiled Rachel. “I remember the first time I ever saw Aunt Jane. I was six years old. She held out to me a small velvet pincushion with beads on it. And then, because I did not, in my shyness, thank her quite as promptly as I should have done, she rapped my head with her bethimble finger to ‘teach me better manners.’ It hurt horribly — I’ve always had a tender head. And that has been Aunt Jane’s way ever since. When I grew too big for the thimble treatment she used her tongue instead — and that hurt worse. And you know, mother, how she used to talk about my engagement. She is able to spoil the whole atmosphere if she happens to come in a bad humor. I don’t want her.”

“She must be invited. People would talk so if she wasn’t.”

“I don’t see why they should. She’s only my great-aunt by marriage. I wouldn’t mind in the least if people did talk. They’ll talk anyway — you know that, mother.”

“Oh, we must have her,” said Mrs. Spencer, with the indifferent finality that marked all her words and decisions — a finality against which it was seldom of any avail to struggle. People, who knew, rarely attempted it; strangers occasionally did, misled by the deceit of appearances.

Isabella Spencer was a wisp of a woman, with a pale, pretty face, uncertainly-colored, long-lashed grayish eyes, and great masses of dull, soft, silky brown hair. She had delicate aquiline features and a small, babyish red mouth. She looked as if a breath would sway her. The truth was that a tornado would hardly have caused her to swerve an inch from her chosen path.

For a moment Rachel looked rebellious; then she yielded, as she generally did in all differences of opinion with her mother. It was not worth while to quarrel over the comparatively unimportant matter of Aunt Jane’s invitation. A quarrel might be inevitable later on; Rachel wanted to save all her resources for that. She gave her shoulders a shrug, and wrote Aunt Jane’s name down on the wedding list in her large, somewhat untidy handwriting — a handwriting which always seemed to irritate her mother. Rachel never could understand this irritation. She could never guess that it was because her writing looked so much like that in a certain packet of faded letters which Mrs. Spencer kept at the bottom of an old horsehair trunk in her bedroom. They were postmarked from seaports all over the world. Mrs. Spencer never read them or looked at them; but she remembered every dash and curve of the handwriting.

Isabella Spencer had overcome many things in her life by the sheer force and persistency of her will. But she could not get the better of heredity. Rachel was her father’s daughter at all points, and Isabella Spencer escaped hating her for it only by loving her the more fiercely because of it. Even so, there were many times when she had to avert her eyes from Rachel’s face because of the pang of the more subtle remembrances; and

never, since her child was born, could Isabella Spencer bear to gaze on that child's face in sleep.

Rachel was to be married to Frank Bell in a fortnight's time. Mrs. Spencer was pleased with the match. She was very fond of Frank, and his farm was so near to her own that she would not lose Rachel altogether. Rachel fondly believed that her mother would not lose her at all; but Isabella Spencer, wiser by olden experience, knew what her daughter's marriage must mean to her, and steeled her heart to bear it with what fortitude she might.

They were in the sitting-room, deciding on the wedding guests and other details. The September sunshine was coming in through the waving boughs of the apple tree that grew close up to the low window. The glints wavered over Rachel's face, as white as a wood lily, with only a faint dream of rose in the cheeks. She wore her sleek, golden hair in a quaint arch around it. Her forehead was very broad and white. She was fresh and young and hopeful. The mother's heart contracted in a spasm of pain as she looked at her. How like the girl was to — to — to the Spencers! Those easy, curving outlines, those large, mirthful blue eyes, that finely molded chin! Isabella Spencer shut her lips firmly and crushed down some unbidden, unwelcome memories.

"There will be about sixty guests, all told," she said, as if she were thinking of nothing else. "We must move the furniture out of this room and set the supper-table here. The dining-room is too small. We must borrow Mrs. Bell's forks and spoons. She offered to lend them. I'd never have been willing to ask her. The damask table cloths with the ribbon pattern must be bleached tomorrow. Nobody else in Avonlea has such tablecloths. And we'll put the little dining-room table on the hall landing, upstairs, for the presents."

Rachel was not thinking about the presents, or the housewifely details of the wedding. Her breath was coming quicker, and the faint blush on her smooth cheeks had deepened to crimson. She knew that a critical moment was approaching. With a steady hand she wrote the last name on her list and drew a line under it.

“Well, have you finished?” asked her mother impatiently. “Hand it here and let me look over it to make sure that you haven’t left anybody out that should be in.”

Rachel passed the paper across the table in silence. The room seemed to her to have grown very still. She could hear the flies buzzing on the panes, the soft purr of the wind about the low eaves and through the apple boughs, the jerky beating of her own heart. She felt frightened and nervous, but resolute.

Mrs. Spencer glanced down the list, murmuring the names aloud and nodding approval at each. But when she came to the last name, she did not utter it. She cast a black glance at Rachel, and a spark leaped up in the depths of the pale eyes. On her face were anger, amazement, incredulity, the last predominating.

The final name on the list of wedding guests was the name of David Spencer. David Spencer lived alone in a little cottage down at the Cove. He was a combination of sailor and fisherman. He was also Isabella Spencer’s husband and Rachel’s father.

“Rachel Spencer, have you taken leave of your senses? What do you mean by such nonsense as this?”

“I simply mean that I am going to invite my father to my wedding,” answered Rachel quietly.

“Not in my house,” cried Mrs. Spencer, her lips as white as if her fiery tone had scathed them.

Rachel leaned forward, folded her large, capable hands deliberately on the table, and gazed unflinchingly into her mother’s bitter face. Her fright and nervousness were gone. Now that the conflict was actually on she found herself rather enjoying it. She wondered a little at herself, and thought that she must be wicked. She was not given to self-analysis, or she might have concluded that it was the sudden assertion of her own personality, so long dominated by her mother’s, which she was finding so agreeable.

“Then there will be no wedding, mother,” she said. “Frank and I will simply go to the manse, be married, and go home. If I cannot invite my father to see me married, no one else shall be invited.”

Her lips narrowed tightly. For the first time in her life Isabella Spencer saw a reflection of herself looking back at her from her daughter’s face — a strange, indefinable resemblance that was more of soul and spirit than of flesh and blood. In spite of her anger her heart thrilled to it. As never before, she realized that this girl was her own and her husband’s child, a living bond between them wherein their conflicting natures mingled and were reconciled. She realized too, that Rachel, so long sweetly meek and obedient, meant to have her own way in this case — and would have it.

“I must say that I can’t see why you are so set on having your father see you married,” she said with a bitter sneer. “HE has never remembered that he is your father. He cares nothing about you — never did care.”

Rachel took no notice of this taunt. It had no power to hurt her, its venom being neutralized by a secret knowledge of her own in which her mother had no share.

“Either I shall invite my father to my wedding, or I shall not have a wedding,” she repeated steadily, adopting her mother’s own effective tactics of repetition undistracted by argument.

“Invite him then,” snapped Mrs. Spencer, with the ungraceful anger of a woman, long accustomed to having her own way, compelled for once to yield. “It’ll be like chips in porridge anyhow — neither good nor harm. He won’t come.”

Rachel made no response. Now that the battle was over, and the victory won, she found herself tremulously on the verge of tears. She rose quickly and went upstairs to her own room, a dim little place shadowed by the white birches growing thickly outside — a virginal room, where everything bespoke the maiden. She lay down on the blue and white patchwork quilt on her bed, and cried softly and bitterly.

Her heart, at this crisis in her life, yearned for her father, who was almost a stranger to her. She knew that her mother had probably spoken the truth when she said that he would not come. Rachel felt that her marriage vows would be lacking in some indefinable sacredness if her father were not by to hear them spoken.

Twenty-five years before this, David Spencer and Isabella Chiswick had been married. Spiteful people said there could be no doubt that Isabella had married David for love, since he had neither lands nor money to tempt her into a match of bargain and sale. David was a handsome fellow, with the blood of a seafaring race in his veins.

He had been a sailor, like his father and grandfather before him; but, when he married Isabella, she induced him to give up the sea and settle down with her on a snug farm her father had left her. Isabella liked farming, and loved her fertile acres and opulent orchards. She abhorred the sea and all that pertained to it, less from any dread of its dangers than from an inbred conviction that sailors were “low” in the social scale — a species of necessary vagabonds. In her eyes there was a taint of disgrace in such a calling. David must be transformed into a respectable, home-abiding tiller of broad lands.

For five years all went well enough. If, at times, David’s longing for the sea troubled him, he stifled it, and listened not to its luring voice. He and Isabella were very happy; the only drawback to their happiness lay in the regretted fact that they were childless.

Then, in the sixth year, came a crisis and a change. Captain Barrett, an old crony of David’s, wanted him to go with him on a voyage as mate. At the suggestion all David’s long-repressed craving for the wide blue wastes of the ocean, and the wind whistling through the spars with the salt foam in its breath, broke forth with a passion all the more intense for that very repression. He must go on that voyage with James Barrett — he MUST! That over, he would be contented again; but go he must. His soul struggled within him like a fettered thing.

Isabella opposed the scheme vehemently and unwisely, with mordant sarcasm and unjust reproaches. The latent obstinacy of David’s character

came to the support of his longing — a longing which Isabella, with five generations of land-loving ancestry behind her, could not understand at all.

He was determined to go, and he told Isabella so.

“I’m sick of plowing and milking cows,” he said hotly.

“You mean that you are sick of a respectable life,” sneered Isabella.

“Perhaps,” said David, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders.

“Anyway, I’m going.”

“If you go on this voyage, David Spencer, you need never come back here,” said Isabella resolutely.

David had gone; he did not believe that she meant it. Isabella believed that he did not care whether she meant it or not. David Spencer left behind him a woman, calm outwardly, inwardly a seething volcano of anger, wounded pride, and thwarted will.

He found precisely the same woman when he came home, tanned, joyous, tamed for a while of his wanderlust, ready, with something of real affection, to go back to the farm fields and the stock-yard.

Isabella met him at the door, smileless, cold-eyed, set-lipped.

“What do you want here?” she said, in the tone she was accustomed to use to tramps and Syrian peddlers.

“Want!” David’s surprise left him at a loss for words. “Want! Why, I — I — want my wife. I’ve come home.”

“This is not your home. I’m no wife of yours. You made your choice when you went away,” Isabella had replied. Then she had gone in, shut the door, and locked it in his face.

David had stood there for a few minutes like a man stunned. Then he had turned and walked away up the lane under the birches. He said nothing —

then or at any other time. From that day no reference to his wife or her concerns ever crossed his lips.

He went directly to the harbor, and shipped with Captain Barrett for another voyage. When he came back from that in a month's time, he bought a small house and had it hauled to the "Cove," a lonely inlet from which no other human habitation was visible. Between his sea voyages he lived there the life of a recluse; fishing and playing his violin were his only employments. He went nowhere and encouraged no visitors.

Isabella Spencer also had adopted the tactics of silence. When the scandalized Chiswicks, Aunt Jane at their head, tried to patch up the matter with argument and entreaty, Isabella met them stonily, seeming not to hear what they said, and making no response. She worsted them totally. As Aunt Jane said in disgust, "What can you do with a woman who won't even TALK?"

Five months after David Spencer had been turned from his wife's door, Rachel was born. Perhaps, if David had come to them then, with due penitence and humility, Isabella's heart, softened by the pain and joy of her long and ardently desired motherhood might have cast out the rankling venom of resentment that had poisoned it and taken him back into it. But David had not come; he gave no sign of knowing or caring that his once longed-for child had been born.

When Isabella was able to be about again, her pale face was harder than ever; and, had there been about her any one discerning enough to notice it, there was a subtle change in her bearing and manner. A certain nervous expectancy, a fluttering restlessness was gone. Isabella had ceased to hope secretly that her husband would yet come back. She had in her secret soul thought he would; and she had meant to forgive him when she had humbled him sufficiently, and when he had abased himself as she considered he should. But now she knew that he did not mean to sue for her forgiveness; and the hate that sprang out of her old love was a rank and speedy and persistent growth.

Rachel, from her earliest recollection, had been vaguely conscious of a difference between her own life and the lives of her playmates. For a long

time it puzzled her childish brain. Finally, she reasoned it out that the difference consisted in the fact that they had fathers and she, Rachel Spencer, had none — not even in the graveyard, as Carrie Bell and Lilian Boulter had. Why was this? Rachel went straight to her mother, put one little dimpled hand on Isabella Spencer's knee, looked up with great searching blue eyes, and said gravely,

“Mother, why haven't I got a father like the other little girls?”

Isabella Spencer laid aside her work, took the seven year old child on her lap, and told her the whole story in a few direct and bitter words that imprinted themselves indelibly on Rachel's remembrance. She understood clearly and hopelessly that she could never have a father — that, in this respect, she must always be unlike other people.

“Your father cares nothing for you,” said Isabella Spencer in conclusion. “He never did care. You must never speak of him to anybody again.”

Rachel slipped silently from her mother's knee and ran out to the Springtime garden with a full heart. There she cried passionately over her mother's last words. It seemed to her a terrible thing that her father should not love her, and a cruel thing that she must never talk of him.

Oddly enough, Rachel's sympathies were all with her father, in as far as she could understand the old quarrel. She did not dream of disobeying her mother and she did not disobey her. Never again did the child speak of her father; but Isabella had not forbidden her to think of him, and thenceforth Rachel thought of him constantly — so constantly that, in some strange way, he seemed to become an unguessed-of part of her inner life — the unseen, ever-present companion in all her experiences.

She was an imaginative child, and in fancy she made the acquaintance of her father. She had never seen him, but he was more real to her than most of the people she had seen. He played and talked with her as her mother never did; he walked with her in the orchard and field and garden; he sat by her pillow in the twilight; to him she whispered secrets she told to none other.

Once her mother asked her impatiently why she talked so much to herself.

“I am not talking to myself. I am talking to a very dear friend of mine,” Rachel answered gravely.

“Silly child,” laughed her mother, half tolerantly, half disapprovingly.

Two years later something wonderful had happened to Rachel. One summer afternoon she had gone to the harbor with several of her little playmates. Such a jaunt was a rare treat to the child, for Isabella Spencer seldom allowed her to go from home with anybody but herself. And Isabella was not an entertaining companion. Rachel never particularly enjoyed an outing with her mother.

The children wandered far along the shore; at last they came to a place that Rachel had never seen before. It was a shallow cove where the waters purred on the yellow sands. Beyond it, the sea was laughing and flashing and preening and alluring, like a beautiful, coquettish woman. Outside, the wind was boisterous and rollicking; here, it was reverent and gentle. A white boat was hauled up on the skids, and there was a queer little house close down to the sands, like a big shell tossed up by the waves. Rachel looked on it all with secret delight; she, too, loved the lonely places of sea and shore, as her father had done. She wanted to linger awhile in this dear spot and revel in it.

“I’m tired, girls,” she announced. “I’m going to stay here and rest for a spell. I don’t want to go to Gull Point. You go on yourselves; I’ll wait for you here.”

“All alone?” asked Carrie Bell, wonderingly.

“I’m not so afraid of being alone as some people are,” said Rachel, with dignity.

The other girls went on, leaving Rachel sitting on the skids, in the shadow of the big white boat. She sat there for a time dreaming happily, with her blue eyes on the far, pearly horizon, and her golden head leaning against the boat.

Suddenly she heard a step behind her. When she turned her head a man was standing beside her, looking down at her with big, merry, blue eyes. Rachel was quite sure that she had never seen him before; yet those eyes seemed to her to have a strangely familiar look. She liked him. She felt no shyness nor timidity, such as usually afflicted her in the presence of strangers.

He was a tall, stout man, dressed in a rough fishing suit, and wearing an oilskin cap on his head. His hair was very thick and curly and fair; his cheeks were tanned and red; his teeth, when he smiled, were very even and white. Rachel thought he must be quite old, because there was a good deal of gray mixed with his fair hair.

“Are you watching for the mermaids?” he said.

Rachel nodded gravely. From any one else she would have scrupulously hidden such a thought.

“Yes, I am,” she said. “Mother says there is no such thing as a mermaid, but I like to think there is. Have you ever seen one?”

The big man sat down on a bleached log of driftwood and smiled at her.

“No, I’m sorry to say that I haven’t. But I have seen many other very wonderful things. I might tell you about some of them, if you would come over here and sit by me.”

Rachel went unhesitatingly. When she reached him he pulled her down on his knee, and she liked it.

“What a nice little craft you are,” he said. “Do you suppose, now, that you could give me a kiss?”

As a rule, Rachel hated kissing. She could seldom be prevailed upon to kiss even her uncles — who knew it and liked to tease her for kisses until they aggravated her so terribly that she told them she couldn’t bear men. But now she promptly put her arms about this strange man’s neck and gave him a hearty smack.

“I like you,” she said frankly.

She felt his arms tighten suddenly about her. The blue eyes looking into hers grew misty and very tender. Then, all at once, Rachel knew who he was. He was her father. She did not say anything, but she laid her curly head down on his shoulder and felt a great happiness, as of one who had come into some longed-for haven.

If David Spencer realized that she understood he said nothing. Instead, he began to tell her fascinating stories of far lands he had visited, and strange things he had seen. Rachel listened entranced, as if she were hearkening to a fairy tale. Yes, he was just as she had dreamed him. She had always been sure he could tell beautiful stories.

“Come up to the house and I’ll show you some pretty things,” he said finally.

Then followed a wonderful hour. The little low-ceilinged room, with its square window, into which he took her, was filled with the flotsam and jetsam of his roving life — things beautiful and odd and strange beyond all telling. The things that pleased Rachel most were two huge shells on the chimney piece — pale pink shells with big crimson and purple spots.

“Oh, I didn’t know there could be such pretty things in the world,” she exclaimed.

“If you would like,” began the big man; then he paused for a moment. “I’ll show you something prettier still.”

Rachel felt vaguely that he meant to say something else when he began; but she forgot to wonder what it was when she saw what he brought out of a little corner cupboard. It was a teapot of some fine, glistening purple ware, coiled over by golden dragons with gilded claws and scales. The lid looked like a beautiful golden flower and the handle was a coil of a dragon’s tail. Rachel sat and looked at it rapt-eyed.

“That’s the only thing of any value I have in the world — now,” he said.

Rachel knew there was something very sad in his eyes and voice. She longed to kiss him again and comfort him. But suddenly he began to laugh, and then he rummaged out some goodies for her to eat, sweetmeats more delicious than she had ever imagined. While she nibbled them he took down an old violin and played music that made her want to dance and sing. Rachel was perfectly happy. She wished she might stay forever in that low, dim room with all its treasures.

“I see your little friends coming around the point,” he said, finally. “I suppose you must go. Put the rest of the goodies in your pocket.”

He took her up in his arms and held her tightly against his breast for a single moment. She felt him kissing her hair.

“There, run along, little girl. Good-by,” he said gently.

“Why don’t you ask me to come and see you again?” cried Rachel, half in tears. “I’m coming ANYHOW.”

“If you can come, COME,” he said. “If you don’t come, I shall know it is because you can’t — and that is much to know. I’m very, very, VERY glad, little woman, that you have come once.”

Rachel was sitting demurely on the skids when her companions came back. They had not seen her leaving the house, and she said not a word to them of her experiences. She only smiled mysteriously when they asked her if she had been lonesome.

That night, for the first time, she mentioned her father’s name in her prayers. She never forgot to do so afterwards. She always said, “bless mother — and father,” with an instinctive pause between the two names — a pause which indicated new realization of the tragedy which had sundered them. And the tone in which she said “father” was softer and more tender than the one which voiced “mother.”

Rachel never visited the Cove again. Isabella Spencer discovered that the children had been there, and, although she knew nothing of Rachel’s

interview with her father, she told the child that she must never again go to that part of the shore.

Rachel shed many a bitter tear in secret over this command; but she obeyed it. Thenceforth there had been no communication between her and her father, save the unworded messages of soul to soul across whatever may divide them.

David Spencer's invitation to his daughter's wedding was sent with the others, and the remaining days of Rachel's maidenhood slipped away in a whirl of preparation and excitement in which her mother reveled, but which was distasteful to the girl.

The wedding day came at last, breaking softly and fairly over the great sea in a sheen of silver and pearl and rose, a September day, as mild and beautiful as June.

The ceremony was to be performed at eight o'clock in the evening. At seven Rachel stood in her room, fully dressed and alone. She had no bridesmaid, and she had asked her cousins to leave her to herself in this last solemn hour of girlhood. She looked very fair and sweet in the sunset-light that showered through the birches. Her wedding gown was a fine, sheer organdie, simply and daintily made. In the loose waves of her bright hair she wore her bridegroom's flowers, roses as white as a virgin's dream. She was very happy; but her happiness was faintly threaded with the sorrow inseparable from all change.

Presently her mother came in, carrying a small basket.

"Here is something for you, Rachel. One of the boys from the harbor brought it up. He was bound to give it into your own hands — said that was his orders. I just took it and sent him to the right-about — told him I'd give it to you at once, and that that was all that was necessary."

She spoke coldly. She knew quite well who had sent the basket, and she resented it; but her resentment was not quite strong enough to overcome her curiosity. She stood silently by while Rachel unpacked the basket.

Rachel's hands trembled as she took off the cover. Two huge pink-spotted shells came first. How well she remembered them! Beneath them, carefully wrapped up in a square of foreign-looking, strangely scented silk, was the dragon teapot. She held it in her hands and gazed at it with tears gathering thickly in her eyes.

"Your father sent that," said Isabella Spencer with an odd sound in her voice. "I remember it well. It was among the things I packed up and sent after him. His father had brought it home from China fifty years ago, and he prized it beyond anything. They used to say it was worth a lot of money."

"Mother, please leave me alone for a little while," said Rachel, imploringly. She had caught sight of a little note at the bottom of the basket, and she felt that she could not read it under her mother's eyes.

Mrs. Spencer went out with unaccustomed acquiescence, and Rachel went quickly to the window, where she read her letter by the fading gleams of twilight. It was very brief, and the writing was that of a man who holds a pen but seldom.

"My dear little girl," it ran, "I'm sorry I can't go to your wedding. It was like you to ask me — for I know it was your doing. I wish I could see you married, but I can't go to the house I was turned out of. I hope you will be very happy. I am sending you the shells and teapot you liked so much. Do you remember that day we had such a good time? I would liked to have seen you again before you were married, but it can't be.

"Your loving father,
"DAVID SPENCER."

Rachel resolutely blinked away the tears that filled her eyes. A fierce desire for her father sprang up in her heart — an insistent hunger that would not be denied. She MUST see her father; she MUST have his blessing on her new life. A sudden determination took possession of her whole being — a determination to sweep aside all conventionalities and objections as if they had not been.

It was now almost dark. The guests would not be coming for half an hour yet. It was only fifteen minutes' walk over the hill to the Cove. Hastily Rachel shrouded herself in her new raincoat, and drew a dark, protecting hood over her gay head. She opened the door and slipped noiselessly downstairs. Mrs. Spencer and her assistants were all busy in the back part of the house. In a moment Rachel was out in the dewy garden. She would go straight over the fields. Nobody would see her.

It was quite dark when she reached the Cove. In the crystal cup of the sky over her the stars were blinking. Flying flakes of foam were scurrying over the sand like elfin things. A soft little wind was crooning about the eaves of the little gray house where David Spencer was sitting, alone in the twilight, his violin on his knee. He had been trying to play, but could not. His heart yearned after his daughter — yes, and after a long-estranged bride of his youth. His love of the sea was sated forever; his love for wife and child still cried for its own under all his old anger and stubbornness.

The door opened suddenly and the very Rachel of whom he was dreaming came suddenly in, flinging off her wraps and standing forth in her young beauty and bridal adornments, a splendid creature, almost lighting up the gloom with her radiance.

“Father,” she cried, brokenly, and her father's eager arms closed around her.

Back in the house she had left, the guests were coming to the wedding. There were jests and laughter and friendly greeting. The bridegroom came, too, a slim, dark-eyed lad who tiptoed bashfully upstairs to the spare room, from which he presently emerged to confront Mrs. Spencer on the landing.

“I want to see Rachel before we go down,” he said, blushing.

Mrs. Spencer deposited a wedding present of linen on the table which was already laden with gifts, opening the door of Rachel's room, and called her. There was no reply; the room was dark and still. In sudden alarm, Isabella Spencer snatched the lamp from the hall table and held it up. The little white room was empty. No blushing, white-clad bride tenanted it. But David Spencer's letter was lying on the stand. She caught it up and read it.

“Rachel is gone,” she gasped. A flash of intuition had revealed to her where and why the girl had gone.

“Gone!” echoed Frank, his face blanching. His pallid dismay recalled Mrs. Spencer to herself. She gave a bitter, ugly little laugh.

“Oh, you needn’t look so scared, Frank. She hasn’t run away from you. Hush; come in here — shut the door. Nobody must know of this. Nice gossip it would make! That little fool has gone to the Cove to see her — her father. I know she has. It’s just like what she would do. He sent her those presents — look — and this letter. Read it. She has gone to coax him to come and see her married. She was crazy about it. And the minister is here and it is halfpast seven. She’ll ruin her dress and shoes in the dust and dew. And what if some one has seen her! Was there ever such a little fool?”

Frank’s presence of mind had returned to him. He knew all about Rachel and her father. She had told him everything.

“I’ll go after her,” he said gently. “Get me my hat and coat. I’ll slip down the back stairs and over to the Cove.”

“You must get out of the pantry window, then,” said Mrs. Spencer firmly, mingling comedy and tragedy after her characteristic fashion. “The kitchen is full of women. I won’t have this known and talked about if it can possibly be helped.”

The bridegroom, wise beyond his years in the knowledge that it was well to yield to women in little things, crawled obediently out of the pantry window and darted through the birch wood. Mrs. Spencer had stood quakingly on guard until he had disappeared.

So Rachel had gone to her father! Like had broken the fetters of years and fled to like.

“It isn’t much use fighting against nature, I guess,” she thought grimly. “I’m beat. He must have thought something of her, after all, when he sent her that teapot and letter. And what does he mean about the ‘day they had such a good time’? Well, it just means that she’s been to see him before, sometime, I suppose, and kept me in ignorance of it all.”

Mrs. Spencer shut down the pantry window with a vicious thud.

“If only she’ll come quietly back with Frank in time to prevent gossip I’ll forgive her,” she said, as she turned to the kitchen.

Rachel was sitting on her father’s knee, with both her white arms around his neck, when Frank came in. She sprang up, her face flushed and appealing, her eyes bright and dewy with tears. Frank thought he had never seen her look so lovely.

“Oh, Frank, is it very late? Oh, are you angry?” she exclaimed timidly.

“No, no, dear. Of course I’m not angry. But don’t you think you’d better come back now? It’s nearly eight and everybody is waiting.”

“I’ve been trying to coax father to come up and see me married,” said Rachel. “Help me, Frank.”

“You’d better come, sir,” said Frank, heartily, “I’d like it as much as Rachel would.”

David Spencer shook his head stubbornly.

“No, I can’t go to that house. I was locked out of it. Never mind me. I’ve had my happiness in this half hour with my little girl. I’d like to see her married, but it isn’t to be.”

“Yes, it is to be — it shall be,” said Rachel resolutely. “You SHALL see me married. Frank, I’m going to be married here in my father’s house! That is the right place for a girl to be married. Go back and tell the guests so, and bring them all down.”

Frank looked rather dismayed. David Spencer said deprecatingly:
“Little girl, don’t you think it would be—”

“I’m going to have my own way in this,” said Rachel, with a sort of tender finality. “Go, Frank. I’ll obey you all my life after, but you must do this for me. Try to understand,” she added beseechingly.

“Oh, I understand,” Frank reassured her. “Besides, I think you are right. But I was thinking of your mother. She won’t come.”

“Then you tell her that if she doesn’t come I shan’t be married at all,” said Rachel. She was betraying unsuspected ability to manage people. She knew that ultimatum would urge Frank to his best endeavors.

Frank, much to Mrs. Spencer’s dismay, marched boldly in at the front door upon his return. She pounced on him and whisked him out of sight into the supper room.

“Where’s Rachel? What made you come that way? Everybody saw you!”

“It makes no difference. They will all have to know, anyway. Rachel says she is going to be married from her father’s house, or not at all. I’ve come

back to tell you so.”

Isabella’s face turned crimson.

“Rachel has gone crazy. I wash my hands of this affair. Do as you please. Take the guests — the supper, too, if you can carry it.”

“We’ll all come back here for supper,” said Frank, ignoring the sarcasm. “Come, Mrs. Spencer, let’s make the best of it.”

“Do you suppose that I am going to David Spencer’s house?” said Isabella Spencer violently.

“Oh you **MUST** come, Mrs. Spencer,” cried poor Frank desperately. He began to fear that he would lose his bride past all finding in this maze of triple stubbornness. “Rachel says she won’t be married at all if you don’t go, too. Think what a talk it will make. You know she will keep her word.”

Isabella Spencer knew it. Amid all the conflict of anger and revolt in her soul was a strong desire not to make a worse scandal than must of necessity be made. The desire subdued and tamed her, as nothing else could have done.

“I will go, since I have to,” she said icily. “What can’t be cured must be endured. Go and tell them.”

Five minutes later the sixty wedding guests were all walking over the fields to the Cove, with the minister and the bridegroom in the front of the procession. They were too amazed even to talk about the strange happening. Isabella Spencer walked behind, fiercely alone.

They all crowded into the little room of the house at the Cove, and a solemn hush fell over it, broken only by the purr of the seawind around it and the croon of the waves on the shore. David Spencer gave his daughter away; but, when the ceremony was concluded, Isabella was the first to take the girl in her arms. She clasped her and kissed her, with tears streaming down her pale face, all her nature melted in a mother’s tenderness.

“Rachel! Rachel! My child, I hope and pray that you may be happy,” she said brokenly.

In the surge of the suddenly merry crowd of well-wishers around the bride and groom, Isabella was pushed back into a shadowy corner behind a heap of sails and ropes. Looking up, she found herself crushed against David Spencer. For the first time in twenty years the eyes of husband and wife met. A strange thrill shot to Isabella’s heart; she felt herself trembling.

“Isabella.” It was David’s voice in her ear — a voice full of tenderness and pleading — the voice of the young wooer of her girlhood—“Is it too late to ask you to forgive me? I’ve been a stubborn fool — but there hasn’t been an hour in all these years that I haven’t thought about you and our baby and longed for you.”

Isabella Spencer had hated this man; yet her hate had been but a parasite growth on a nobler stem, with no abiding roots of its own. It withered under his words, and lo, there was the old love, fair and strong and beautiful as ever.

“Oh — David — I — was — all — to — blame,” she murmured brokenly.

Further words were lost on her husband’s lips.

When the hubbub of handshaking and congratulating had subsided, Isabella Spencer stepped out before the company. She looked almost girlish and bridal herself, with her flushed cheeks and bright eyes.

“Let’s go back now and have supper, and be sensible,” she said crisply. “Rachel, your father is coming, too. He is coming to STAY,” — with a defiant glance around the circle. “Come, everybody.”

They went back with laughter and raillery over the quiet autumn fields, faintly silvered now by the moon that was rising over the hills. The young bride and groom lagged behind; they were very happy, but they were not so happy, after all, as the old bride and groom who walked swiftly in front. Isabella’s hand was in her husband’s and sometimes she could not see the moonlit hills for a mist of glorified tears.

“David,” she whispered, as he helped her over the fence, “how can you ever forgive me?”

“There’s nothing to forgive,” he said. “We’re only just married. Who ever heard of a bridegroom talking of forgiveness? Everything is beginning over new for us, my girl.”

JANE’S BAB Y

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Miss Rosetta Ellis, with her front hair in curl-papers, and her back hair bound with a checked apron, was out in her breezy side yard under the firs, shaking her parlor rugs, when Mr. Nathan Patterson drove in. Miss Rosetta had seen him coming down the long red hill, but she had not supposed he would be calling at that time of the morning. So she had not run. Miss Rosetta always ran if anybody called and her front hair was in curl-papers; and, though the errand of the said caller might be life or death, he or she had to wait until Miss Rosetta had taken her hair out. Everybody in Avonlea knew this, because everybody in Avonlea knew everything about everybody else.

But Mr. Patterson had wheeled into the lane so quickly and unexpectedly that Miss Rosetta had had no time to run; so, twitching off the checked apron, she stood her ground as calmly as might be under the disagreeable consciousness of curl-papers.

“Good morning, Miss Ellis,” said Mr. Patterson, so somberly that Miss Rosetta instantly felt that he was the bearer of bad news. Usually Mr. Patterson’s face was as broad and beaming as a harvest moon. Now his expression was very melancholy and his voice positively sepulchral.

“Good morning,” returned Miss Rosetta, crisply and cheerfully. She, at any rate, would not go into eclipse until she knew the reason therefor. “It is a fine day.”

“A very fine day,” assented Mr. Patterson, solemnly. “I have just come from the Wheeler place, Miss Ellis, and I regret to say—”

“Charlotte is sick!” cried Miss Rosetta, rapidly. “Charlotte has got another spell with her heart! I knew it! I’ve been expecting to hear it! Any woman that drives about the country as much as she does is liable to heart disease at any moment. I never go outside of my gate but I meet her gadding off somewhere. Goodness knows who looks after her place. I shouldn’t like to trust as much to a hired man as she does. Well, it is very kind of you, Mr. Patterson, to put yourself out to the extent of calling to tell me that Charlotte is sick, but I don’t really see why you should take so much trouble — I really don’t. It doesn’t matter to me whether Charlotte is sick or whether she isn’t. YOU know that perfectly well, Mr. Patterson, if anybody does. When Charlotte went and got married, on the sly, to that good-for-nothing Jacob Wheeler—”

“Mrs. Wheeler is quite well,” interrupted Mr. Patterson desperately. “Quite well. Nothing at all the matter with her, in fact. I only—”

“Then what do you mean by coming here and telling me she wasn’t, and frightening me half to death?” demanded Miss Rosetta, indignantly. “My own heart isn’t very strong — it runs in our family — and my doctor warned me to avoid all shocks and excitement. I don’t want to be excited, Mr. Patterson. I won’t be excited, not even if Charlotte has another spell. It’s perfectly useless for you to try to excite me, Mr. Patterson.”

“Bless the woman, I’m not trying to excite anybody!” declared Mr. Patterson in exasperation. “I merely called to tell you—”

“To tell me WHAT?” said Miss Rosetta. “How much longer do you mean to keep me in suspense, Mr. Patterson. No doubt you have abundance of spare time, but — I — have NOT.”

“ — that your sister, Mrs. Wheeler, has had a letter from a cousin of yours, and she’s in Charlottetown. Mrs. Roberts, I think her name is—”

“Jane Roberts,” broke in Miss Rosetta. “Jane Ellis she was, before she was married. What was she writing to Charlotte about? Not that I want to

know, of course. I'm not interested in Charlotte's correspondence, goodness knows. But if Jane had anything in particular to write about she should have written to ME. I am the oldest. Charlotte had no business to get a letter from Jane Roberts without consulting me. It's just like her underhanded ways. She got married the same way. Never said a word to me about it, but just sneaked off with that unprincipled Jacob Wheeler—"

"Mrs. Roberts is very ill. I understand," persisted Mr. Patterson, nobly resolved to do what he had come to do, "dying, in fact, and—"

"Jane ill! Jane dying!" exclaimed Miss Rosetta. "Why, she was the healthiest girl I ever knew! But then I've never seen her, nor heard from her, since she got married fifteen years ago. I dare say her husband was a brute and neglected her, and she's pined away by slow degrees. I've no faith in husbands. Look at Charlotte! Everybody knows how Jacob Wheeler used her. To be sure, she deserved it, but—"

"Mrs. Roberts' husband is dead," said Mr. Patterson. "Died about two months ago, I understand, and she has a little baby six months old, and she thought perhaps Mrs. Wheeler would take it for old times' sake—"

"Did Charlotte ask you to call and tell me this?" demanded Miss Rosetta eagerly.

"No; she just told me what was in the letter. She didn't mention you; but I thought, perhaps, you ought to be told—"

"I knew it," said Miss Rosetta in a tone of bitter assurance. "I could have told you so. Charlotte wouldn't even let me know that Jane was ill. Charlotte would be afraid I would want to get the baby, seeing that Jane and I were such intimate friends long ago. And who has a better right to it than me, I should like to know? Ain't I the oldest? And haven't I had experience in bringing up babies? Charlotte needn't think she is going to run the affairs of our family just because she happened to get married. Jacob Wheeler—"

"I must be going," said Mr. Patterson, gathering up his reins thankfully.

“I am much obliged to you for coming to tell me about Jane,” said Miss Rosetta, “even though you have wasted a lot of precious time getting it out. If it hadn’t been for you I suppose I should never have known it at all. As it is, I shall start for town just as soon as I can get ready.”

“You’ll have to hurry if you want to get ahead of Mrs. Wheeler,” advised Mr. Patterson. “She’s packing her trunk and going on the morning train.”

“I’ll pack a valise and go on the afternoon train,” retorted Miss Rosetta triumphantly. “I’ll show Charlotte she isn’t running the Ellis affairs. She married out of them into the Wheelers. She can attend to them. Jacob Wheeler was the most—”

But Mr. Patterson had driven away. He felt that he had done his duty in the face of fearful odds, and he did not want to hear anything more about Jacob Wheeler.

Rosetta Ellis and Charlotte Wheeler had not exchanged a word for ten years. Before that time they had been devoted to each other, living together in the little Ellis cottage on the White Sands road, as they had done ever since their parents’ death. The trouble began when Jacob Wheeler had commenced to pay attention to Charlotte, the younger and prettier of two women who had both ceased to be either very young or very pretty. Rosetta had been bitterly opposed to the match from the first. She vowed she had no use for Jacob Wheeler. There were not lacking malicious people to hint that this was because the aforesaid Jacob Wheeler had selected the wrong sister upon whom to bestow his affections. Be that as it might, Miss Rosetta certainly continued to render the course of Jacob Wheeler’s true love exceedingly rough and tumultuous. The end of it was that Charlotte had gone quietly away one morning and married Jacob Wheeler without Miss Rosetta’s knowing anything about it. Miss Rosetta had never forgiven her for it, and Charlotte had never forgiven the things Rosetta had said to her when she and Jacob returned to the Ellis cottage. Since then the sisters had been avowed and open foes, the only difference being that Miss Rosetta aired her grievances publicly, in season and out of season, while Charlotte was never heard to mention Rosetta’s name. Even the death of Jacob Wheeler, five years after the marriage, had not healed the breach.

Miss Rosetta took out her curl-papers, packed her valise, and caught the late afternoon train for Charlottetown, as she had threatened. All the way there she sat rigidly upright in her seat and held imaginary dialogues with Charlotte in her mind, running something like this on her part: —

“No, Charlotte Wheeler, you are not going to have Jane’s baby, and you’re very much mistaken if you think so. Oh, all right — we’ll see! You don’t know anything about babies, even if you are married. I do. Didn’t I take William Ellis’s baby, when his wife died? Tell me that, Charlotte Wheeler! And didn’t the little thing thrive with me, and grow strong and healthy? Yes, even you have to admit that it did, Charlotte Wheeler. And yet you have the presumption to think that you ought to have Jane’s baby! Yes, it is presumption, Charlotte Wheeler. And when William Ellis got married again, and took the baby, didn’t the child cling to me and cry as if I was its real mother? You know it did, Charlotte Wheeler. I’m going to get and keep Jane’s baby in spite of you, Charlotte Wheeler, and I’d like to see you try to prevent me — you that went and got married and never so much as let your own sister know of it! If I had got married in such a fashion, Charlotte Wheeler, I’d be ashamed to look anybody in the face for the rest of my natural life!”

Miss Rosetta was so interested in thus laying down the law to Charlotte, and in planning out the future life of Jane’s baby, that she didn’t find the journey to Charlottetown so long or tedious as might have been expected, considering her haste. She soon found her way to the house where her cousin lived. There, to her dismay and real sorrow, she learned that Mrs. Roberts had died at four o’clock that afternoon.

“She seemed dreadful anxious to live until she heard from some of her folks out in Avonlea,” said the woman who gave Miss Rosetta the information. “She had written to them about her little girl. She was my sister-in-law, and she lived with me ever since her husband died. I’ve done my best for her; but I’ve a big family of my own and I can’t see how I’m to keep the child. Poor Jane looked and longed for some one to come from Avonlea, but she couldn’t hold out. A patient, suffering creature she was!”

“I’m her cousin,” said Miss Rosetta, wiping her eyes, “and I have come for the baby. I’ll take it home with me after the funeral; and, if you please,

Mrs. Gordon, let me see it right away, so it can get accustomed to me. Poor Jane! I wish I could have got here in time to see her, she and I were such friends long ago. We were far more intimate and confidential than ever her and Charlotte was. Charlotte knows that, too!”

The vim with which Miss Rosetta snapped this out rather amazed Mrs. Gordon, who couldn’t understand it at all. But she took Miss Rosetta upstairs to the room where the baby was sleeping.

“Oh, the little darling,” cried Miss Rosetta, all her old maidishness and oddity falling away from her like a garment, and all her innate and denied motherhood shining out in her face like a transforming illumination. “Oh, the sweet, dear, pretty little thing!”

The baby was a darling — a six-months’ old beauty with little golden ringlets curling and glistening all over its tiny head. As Miss Rosetta hung over it, it opened its eyes and then held out its tiny hands to her with a gurgle of confidence.

“Oh, you sweetest!” said Miss Rosetta rapturously, gathering it up in her arms. “You belong to me, darling — never, never, to that underhanded Charlotte! What is its name, Mrs. Gordon?”

“It wasn’t named,” said Mrs. Gordon. “Guess you’ll have to name it yourself, Miss Ellis.”

“Camilla Jane,” said Miss Rosetta without a moment’s hesitation. “Jane after its mother, of course; and I have always thought Camilla the prettiest name in the world. Charlotte would be sure to give it some perfectly heathenish name. I wouldn’t put it past her calling the poor innocent Mehitable.”

Miss Rosetta decided to stay in Charlottetown until after the funeral. That night she lay with the baby on her arm, listening with joy to its soft little breathing. She did not sleep or wish to sleep. Her waking fancies were more alluring than any visions of dreamland. Moreover, she gave a spice to them by occasionally snapping some vicious sentences out loud at Charlotte.

Miss Rosetta fully expected Charlotte along on the following morning and girded herself for the fray; but no Charlotte appeared. Night came; no Charlotte. Another morning and no Charlotte. Miss Rosetta was hopelessly puzzled. What had happened? Dear, dear, had Charlotte taken a bad heart spell, on hearing that she, Rosetta, had stolen a march on her to Charlottetown? It was quite likely. You never knew what to expect of a woman who had married Jacob Wheeler!

The truth was, that the very evening Miss Rosetta had left Avonlea Mrs. Jacob Wheeler's hired man had broken his leg and had had to be conveyed to his distant home on a feather bed in an express wagon. Mrs. Wheeler could not leave home until she had obtained another hired man. Consequently, it was the evening after the funeral when Mrs. Wheeler whisked up the steps of the Gordon house and met Miss Rosetta coming out with a big white bundle in her arms.

The eyes of the two women met defiantly. Miss Rosetta's face wore an air of triumph, chastened by a remembrance of the funeral that afternoon. Mrs. Wheeler's face, except for eyes, was as expressionless as it usually was. Unlike the tall, fair, fat Miss Rosetta, Mrs. Wheeler was small and dark and thin, with an eager, careworn face.

"How is Jane?" she said abruptly, breaking the silence of ten years in saying it.

"Jane is dead and buried, poor thing," said Miss Rosetta calmly.

"I am taking her baby, little Camilla Jane, home with me."

"The baby belongs to me," cried Mrs. Wheeler passionately. "Jane wrote to me about her. Jane meant that I should have her. I've come for her."

"You'll go back without her then," said Miss Rosetta, serene in the possession that is nine points of the law. "The child is mine, and she is going to stay mine. You can make up your mind to that, Charlotte Wheeler. A woman who eloped to get married isn't fit to be trusted with a baby, anyhow. Jacob Wheeler—"

But Mrs. Wheeler had rushed past into the house. Miss Rosetta composedly stepped into the cab and drove to the station. She fairly bridled with triumph; and underneath the triumph ran a queer undercurrent of satisfaction over the fact that Charlotte had spoken to her at last. Miss Rosetta would not look at this satisfaction, or give it a name, but it was there.

Miss Rosetta arrived safely back in Avonlea with Camilla Jane and within ten hours everybody in the settlement knew the whole story, and every woman who could stand on her feet had been up to the Ellis cottage to see the baby. Mrs. Wheeler arrived home twenty-four hours later, and silently betook herself to her farm. When her Avonlea neighbors sympathized with her in her disappointment, she said nothing, but looked all the more darkly determined. Also, a week later, Mr. William J. Blair, the Carmody storekeeper, had an odd tale to tell. Mrs. Wheeler had come to the store and bought a lot of fine flannel and muslin and valenciennes. Now, what in the name of time, did Mrs. Wheeler want with such stuff? Mr. William J. Blair couldn't make head or tail of it, and it worried him. Mr. Blair was so accustomed to know what everybody bought anything for that such a mystery quite upset him.

Miss Rosetta had exulted in the possession of little Camilla Jane for a month, and had been so happy that she had almost given up inveighing against Charlotte. Her conversations, instead of tending always to Jacob Wheeler, now ran Camilla Janeward; and this, folks thought, was an improvement.

One afternoon, Miss Rosetta, leaving Camilla Jane snugly sleeping in her cradle in the kitchen, had slipped down to the bottom of the garden to pick her currants. The house was hidden from her sight by the copse of cherry trees, but she had left the kitchen window open, so that she could hear the baby if it awakened and cried. Miss Rosetta sang happily as she picked her currants. For the first time since Charlotte had married Jacob Wheeler Miss Rosetta felt really happy — so happy that at there was no room in her heart for bitterness. In fancy she looked forward to the coming years, and saw Camilla Jane growing up into girlhood, fair and lovable.

“She’ll be a beauty,” reflected Miss Rosetta complacently. “Jane was a handsome girl. She shall always be dressed as nice as I can manage it, and I’ll get her an organ, and have her take painting and music lessons. Parties, too! I’ll give her a real coming-out party when she’s eighteen and the very prettiest dress that’s to be had. Dear me, I can hardly wait for her to grow up, though she’s sweet enough now to make one wish she could stay a baby forever.”

When Miss Rosetta returned to the kitchen, her eyes fell on an empty cradle. Camilla Jane was gone!

Miss Rosetta promptly screamed. She understood at a glance what had happened. Six months’ old babies do not get out of their cradles and disappear through closed doors without any assistance.

“Charlotte has been here,” gasped Miss Rosetta. “Charlotte has stolen Camilla Jane! I might have expected it. I might have known when I heard that story about her buying muslin and flannel. It’s just like Charlotte to do such an underhand trick. But I’ll go after her! I’ll show her! She’ll find out she has got Rosetta Ellis to deal with and no Wheeler!”

Like a frantic creature and wholly forgetting that her hair was in curl-papers, Miss Rosetta hurried up the hill and down the shore road to the Wheeler Farm — a place she had never visited in her life before.

The wind was offshore and only broke the bay’s surface into long silvery ripples, and sent sheeny shadows flying out across it from every point and headland, like transparent wings.

The little gray house, so close to the purring waves that in storms their spray splashed over its very doorstep, seemed deserted. Miss Rosetta pounded lustily on the front door. This producing no result, she marched around to the back door and knocked. No answer. Miss Rosetta tried the door. It was locked.

“Guilty conscience,” sniffed Miss Rosetta. “Well, I shall stay here until I see that perfidious Charlotte, if I have to camp in the yard all night.”

Miss Rosetta was quite capable of doing this, but she was spared the necessity; walking boldly up to the kitchen window, and peering through it, she felt her heart swell with anger as she beheld Charlotte sitting calmly by the table with Camilla Jane on her knee. Beside her was a befrilled and bemuslined cradle, and on a chair lay the garments in which Miss Rosetta had dressed the baby. It was clad in an entirely new outfit, and seemed quite at home with its new possessor. It was laughing and cooing, and making little dabs at her with its dimpled hands.

“Charlotte Wheeler,” cried Miss Rosetta, rapping sharply on the windowpane. “I’ve come for that child! Bring her out to me at once — at once, I say! How dare you come to my house and steal a baby? You’re no better than a common burglar. Give me Camilla Jane, I say!”

Charlotte came over to the window with the baby in her arms and triumph glittering in her eyes.

“There is no such child as Camilla Jane here,” she said. “This is Barbara Jane. She belongs to me.”

With that Mrs. Wheeler pulled down the shade.

Miss Rosetta had to go home. There was nothing else for her to do. On her way she met Mr. Patterson and told him in full the story of her wrongs. It was all over Avonlea by night, and created quite a sensation. Avonlea had not had such a toothsome bit of gossip for a long time.

Mrs. Wheeler exulted in the possession of Barbara Jane for six weeks, during which Miss Rosetta broke her heart with loneliness and longing, and meditated futile plots for the recovery of the baby. It was hopeless to think of stealing it back or she would have tried to. The hired man at the Wheeler place reported that Mrs. Wheeler never left it night or day for a single moment. She even carried it with her when she went to milk the cows.

“But my turn will come,” said Miss Rosetta grimly. “Camilla Jane is mine, and if she was called Barbara for a century it wouldn’t alter that fact!

Barbara, indeed! Why not have called her Methusaleh and have done with it?”

One afternoon in October, when Miss Rosetta was picking her apples and thinking drearily about lost Camilla Jane, a woman came running breathlessly down the hill and into the yard. Miss Rosetta gave an exclamation of amazement and dropped her basket of apples. Of all incredible things! The woman was Charlotte — Charlotte who had never set foot on the grounds of the Ellis cottage since her marriage ten years ago, Charlotte, bareheaded, wild-eyed, distraught, wringing her hands and sobbing.

Miss Rosetta flew to meet her.

“You’ve scalded Camilla Jane to death!” she exclaimed. “I always knew you would — always expected it!”

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, come quick, Rosetta!” gasped Charlotte. “Barbara Jane is in convulsions and I don’t know what to do. The hired man has gone for the doctor. You were the nearest, so I came to you. Jenny White was there when they came on, so I left her and ran. Oh, Rosetta, come, come, if you have a spark of humanity in you! You know what to do for convulsions — you saved the Ellis baby when it had them. Oh, come and save Barbara Jane!”

“You mean Camilla Jane, I presume?” said Miss Rosetta firmly, in spite of her agitation.

For a second Charlotte Wheeler hesitated. Then she said passionately: “Yes, yes, Camilla Jane — any name you like! Only come.”

Miss Rosetta went, and not a moment too soon, either. The doctor lived eight miles away and the baby was very bad. The two women and Jenny White worked over her for hours. It was not until dark, when the baby was sleeping soundly and the doctor had gone, after telling Miss Rosetta that she had saved the child’s life, that a realization of the situation came home to them.

“Well,” said Miss Rosetta, dropping into an armchair with a long sigh of weariness, “I guess you’ll admit now, Charlotte Wheeler, that you are hardly a fit person to have charge of a baby, even if you had to go and steal it from me. I should think your conscience would reproach you — that is, if any woman who would marry Jacob Wheeler in such an underhanded fashion has a—”

“I — I wanted the baby,” sobbed Charlotte, tremulously. “I was so lonely here. I didn’t think it was any harm to take her, because Jane gave her to me in her letter. But you have saved her life, Rosetta, and you — you can have her back, although it will break my heart to give her up. But, oh, Rosetta, won’t you let me come and see her sometimes? I love her so I can’t bear to give her up entirely.”

“Charlotte,” said Miss Rosetta firmly, “the most sensible thing for you to do is just to come back with the baby. You are worried to death trying to run this farm with the debt Jacob Wheeler left on it for you. Sell it, and come home with me. And we’ll both have the baby then.”

“Oh, Rosetta, I’d love to,” faltered Charlotte. “I’ve — I’ve wanted to be good friends with you again so much. But I thought you were so hard and bitter you’d never make up.”

“Maybe I’ve talked too much,” conceded Miss Rosetta, “but you ought to know me well enough to know I didn’t mean a word of it. It was your never saying anything, no matter what I said, that riled me up so bad. Let bygones be bygones, and come home, Charlotte.”

“I will,” said Charlotte resolutely, wiping away her tears. “I’m sick of living here and putting up with hired men. I’ll be real glad to go home, Rosetta, and that’s the truth. I’ve had a hard enough time. I s’pose you’ll say I deserved it; but I was fond of Jacob, and—”

“Of course, of course. Why shouldn’t you be?” said Miss Rosetta briskly. “I’m sure Jacob Wheeler was a good enough soul, if he was a little slack-twisted. I’d like to hear anybody say a word against him in my presence. Look at that blessed child, Charlotte. Isn’t she the sweetest thing? I’m desperate glad you are coming back home, Charlotte. I’ve never been able

to put up a decent mess of mustard pickles since you went away, and you were always such a hand with them! We'll be real snug and cozy again — you and me and little Camilla Barbara Jane.”

THE DREAM-CHILD

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A man's heart — aye, and a woman's, too — should be light in the spring. The spirit of resurrection is abroad, calling the life of the world out of its wintry grave, knocking with radiant fingers at the gates of its tomb. It stirs in human hearts, and makes them glad with the old primal gladness they felt in childhood. It quickens human souls, and brings them, if so they will, so close to God that they may clasp hands with Him. It is a time of wonder and renewed life, and a great outward and inward rapture, as of a young angel softly clapping his hands for creation's joy. At least, so it should be; and so it always had been with me until the spring when the dream-child first came into our lives.

That year I hated the spring — I, who had always loved it so. As boy I had loved it, and as man. All the happiness that had ever been mine, and it was much, had come to blossom in the springtime. It was in the spring that Josephine and I had first loved each other, or, at least, had first come into the full knowledge that we loved. I think that we must have loved each other all our lives, and that each succeeding spring was a word in the revelation of that love, not to be understood until, in the fullness of time, the whole sentence was written out in that most beautiful of all beautiful springs.

How beautiful it was! And how beautiful she was! I suppose every lover thinks that of his lass; otherwise he is a poor sort of lover. But it was not only my eyes of love that made my dear lovely. She was slim and lithe as a young, white-stemmed birch tree; her hair was like a soft, dusky cloud; and her eyes were as blue as Avonlea harbor on a fair twilight, when all the sky is abloom over it. She had dark lashes, and a little red mouth that quivered when she was very sad or very happy, or when she loved very much — quivered like a crimson rose too rudely shaken by the wind. At such times what was a man to do save kiss it?

The next spring we were married, and I brought her home to my gray old homestead on the gray old harbor shore. A lonely place for a young bride, said Avonlea people. Nay, it was not so. She was happy here, even in my absences. She loved the great, restless harbor and the vast, misty sea beyond; she loved the tides, keeping their world-old tryst with the shore, and the gulls, and the croon of the waves, and the call of the winds in the fir woods at noon and even; she loved the moonrises and the sunsets, and the clear, calm nights when the stars seemed to have fallen into the water and to be a little dizzy from such a fall. She loved these things, even as I did. No, she was never lonely here then.

The third spring came, and our boy was born. We thought we had been happy before; now we knew that we had only dreamed a pleasant dream of happiness, and had awakened to this exquisite reality. We thought we had loved each other before; now, as I looked into my wife's pale face, blanched with its baptism of pain, and met the uplifted gaze of her blue eyes, aglow with the holy passion of motherhood, I knew we had only imagined what love might be. The imagination had been sweet, as the thought of the rose is sweet before the bud is open; but as the rose to the thought, so was love to the imagination of it.

"All my thoughts are poetry since baby came," my wife said once, rapturously.

Our boy lived for twenty months. He was a sturdy, toddling rogue, so full of life and laughter and mischief that, when he died, one day, after the illness of an hour, it seemed a most absurd thing that he should be dead — a thing I could have laughed at, until belief forced itself into my soul like a burning, searing iron.

I think I grieved over my little son's death as deeply and sincerely as ever man did, or could. But the heart of the father is not as the heart of the mother. Time brought no healing to Josephine; she fretted and pined; her cheeks lost their pretty oval, and her red mouth grew pale and drooping.

I hoped that spring might work its miracle upon her. When the buds swelled, and the old earth grew green in the sun, and the gulls came back to the gray harbor, whose very grayness grew golden and mellow, I thought

I should see her smile again. But, when the spring came, came the dream-child, and the fear that was to be my companion, at bed and board, from sunsetting to sunsetting.

One night I awakened from sleep, realizing in the moment of awakening that I was alone. I listened to hear whether my wife were moving about the house. I heard nothing but the little splash of waves on the shore below and the low moan of the distant ocean.

I rose and searched the house. She was not in it. I did not know where to seek her; but, at a venture, I started along the shore.

It was pale, fainting moonlight. The harbor looked like a phantom harbor, and the night was as still and cold and calm as the face of a dead man. At last I saw my wife coming to me along the shore. When I saw her, I knew what I had feared and how great my fear had been.

As she drew near, I saw that she had been crying; her face was stained with tears, and her dark hair hung loose over her shoulders in little, glossy ringlets like a child's. She seemed to be very tired, and at intervals she wrung her small hands together.

She showed no surprise when she met me, but only held out her hands to me as if glad to see me.

"I followed him — but I could not overtake him," she said with a sob. "I did my best — I hurried so; but he was always a little way ahead. And then I lost him — and so I came back. But I did my best — indeed I did. And oh, I am so tired!"

"Josie, dearest, what do you mean, and where have you been?" I said, drawing her close to me. "Why did you go out so — alone in the night?"

She looked at me wonderingly.

"How could I help it, David? He called me. I had to go."

"WHO called you?"

“The child,” she answered in a whisper. “Our child, David — our pretty boy. I awakened in the darkness and heard him calling to me down on the shore. Such a sad, little wailing cry, David, as if he were cold and lonely and wanted his mother. I hurried out to him, but I could not find him. I could only hear the call, and I followed it on and on, far down the shore. Oh, I tried so hard to overtake it, but I could not. Once I saw a little white hand beckoning to me far ahead in the moonlight. But still I could not go fast enough. And then the cry ceased, and I was there all alone on that terrible, cold, gray shore. I was so tired and I came home. But I wish I could have found him. Perhaps he does not know that I tried to. Perhaps he thinks his mother never listened to his call. Oh, I would not have him think that.”

“You have had a bad dream, dear,” I said. I tried to say it naturally; but it is hard for a man to speak naturally when he feels a mortal dread striking into his very vitals with its deadly chill.

“It was no dream,” she answered reproachfully. “I tell you I heard him calling me — me, his mother. What could I do but go to him? You cannot understand — you are only his father. It was not you who gave him birth. It was not you who paid the price of his dear life in pain. He would not call to you — he wanted his mother.”

I got her back to the house and to her bed, whither she went obediently enough, and soon fell into the sleep of exhaustion. But there was no more sleep for me that night. I kept a grim vigil with dread.

When I had married Josephine, one of those officious relatives that are apt to buzz about a man’s marriage told me that her grandmother had been insane all the latter part of her life. She had grieved over the death of a favorite child until she lost her mind, and, as the first indication of it, she had sought by nights a white dream-child which always called her, so she said, and led her afar with a little, pale, beckoning hand.

I had smiled at the story then. What had that grim old bygone to do with springtime and love and Josephine? But it came back to me now, hand in hand with my fear. Was this fate coming on my dear wife? It was too horrible for belief. She was so young, so fair, so sweet, this girl-wife of

mine. It had been only a bad dream, with a frightened, bewildered waking. So I tried to comfort myself.

When she awakened in the morning she did not speak of what had happened and I did not dare to. She seemed more cheerful that day than she had been, and went about her household duties briskly and skillfully. My fear lifted. I was sure now that she had only dreamed. And I was confirmed in my hopeful belief when two nights had passed away uneventfully.

Then, on the third night, the dream-child called to her again. I wakened from a troubled doze to find her dressing herself with feverish haste.

“He is calling me,” she cried. “Oh, don’t you hear him? Can’t you hear him? Listen — listen — the little, lonely cry! Yes, yes, my precious, mother is coming. Wait for me. Mother is coming to her pretty boy!”

I caught her hand and let her lead me where she would. Hand in hand we followed the dream-child down the harbor shore in that ghostly, clouded moonlight. Ever, she said, the little cry sounded before her. She entreated the dream-child to wait for her; she cried and implored and uttered tender mother-talk. But, at last, she ceased to hear the cry; and then, weeping, wearied, she let me lead her home again.

What a horror brooded over that spring — that so beautiful spring! It was a time of wonder and marvel; of the soft touch of silver rain on greening fields; of the incredible delicacy of young leaves; of blossom on the land and blossom in the sunset. The whole world bloomed in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the evasive, fleeting charm of spring and girlhood and young morning. And almost every night of this wonderful time the dream-child called his mother, and we roved the gray shore in quest of him.

In the day she was herself; but, when the night fell, she was restless and uneasy until she heard the call. Then follow it she would, even through storm and darkness. It was then, she said, that the cry sounded loudest and nearest, as if her pretty boy were frightened by the tempest. What wild, terrible roving we had, she straining forward, eager to overtake the

dream-child; I, sick at heart, following, guiding, protecting, as best I could; then afterwards leading her gently home, heartbroken because she could not reach the child.

I bore my burden in secret, determining that gossip should not busy itself with my wife's condition so long as I could keep it from becoming known. We had no near relatives — none with any right to share any trouble — and whoso accepteth human love must bind it to his soul with pain.

I thought, however, that I should have medical advice, and I took our old doctor into my confidence. He looked grave when he heard my story. I did not like his expression nor his few guarded remarks. He said he thought human aid would avail little; she might come all right in time; humor her, as far as possible, watch over her, protect her. He needed not to tell me THAT.

The spring went out and summer came in — and the horror deepened and darkened. I knew that suspicions were being whispered from lip to lip. We had been seen on our nightly quests. Men and women began to look at us pityingly when we went abroad.

One day, on a dull, drowsy afternoon, the dream-child called. I knew then that the end was near; the end had been near in the old grandmother's case sixty years before when the dream-child called in the day. The doctor looked graver than ever when I told him, and said that the time had come when I must have help in my task. I could not watch by day and night. Unless I had assistance I would break down.

I did not think that I should. Love is stronger than that. And on one thing I was determined — they should never take my wife from me. No restraint sterner than a husband's loving hand should ever be put upon her, my pretty, piteous darling.

I never spoke of the dream-child to her. The doctor advised against it. It would, he said, only serve to deepen the delusion. When he hinted at an asylum I gave him a look that would have been a fierce word for another man. He never spoke of it again.

One night in August there was a dull, murky sunset after a dead, breathless day of heat, with not a wind stirring. The sea was not blue as a sea should be, but pink — all pink — a ghastly, staring, painted pink. I lingered on the harbor shore below the house until dark. The evening bells were ringing faintly and mournfully in a church across the harbor. Behind me, in the kitchen, I heard my wife singing. Sometimes now her spirits were fitfully high, and then she would sing the old songs of her girlhood. But even in her singing was something strange, as if a wailing, unearthly cry rang through it. Nothing about her was sadder than that strange singing.

When I went back to the house the rain was beginning to fall; but there was no wind or sound in the air — only that dismal stillness, as if the world were holding its breath in expectation of a calamity.

Josie was standing by the window, looking out and listening. I tried to induce her to go to bed, but she only shook her head.

“I might fall asleep and not hear him when he called,” she said. “I am always afraid to sleep now, for fear he should call and his mother fail to hear him.”

Knowing it was of no use to entreat, I sat down by the table and tried to read. Three hours passed on. When the clock struck midnight she started up, with the wild light in her sunken blue eyes.

“He is calling,” she cried, “calling out there in the storm.
Yes, yes, sweet, I am coming!”

She opened the door and fled down the path to the shore. I snatched a lantern from the wall, lighted it, and followed. It was the blackest night I was ever out in, dark with the very darkness of death. The rain fell thickly and heavily. I overtook Josie, caught her hand, and stumbled along in her wake, for she went with the speed and recklessness of a distraught woman. We moved in the little flitting circle of light shed by the lantern. All around us and above us was a horrible, voiceless darkness, held, as it were, at bay by the friendly light.

“If I could only overtake him once,” moaned Josie. “If I could just kiss him once, and hold him close against my aching heart. This pain, that never leaves me, would leave me then. Oh, my pretty boy, wait for mother! I am coming to you. Listen, David; he cries — he cries so pitifully; listen! Can’t you hear it?”

I DID hear it! Clear and distinct, out of the deadly still darkness before us, came a faint, wailing cry. What was it? Was I, too, going mad, or WAS there something out there — something that cried and moaned — longing for human love, yet ever retreating from human footsteps? I am not a superstitious man; but my nerve had been shaken by my long trial, and I was weaker than I thought. Terror took possession of me — terror unnameable. I trembled in every limb; clammy perspiration oozed from my forehead; I was possessed by a wild impulse to turn and flee — anywhere, away from that unearthly cry. But Josephine’s cold hand gripped mine firmly, and led me on. That strange cry still rang in my ears. But it did not recede; it sounded clearer and stronger; it was a wail; but a loud, insistent wail; it was nearer — nearer; it was in the darkness just beyond us.

Then we came to it; a little dory had been beached on the pebbles and left there by the receding tide. There was a child in it — a boy, of perhaps two years old, who crouched in the bottom of the dory in water to his waist, his big, blue eyes wild and wide with terror, his face white and tearstained. He wailed again when he saw us, and held out his little hands.

My horror fell away from me like a discarded garment. THIS child was living. How he had come there, whence and why, I did not know and, in my state of mind, did not question. It was no cry of parted spirit I had heard — that was enough for me.

“Oh, the poor darling!” cried my wife.

She stooped over the dory and lifted the baby in her arms. His long, fair curls fell on her shoulder; she laid her face against his and wrapped her shawl around him.

“Let me carry him, dear,” I said. “He is very wet, and too heavy for you.”

“No, no, I must carry him. My arms have been so empty — they are full now. Oh, David, the pain at my heart has gone. He has come to me to take the place of my own. God has sent him to me out of the sea. He is wet and cold and tired. Hush, sweet one, we will go home.”

Silently I followed her home. The wind was rising, coming in sudden, angry gusts; the storm was at hand, but we reached shelter before it broke. Just as I shut our door behind us it smote the house with the roar of a baffled beast. I thanked God that we were not out in it, following the dream-child.

“You are very wet, Josie,” I said. “Go and put on dry clothes at once.”

“The child must be looked to first,” she said firmly. “See how chilled and exhausted he is, the pretty dear. Light a fire quickly, David, while I get dry things for him.”

I let her have her way. She brought out the clothes our own child had worn and dressed the waif in them, rubbing his chilled limbs, brushing his wet hair, laughing over him, mothering him. She seemed like her old self.

For my own part, I was bewildered. All the questions I had not asked before came crowding to my mind now. Whose child was this? Whence had he come? What was the meaning of it all?

He was a pretty baby, fair and plump and rosy. When he was dried and fed, he fell asleep in Josie’s arms. She hung over him in a passion of delight. It was with difficulty I persuaded her to leave him long enough to change her wet clothes. She never asked whose he might be or from where he might have come. He had been sent to her from the sea; the dream-child had led her to him; that was what she believed, and I dared not throw any doubt on that belief. She slept that night with the baby on her arm, and in her sleep her face was the face of a girl in her youth, untroubled and unworn.

I expected that the morrow would bring some one seeking the baby. I had come to the conclusion that he must belong to the “Cove” across the harbor, where the fishing hamlet was; and all day, while Josie laughed and played with him, I waited and listened for the footsteps of those who

would come seeking him. But they did not come. Day after day passed, and still they did not come.

I was in a maze of perplexity. What should I do? I shrank from the thought of the boy being taken away from us. Since we had found him the dream-child had never called. My wife seemed to have turned back from the dark borderland, where her feet had strayed to walk again with me in our own homely paths. Day and night she was her old, bright self, happy and serene in the new motherhood that had come to her. The only thing strange in her was her calm acceptance of the event. She never wondered who or whose the child might be — never seemed to fear that he would be taken from her; and she gave him our dream-child's name.

At last, when a full week had passed, I went, in my bewilderment, to our old doctor.

“A most extraordinary thing,” he said thoughtfully. “The child, as you say, must belong to the Spruce Cove people. Yet it is an almost unbelievable thing that there has been no search or inquiry after him. Probably there is some simple explanation of the mystery, however. I advise you to go over to the Cove and inquire. When you find the parents or guardians of the child, ask them to allow you to keep it for a time. It may prove your wife's salvation. I have known such cases. Evidently on that night the crisis of her mental disorder was reached. A little thing might have sufficed to turn her feet either way — back to reason and sanity, or into deeper darkness. It is my belief that the former has occurred, and that, if she is left in undisturbed possession of this child for a time, she will recover completely.”

I drove around the harbor that day with a lighter heart than I had hoped ever to possess again. When I reached Spruce Cove the first person I met was old Abel Blair. I asked him if any child were missing from the Cove or along shore. He looked at me in surprise, shook his head, and said he had not heard of any. I told him as much of the tale as was necessary, leaving him to think that my wife and I had found the dory and its small passenger during an ordinary walk along the shore.

“A green dory!” he exclaimed. “Ben Forbes’ old green dory has been missing for a week, but it was so rotten and leaky he didn’t bother looking for it. But this child, sir — it beats me. What might he be like?”

I described the child as closely as possible.

“That fits little Harry Martin to a hair,” said old Abel, perplexedly, “but, sir, it can’t be. Or, if it is, there’s been foul work somewhere. James Martin’s wife died last winter, sir, and he died the next month. They left a baby and not much else. There weren’t nobody to take the child but Jim’s half-sister, Maggie Fleming. She lived here at the Cove, and, I’m sorry to say, sir, she hadn’t too good a name. She didn’t want to be bothered with the baby, and folks say she neglected him scandalous. Well, last spring she begun talking of going away to the States. She said a friend of hers had got her a good place in Boston, and she was going to go and take little Harry. We supposed it was all right. Last Saturday she went, sir. She was going to walk to the station, and the last seen of her she was trudging along the road, carrying the baby. It hasn’t been thought of since. But, sir, d’ye suppose she set that innocent child adrift in that old leaky dory to send him to his death? I knew Maggie was no better than she should be, but I can’t believe she was as bad as that.”

“You must come over with me and see if you can identify the child,” I said. “If he is Harry Martin I shall keep him. My wife has been very lonely since our baby died, and she has taken a fancy to this little chap.”

When we reached my home old Abel recognized the child as Harry Martin.

He is with us still. His baby hands led my dear wife back to health and happiness. Other children have come to us, she loves them all dearly; but the boy who bears her dead son’s name is to her — aye, and to me — as dear as if she had given him birth. He came from the sea, and at his coming the ghostly dream-child fled, nevermore to lure my wife away from me with its exciting cry. Therefore I look upon him and love him as my firstborn.

THE BROTHER WHO FAILED

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The Monroe family were holding a Christmas reunion at the old Prince Edward Island homestead at White Sands. It was the first time they had all been together under one roof since the death of their mother, thirty years before. The idea of this Christmas reunion had originated with Edith Monroe the preceding spring, during her tedious convalescence from a bad attack of pneumonia among strangers in an American city, where she had not been able to fill her concert engagements, and had more spare time in which to feel the tug of old ties and the homesick longing for her own people than she had had for years. As a result, when she recovered, she wrote to her second brother, James Monroe, who lived on the homestead; and the consequence was this gathering of the Monroes under the old roof-tree. Ralph Monroe for once laid aside the cares of his railroads, and the deceitfulness of his millions, in Toronto and took the long-promised, long-deferred trip to the homeland. Malcolm Monroe journeyed from the far western university of which he was president. Edith came, flushed with the triumph of her latest and most successful concert tour. Mrs. Woodburn, who had been Margaret Monroe, came from the Nova Scotia town where she lived a busy, happy life as the wife of a rising young lawyer. James, prosperous and hearty, greeted them warmly at the old homestead whose fertile acres had well repaid his skillful management.

They were a merry party, casting aside their cares and years, and harking back to joyous boyhood and girlhood once more. James had a family of rosy lads and lasses; Margaret brought her two blue-eyed little girls; Ralph's dark, clever-looking son accompanied him, and Malcolm brought his, a young man with a resolute face, in which there was less of boyishness than in his father's, and the eyes of a keen, perhaps a hard bargainer. The two cousins were the same age to a day, and it was a family joke among the Monroes that the stork must have mixed the babies, since Ralph's son was like Malcolm in face and brain, while Malcolm's boy was a second edition of his uncle Ralph.

To crown all, Aunt Isabel came, too — a talkative, clever, shrewd old lady, as young at eighty-five as she had been at thirty, thinking the Monroe stock the best in the world, and beamingly proud of her nephews and nieces, who had gone out from this humble, little farm to destinies of such brilliance and influence in the world beyond.

I have forgotten Robert. Robert Monroe was apt to be forgotten. Although he was the oldest of the family, White Sands people, in naming over the various members of the Monroe family, would add, “and Robert,” in a tone of surprise over the remembrance of his existence.

He lived on a poor, sandy little farm down by the shore, but he had come up to James’ place on the evening when the guests arrived; they had all greeted him warmly and joyously, and then did not think about him again in their laughter and conversation. Robert sat back in a corner and listened with a smile, but he never spoke. Afterwards he had slipped noiselessly away and gone home, and nobody noticed his going. They were all gayly busy recalling what had happened in the old times and telling what had happened in the new.

Edith recounted the successes of her concert tours; Malcolm expatiated proudly on his plans for developing his beloved college; Ralph described the country through which his new railroad ran, and the difficulties he had had to overcome in connection with it. James, aside, discussed his orchard and his crops with Margaret, who had not been long enough away from the farm to lose touch with its interests. Aunt Isabel knitted and smiled complacently on all, talking now with one, now with the other, secretly quite proud of herself that she, an old woman of eighty-five, who had seldom been out of White Sands in her life, could discuss high finance with Ralph, and higher education with Malcolm, and hold her own with James in an argument on drainage.

The White Sands school teacher, an arch-eyed, red-mouthed bit a girl — a Bell from Avonlea — who boarded with the James Monroes, amused herself with the boys. All were enjoying themselves hugely, so it is not to be wondered at that they did not miss Robert, who had gone home early because his old housekeeper was nervous if left alone at night.

He came again the next afternoon. From James, in the barnyard, he learned that Malcolm and Ralph had driven to the harbor, that Margaret and Mrs. James had gone to call on friends in Avonlea, and that Edith was walking somewhere in the woods on the hill. There was nobody in the house except Aunt Isabel and the teacher.

“You’d better wait and stay the evening,” said James, indifferently.
“They’ll all be back soon.”

Robert went across the yard and sat down on the rustic bench in the angle of the front porch. It was a fine December evening, as mild as autumn; there had been no snow, and the long fields, sloping down from the homestead, were brown and mellow. A weird, dreamy stillness had fallen upon the purple earth, the windless woods, the rain of the valleys, the sere meadows. Nature seemed to have folded satisfied hands to rest, knowing that her long, wintry slumber was coming upon her. Out to sea, a dull, red sunset faded out into somber clouds, and the ceaseless voice of many waters came up from the tawny shore.

Robert rested his chin on his hand and looked across the vales and hills, where the feathery gray of leafless hardwoods was mingled with the sturdy, unfailing green of the conebearers. He was a tall, bent man, with thin, gray hair, a lined face, and deeply-set, gentle brown eyes — the eyes of one who, looking through pain, sees rapture beyond.

He felt very happy. He loved his family clannishly, and he was rejoiced that they were all again near to him. He was proud of their success and fame. He was glad that James had prospered so well of late years. There was no canker of envy or discontent in his soul.

He heard absently indistinct voices at the open hall window above the porch, where Aunt Isabel was talking to Kathleen Bell. Presently Aunt Isabel moved nearer to the window, and her words came down to Robert with startling clearness.

“Yes, I can assure you, Miss Bell, that I’m real proud of my nephews and nieces. They’re a smart family. They’ve almost all done well, and they hadn’t any of them much to begin with. Ralph had absolutely nothing and

to-day he is a millionaire. Their father met with so many losses, what with his ill-health and the bank failing, that he couldn't help them any. But they've all succeeded, except poor Robert — and I must admit that he's a total failure."

"Oh, no, no," said the little teacher deprecatingly.

"A total failure!" Aunt Isabel repeated her words emphatically. She was not going to be contradicted by anybody, least of all a Bell from Avonlea. "He has been a failure since the time he was born. He is the first Monroe to disgrace the old stock that way. I'm sure his brothers and sisters must be dreadfully ashamed of him. He has lived sixty years and he hasn't done a thing worth while. He can't even make his farm pay. If he's kept out of debt it's as much as he's ever managed to do."

"Some men can't even do that," murmured the little school teacher. She was really so much in awe of this imperious, clever old Aunt Isabel that it was positive heroism on her part to venture even this faint protest.

"More is expected of a Monroe," said Aunt Isabel majestically.

"Robert Monroe is a failure, and that is the only name for him."

Robert Monroe stood up below the window in a dizzy, uncertain fashion. Aunt Isabel had been speaking of him! He, Robert, was a failure, a disgrace to his blood, of whom his nearest and dearest were ashamed! Yes, it was true; he had never realized it before; he had known that he could never win power or accumulate riches, but he had not thought that mattered much. Now, through Aunt Isabel's scornful eyes, he saw himself as the world saw him — as his brothers and sisters must see him. THERE lay the sting. What the world thought of him did not matter; but that his own should think him a failure and disgrace was agony. He moaned as he started to walk across the yard, only anxious to hide his pain and shame away from all human sight, and in his eyes was the look of a gentle animal which had been stricken by a cruel and unexpected blow.

Edith Monroe, who, unaware of Robert's proximity, had been standing on the other side of the porch, saw that look, as he hurried past her, unseeing.

A moment before her dark eyes had been flashing with anger at Aunt Isabel's words; now the anger was drowned in a sudden rush of tears.

She took a quick step after Robert, but checked the impulse. Not then — and not by her alone — could that deadly hurt be healed. Nay, more, Robert must never suspect that she knew of any hurt. She stood and watched him through her tears as he went away across the lowlying shore fields to hide his broken heart under his own humble roof. She yearned to hurry after him and comfort him, but she knew that comfort was not what Robert needed now. Justice, and justice only, could pluck out the sting, which otherwise must rankle to the death.

Ralph and Malcolm were driving into the yard. Edith went over to them.

"Boys," she said resolutely, "I want to have a talk with you."

The Christmas dinner at the old homestead was a merry one. Mrs. James spread a feast that was fit for the halls of Lucullus. Laughter, jest, and repartee flew from lip to lip. Nobody appeared to notice that Robert ate little, said nothing, and sat with his form shrinking in his shabby "best" suit, his gray head bent even lower than usual, as if desirous of avoiding all observation. When the others spoke to him he answered deprecatingly, and shrank still further into himself.

Finally all had eaten all they could, and the remainder of the plum pudding was carried out. Robert gave a low sigh of relief. It was almost over. Soon he would be able to escape and hide himself and his shame away from the mirthful eyes of these men and women who had earned the right to laugh at the world in which their success gave them power and influence. He — he — only — was a failure.

He wondered impatiently why Mrs. James did not rise. Mrs. James merely leaned comfortably back in her chair, with the righteous expression of one who has done her duty by her fellow creatures' palates, and looked at Malcolm.

Malcolm rose in his place. Silence fell on the company; everybody looked suddenly alert and expectant, except Robert. He still sat with bowed head,

wrapped in his own bitterness.

“I have been told that I must lead off,” said Malcolm, “because I am supposed to possess the gift of gab. But, if I do, I am not going to use it for any rhetorical effect to-day. Simple, earnest words must express the deepest feelings of the heart in doing justice to its own. Brothers and sisters, we meet to-day under our own roof-tree, surrounded by the benedictions of the past years. Perhaps invisible guests are here — the spirits of those who founded this home and whose work on earth has long been finished. It is not amiss to hope that this is so and our family circle made indeed complete. To each one of us who are here in visible bodily presence some measure of success has fallen; but only one of us has been supremely successful in the only things that really count — the things that count for eternity as well as time — sympathy and unselfishness and self-sacrifice.

“I shall tell you my own story for the benefit of those who have not heard it. When I was a lad of sixteen I started to work out my own education. Some of you will remember that old Mr. Blair of Avonlea offered me a place in his store for the summer, at wages which would go far towards paying my expenses at the country academy the next winter. I went to work, eager and hopeful. All summer I tried to do my faithful best for my employer. In September the blow fell. A sum of money was missing from Mr. Blair’s till. I was suspected and discharged in disgrace. All my neighbors believed me guilty; even some of my own family looked upon me with suspicion — nor could I blame them, for the circumstantial evidence was strongly against me.”

Ralph and James looked ashamed; Edith and Margaret, who had not been born at the time referred to, lifted their faces innocently. Robert did not move or glance up. He hardly seemed to be listening.

“I was crushed in an agony of shame and despair,” continued Malcolm. “I believed my career was ruined. I was bent on casting all my ambitions behind me, and going west to some place where nobody knew me or my disgrace. But there was one person who believed in my innocence, who said to me, ‘You shall not give up — you shall not behave as if you were guilty. You are innocent, and in time your innocence will be proved.

Meanwhile show yourself a man. You have nearly enough to pay your way next winter at the Academy. I have a little I can give to help you out. Don't give in — never give in when you have done no wrong.'

"I listened and took his advice. I went to the Academy. My story was there as soon as I was, and I found myself sneered at and shunned. Many a time I would have given up in despair, had it not been for the encouragement of my counselor. He furnished the backbone for me. I was determined that his belief in me should be justified. I studied hard and came out at the head of my class. Then there seemed to be no chance of my earning any more money that summer. But a farmer at Newbridge, who cared nothing about the character of his help, if he could get the work out of them, offered to hire me. The prospect was distasteful but, urged by the man who believed in me, I took the place and endured the hardships. Another winter of lonely work passed at the Academy. I won the Farrell Scholarship the last year it was offered, and that meant an Arts course for me. I went to Redmond College. My story was not openly known there, but something of it got abroad, enough to taint my life there also with its suspicion. But the year I graduated, Mr. Blair's nephew, who, as you know, was the real culprit, confessed his guilt, and I was cleared before the world. Since then my career has been what is called a brilliant one. But" — Malcolm turned and laid his hand on Robert's thin shoulder—"all of my success I owe to my brother Robert. It is his success — not mine — and here to-day, since we have agreed to say what is too often left to be said over a coffin lid, I thank him for all he did for me, and tell him that there is nothing I am more proud of and thankful for than such a brother."

Robert had looked up at last, amazed, bewildered, incredulous. His face crimsoned as Malcolm sat down. But now Ralph was getting up.

"I am no orator as Malcolm is," he quoted gayly, "but I've got a story to tell, too, which only one of you knows. Forty years ago, when I started in life as a business man, money wasn't so plentiful with me as it may be to-day. And I needed it badly. A chance came my way to make a pile of it. It wasn't a clean chance. It was a dirty chance. It looked square on the surface; but, underneath, it meant trickery and roguery. I hadn't enough perception to see that, though — I was fool enough to think it was all

right. I told Robert what I meant to do. And Robert saw clear through the outward sham to the real, hideous thing underneath. He showed me what it meant and he gave me a preachment about a few Monroe Traditions of truth and honor. I saw what I had been about to do as he saw it — as all good men and true must see it. And I vowed then and there that I'd never go into anything that I wasn't sure was fair and square and clean through and through. I've kept that vow. I am a rich man, and not a dollar of my money is 'tainted' money. But I didn't make it. Robert really made every cent of my money. If it hadn't been for him I'd have been a poor man to-day, or behind prison bars, as are the other men who went into that deal when I backed out. I've got a son here. I hope he'll be as clever as his Uncle Malcolm; but I hope, still more earnestly, that he'll be as good and honorable a man as his Uncle Robert."

By this time Robert's head was bent again, and his face buried in his hands.

"My turn next," said James. "I haven't much to say — only this. After mother died I took typhoid fever. Here I was with no one to wait on me. Robert came and nursed me. He was the most faithful, tender, gentle nurse ever a man had. The doctor said Robert saved my life. I don't suppose any of the rest of us here can say we have saved a life."

Edith wiped away her tears and sprang up impulsively.

"Years ago," she said, "there was a poor, ambitious girl who had a voice. She wanted a musical education and her only apparent chance of obtaining it was to get a teacher's certificate and earn money enough to have her voice trained. She studied hard, but her brains, in mathematics at least, weren't as good as her voice, and the time was short. She failed. She was lost in disappointment and despair, for that was the last year in which it was possible to obtain a teacher's certificate without attending Queen's Academy, and she could not afford that. Then her oldest brother came to her and told her he could spare enough money to send her to the conservatory of music in Halifax for a year. He made her take it. She never knew till long afterwards that he had sold the beautiful horse which he loved like a human creature, to get the money. She went to the Halifax

conservatory. She won a musical scholarship. She has had a happy life and a successful career. And she owes it all to her brother Robert—”

But Edith could go no further. Her voice failed her and she sat down in tears. Margaret did not try to stand up.

“I was only five when my mother died,” she sobbed. “Robert was both father and mother to me. Never had child or girl so wise and loving a guardian as he was to me. I have never forgotten the lessons he taught me. Whatever there is of good in my life or character I owe to him. I was often headstrong and willful, but he never lost patience with me. I owe everything to Robert.”

Suddenly the little teacher rose with wet eyes and crimson cheeks.

“I have something to say, too,” she said resolutely. “You have spoken for yourselves. I speak for the people of White Sands. There is a man in this settlement whom everybody loves. I shall tell you some of the things he has done.”

“Last fall, in an October storm, the harbor lighthouse flew a flag of distress. Only one man was brave enough to face the danger of sailing to the lighthouse to find out what the trouble was. That was Robert Monroe. He found the keeper alone with a broken leg; and he sailed back and made — yes, MADE the unwilling and terrified doctor go with him to the lighthouse. I saw him when he told the doctor he must go; and I tell you that no man living could have set his will against Robert Monroe’s at that moment.

“Four years ago old Sarah Cooper was to be taken to the poorhouse. She was brokenhearted. One man took the poor, bedridden, fretful old creature into his home, paid for medical attendance, and waited on her himself, when his housekeeper couldn’t endure her tantrums and temper. Sarah Cooper died two years afterwards, and her latest breath was a benediction on Robert Monroe — the best man God ever made.

“Eight years ago Jack Blewitt wanted a place. Nobody would hire him, because his father was in the penitentiary, and some people thought Jack

ought to be there, too. Robert Monroe hired him — and helped him, and kept him straight, and got him started right — and Jack Blewitt is a hardworking, respected young man to-day, with every prospect of a useful and honorable life. There is hardly a man, woman, or child in White Sands who doesn't owe something to Robert Monroe!"

As Kathleen Bell sat down, Malcolm sprang up and held out his hands.

"Every one of us stand up and sing Auld Lang Syne," he cried.

Everybody stood up and joined hands, but one did not sing. Robert Monroe stood erect, with a great radiance on his face and in his eyes. His reproach had been taken away; he was crowned among his kindred with the beauty and blessing of sacred yesterdays.

When the singing ceased Malcolm's stern-faced son reached over and shook Robert's hands.

"Uncle Rob," he said heartily, "I hope that when I'm sixty I'll be as successful a man as you."

"I guess," said Aunt Isabel, aside to the little school teacher, as she wiped the tears from her keen old eyes, "that there's a kind of failure that's the best success."

THE RETURN OF HESTER

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Just at dusk, that evening, I had gone upstairs and put on my muslin gown. I had been busy all day attending to the strawberry preserving — for Mary Sloane could not be trusted with that — and I was a little tired, and thought it was hardly worth while to change my dress, especially since there was nobody to see or care, since Hester was gone. Mary Sloane did not count.

But I did it because Hester would have cared if she had been here. She always liked to see me neat and dainty. So, although I was tired and sick at heart, I put on my pale blue muslin and dressed my hair.

At first I did my hair up in a way I had always liked; but had seldom worn, because Hester had disapproved of it. It became me; but I suddenly felt as if it were disloyal to her, so I took the puffs down again and arranged my hair in the plain, old-fashioned way she had liked. My hair, though it had a good many gray threads in it, was thick and long and brown still; but that did not matter — nothing mattered since Hester was dead and I had sent Hugh Blair away for the second time.

The Newbridge people all wondered why I had not put on mourning for Hester. I did not tell them it was because Hester had asked me not to. Hester had never approved of mourning; she said that if the heart did not mourn crape would not mend matters; and if it did there was no need of the external trappings of woe. She told me calmly, the night before she died, to go on wearing my pretty dresses just as I had always worn them, and to make no difference in my outward life because of her going.

“I know there will be a difference in your inward life,” she said wistfully.

And oh, there was! But sometimes I wondered uneasily, feeling almost conscience-stricken, whether it were wholly because Hester had left me — whether it were not partly because, for a second time, I had shut the door of my heart in the face of love at her bidding.

When I had dressed I went downstairs to the front door, and sat on the sandstone steps under the arch of the Virginia creeper. I was all alone, for Mary Sloane had gone to Avonlea.

It was a beautiful night; the full moon was just rising over the wooded hills, and her light fell through the poplars into the garden before me. Through an open corner on the western side I saw the sky all silvery blue in the afterlight. The garden was very beautiful just then, for it was the time of the roses, and ours were all out — so many of them — great pink, and red, and white, and yellow roses.

Hester had loved roses and could never have enough of them. Her favorite bush was growing by the steps, all gloried over with blossoms — white, with pale pink hearts. I gathered a cluster and pinned it loosely on my breast. But my eyes filled as I did so — I felt so very, very desolate.

I was all alone, and it was bitter. The roses, much as I loved them, could not give me sufficient companionship. I wanted the clasp of a human hand, and the love-light in human eyes. And then I fell to thinking of Hugh, though I tried not to.

I had always lived alone with Hester. I did not remember our parents, who had died in my babyhood. Hester was fifteen years older than I, and she had always seemed more like a mother than a sister. She had been very good to me and had never denied me anything I wanted, save the one thing that mattered.

I was twenty-five before I ever had a lover. This was not, I think, because I was more unattractive than other women. The Merediths had always been the “big” family of Newbridge. The rest of the people looked up to us, because we were the granddaughters of old Squire Meredith. The Newbridge young men would have thought it no use to try to woo a Meredith.

I had not a great deal of family pride, as perhaps I should be ashamed to confess. I found our exalted position very lonely, and cared more for the simple joys of friendship and companionship which other girls had. But Hester possessed it in a double measure; she never allowed me to associate on a level of equality with the young people of Newbridge. We must be very nice and kind and affable to them — noblesse oblige, as it were — but we must never forget that we were Merediths.

When I was twenty-five, Hugh Blair came to Newbridge, having bought a farm near the village. He was a stranger, from Lower Carmody, and so was not imbued with any preconceptions of Meredith superiority. In his eyes I was just a girl like others — a girl to be wooed and won by any man of clean life and honest heart. I met him at a little Sunday-School picnic over at Avonlea, which I attended because of my class. I thought him very

handsome and manly. He talked to me a great deal, and at last he drove me home. The next Sunday evening he walked up from church with me.

Hester was away, or, of course, this would never have happened. She had gone for a month's visit to distant friends.

In that month I lived a lifetime. Hugh Blair courted me as the other girls in Newbridge were courted. He took me out driving and came to see me in the evenings, which we spent for the most part in the garden. I did not like the stately gloom and formality of our old Meredith parlor, and Hugh never seemed to feel at ease there. His broad shoulders and hearty laughter were oddly out of place among our faded, old-maidish furnishings.

Mary Sloane was very much pleased at Hugh's visit. She had always resented the fact that I had never had a "beau," seeming to think it reflected some slight or disparagement upon me. She did all she could to encourage him.

But when Hester returned and found out about Hugh she was very angry — and grieved, which hurt me far more. She told me that I had forgotten myself and that Hugh's visits must cease.

I had never been afraid of Hester before, but I was afraid of her then. I yielded. Perhaps it was very weak of me, but then I was always weak. I think that was why Hugh's strength had appealed so to me. I needed love and protection. Hester, strong and self-sufficient, had never felt such a need. She could not understand. Oh, how contemptuous she was.

I told Hugh timidly that Hester did not approve of our friendship and that it must end. He took it quietly enough, and went away. I thought he did not care much, and the thought selfishly made my own heartache worse. I was very unhappy for a long time, but I tried not to let Hester see it, and I don't think she did. She was not very discerning in some things.

After a time I got over it; that is, the heartache ceased to ache all the time. But things were never quite the same again. Life always seemed rather dreary and empty, in spite of Hester and my roses and my Sunday-School.

I supposed that Hugh Blair would find him a wife elsewhere, but he did not. The years went by and we never met, although I saw him often at church. At such times Hester always watched me very closely, but there was no need of her to do so. Hugh made no attempt to meet me, or speak with me, and I would not have permitted it if he had. But my heart always yearned after him. I was selfishly glad he had not married, because if he had I could not have thought and dreamed of him — it would have been wrong. Perhaps, as it was, it was foolish; but it seemed to me that I must have something, if only foolish dreams, to fill my life.

At first there was only pain in the thought of him, but afterwards a faint, misty little pleasure crept in, like a mirage from a land of lost delight.

Ten years slipped away thus. And then Hester died. Her illness was sudden and short; but, before she died, she asked me to promise that I would never marry Hugh Blair.

She had not mentioned his name for years. I thought she had forgotten all about him.

“Oh, dear sister, is there any need of such a promise?” I asked, weeping. “Hugh Blair does not want to marry me now. He never will again.”

“He has never married — he has not forgotten you,” she said fiercely. “I could not rest in my grave if I thought you would disgrace your family by marrying beneath you. Promise me, Margaret.”

I promised. I would have promised anything in my power to make her dying pillow easier. Besides, what did it matter? I was sure that Hugh would never think of me again.

She smiled when she heard me, and pressed my hand.

“Good little sister — that is right. You were always a good girl, Margaret — good and obedient, though a little sentimental and foolish in some ways. You are like our mother — she was always weak and loving. I took after the Merediths.”

She did, indeed. Even in her coffin her dark, handsome features preserved their expression of pride and determination. Somehow, that last look of her dead face remained in my memory, blotting out the real affection and gentleness which her living face had almost always shown me. This distressed me, but I could not help it. I wished to think of her as kind and loving, but I could remember only the pride and coldness with which she had crushed out my newborn happiness. Yet I felt no anger or resentment towards her for what she had done. I knew she had meant it for the best — my best. It was only that she was mistaken.

And then, a month after she had died, Hugh Blair came to me and asked me to be his wife. He said he had always loved me, and could never love any other woman.

All my old love for him reawakened. I wanted to say yes — to feel his strong arms about me, and the warmth of his love enfolding and guarding me. In my weakness I yearned for his strength.

But there was my promise to Hester — that promise given by her deathbed. I could not break it, and I told him so. It was the hardest thing I had ever done.

He did not go away quietly this time. He pleaded and reasoned and reproached. Every word of his hurt me like a knife-thrust. But I could not break my promise to the dead. If Hester had been living I would have braved her wrath and her estrangement and gone to him. But she was dead and I could not do it.

Finally he went away in grief and anger. That was three weeks ago — and now I sat alone in the moonlit rose-garden and wept for him. But after a time my tears dried and a very strange feeling came over me. I felt calm and happy, as if some wonderful love and tenderness were very near me.

And now comes the strange part of my story — the part which will not, I suppose, be believed. If it were not for one thing I think I should hardly believe it myself. I should feel tempted to think I had dreamed it. But because of that one thing I know it was real. The night was very calm and still. Not a breath of wind stirred. The moonshine was the brightest I had

ever seen. In the middle of the garden, where the shadow of the poplars did not fall, it was almost as bright as day. One could have read fine print. There was still a little rose glow in the west, and over the airy boughs of the tall poplars one or two large, bright stars were shining. The air was sweet with a hush of dreams, and the world was so lovely that I held my breath over its beauty.

Then, all at once, down at the far end of the garden, I saw a woman walking. I thought at first that it must be Mary Sloane; but, as she crossed a moonlit path, I saw it was not our old servant's stout, homely figure. This woman was tall and erect.

Although no suspicion of the truth came to me, something about her reminded me of Hester. Even so had Hester liked to wander about the garden in the twilight. I had seen her thus a thousand times.

I wondered who the woman could be. Some neighbor, of course. But what a strange way for her to come! She walked up the garden slowly in the poplar shade. Now and then she stooped, as if to caress a flower, but she plucked none. Half way up she out in to the moonlight and walked across the plot of grass in the center of the garden. My heart gave a great throb and I stood up. She was quite near to me now — and I saw that it was Hester.

I can hardly say just what my feelings were at this moment. I know that I was not surprised. I was frightened and yet I was not frightened. Something in me shrank back in a sickening terror; but I, the real I, was not frightened. I knew that this was my sister, and that there could be no reason why I should be frightened of her, because she loved me still, as she had always done. Further than this I was not conscious of any coherent thought, either of wonder or attempt at reasoning.

Hester paused when she came to within a few steps of me. In the moonlight I saw her face quite plainly. It wore an expression I had never before seen on it — a humble, wistful, tender look. Often in life Hester had looked lovingly, even tenderly, upon me; but always, as it were, through a mask of pride and sternness. This was gone now, and I felt nearer to her than ever before. I knew suddenly that she understood me.

And then the half-conscious awe and terror some part of me had felt vanished, and I only realized that Hester was here, and that there was no terrible gulf of change between us.

Hester beckoned to me and said,

“Come.”

I stood up and followed her out of the garden. We walked side by side down our lane, under the willows and out to the road, which lay long and still in that bright, calm moonshine. I felt as if I were in a dream, moving at the bidding of a will not my own, which I could not have disputed even if I had wished to do so. But I did not wish it; I had only the feeling of a strange, boundless content.

We went down the road between the growths of young fir that bordered it. I smelled their balsam as we passed, and noticed how clearly and darkly their pointed tops came out against the sky. I heard the tread of my own feet on little twigs and plants in our way, and the trail of my dress over the grass; but Hester moved noiselessly.

Then we went through the Avenue — that stretch of road under the apple trees that Anne Shirley, over at Avonlea, calls “The White Way of Delight.” It was almost dark here; and yet I could see Hester’s face just as plainly as if the moon were shining on it; and whenever I looked at her she was always looking at me with that strangely gentle smile on her lips.

Just as we passed out of the Avenue, James Trent overtook us, driving. It seems to me that our feelings at a given moment are seldom what we would expect them to be. I simply felt annoyed that James Trent, the most notorious gossip in Newbridge, should have seen me walking with Hester. In a flash I anticipated all the annoyance of it; he would talk of the matter far and wide.

But James Trent merely nodded and called out,

“Howdy, Miss Margaret. Taking a moonlight stroll by yourself? Lovely night, ain’t it?”

Just then his horse suddenly swerved, as if startled, and broke into a gallop. They whirled around the curve of the road in an instant. I felt relieved, but puzzled. JAMES TRENT HAD NOT SEEN HESTER.

Down over the hill was Hugh Blair's place. When we came to it, Hester turned in at the gate. Then, for the first time, I understood why she had come back, and a blinding flash of joy broke over my soul. I stopped and looked at her. Her deep eyes gazed into mine, but she did not speak.

We went on. Hugh's house lay before us in the moonlight, grown over by a tangle of vines. His garden was on our right, a quaint spot, full of old-fashioned flowers growing in a sort of disorderly sweetness. I trod on a bed of mint, and the spice of it floated up to me like the incense of some strange, sacred, solemn ceremonial. I felt unspeakably happy and blessed.

When we came to the door Hester said,

"Knock, Margaret."

I rapped gently. In a moment, Hugh opened it. Then that happened by which, in after days, I was to know that this strange thing was no dream or fancy of mine. Hugh looked not at me, but past me.

"Hester!" he exclaimed, with human fear and horror in his voice.

He leaned against the door-post, the big, strong fellow, trembling from head to foot.

"I have learned," said Hester, "that nothing matters in all God's universe, except love. There is no pride where I have been, and no false ideals."

Hugh and I looked into each other's eyes, wondering, and then we knew that we were alone.

THE LITTLE BROWN BOOK OF MISS EMILY

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The first summer Mr. Irving and Miss Lavendar — Diana and I could never call her anything else, even after she was married — were at Echo Lodge after their marriage, both Diana and I spent a great deal of time with them. We became acquainted with many of the Grafton people whom we had not known before, and among others, the family of Mr. Mack Leith. We often went up to the Leiths in the evening to play croquet. Millie and Margaret Leith were very nice girls, and the boys were nice, too. Indeed, we liked every one in the family, except poor old Miss Emily Leith. We tried hard enough to like her, because she seemed to like Diana and me very much, and always wanted to sit with us and talk to us, when we would much rather have been somewhere else. We often felt a good deal of impatience at these times, but I am very glad to think now that we never showed it.

In a way, we felt sorry for Miss Emily. She was Mr. Leith's old-maid sister and she was not of much importance in the household. But, though we felt sorry for her, we couldn't like her. She really was fussy and meddlesome; she liked to poke a finger into every one's pie, and she was not at all tactful. Then, too, she had a sarcastic tongue, and seemed to feel bitter towards all the young folks and their love affairs. Diana and I thought this was because she had never had a lover of her own.

Somehow, it seemed impossible to think of lovers in connection with Miss Emily. She was short and stout and pudgy, with a face so round and fat and red that it seemed quite featureless; and her hair was scanty and gray. She walked with a waddle, just like Mrs. Rachel Lynde, and she was always rather short of breath. It was hard to believe Miss Emily had ever been young; yet old Mr. Murray, who lived next door to the Leiths, not only expected us to believe it, but assured us that she had been very pretty.

“THAT, at least, is impossible,” said Diana to me.

And then, one day, Miss Emily died. I’m afraid no one was very sorry. It seems to me a most dreadful thing to go out of the world and leave not one person behind to be sorry because you have gone. Miss Emily was dead and buried before Diana and I heard of it at all. The first I knew of it was when I came home from Orchard Slope one day and found a queer, shabby little black horsehair trunk, all studded with brass nails, on the floor of my room at Green Gables. Marilla told me that Jack Leith had brought it over, and said that it had belonged to Miss Emily and that, when she was dying, she asked them to send it to me.

“But what is in it? And what am I to do with it?” I asked in bewilderment.

“There was nothing said about what you were to do with it. Jack said they didn’t know what was in it, and hadn’t looked into it, seeing that it was your property. It seems a rather queer proceeding — but you’re always getting mixed up in queer proceedings, Anne. As for what is in it, the easiest way to find out, I reckon, is to open it and see. The key is tied to it. Jack said Miss Emily said she wanted you to have it because she loved you and saw her lost youth in you. I guess she was a bit delirious at the last and wandered a good deal. She said she wanted you ‘to understand her.’”

I ran over to Orchard Slope and asked Diana to come over and examine the trunk with me. I hadn’t received any instructions about keeping its contents secret and I knew Miss Emily wouldn’t mind Diana knowing about them, whatever they were.

It was a cool, gray afternoon and we got back to Green Gables just as the rain was beginning to fall. When we went up to my room the wind was rising and whistling through the boughs of the big old Snow Queen outside of my window. Diana was excited, and, I really believe, a little bit frightened.

We opened the old trunk. It was very small, and there was nothing in it but a big cardboard box. The box was tied up and the knots sealed with wax. We lifted it out and untied it. I touched Diana’s fingers as we did it, and both of us exclaimed at once, “How cold your hand is!”

In the box was a quaint, pretty, old-fashioned gown, not at all faded, made of blue muslin, with a little darker blue flower in it. Under it we found a sash, a yellowed feather fan, and an envelope full of withered flowers. At the bottom of the box was a little brown book.

It was small and thin, like a girl's exercise book, with leaves that had once been blue and pink, but were now quite faded, and stained in places. On the fly leaf was written, in a very delicate hand, "Emily Margaret Leith," and the same writing covered the first few pages of the book. The rest were not written on at all. We sat there on the floor, Diana and I, and read the little book together, while the rain thudded against the window panes.

June 19, 18 —

I came to-day to spend a while with Aunt Margaret in Charlottetown. It is so pretty here, where she lives — and ever so much nicer than on the farm at home. I have no cows to milk here or pigs to feed. Aunt Margaret has given me such a lovely blue muslin dress, and I am to have it made to wear at a garden party out at Brighton next week. I never had a muslin dress before — nothing but ugly prints and dark woolens. I wish we were rich, like Aunt Margaret. Aunt Margaret laughed when I said this, and declared she would give all her wealth for my youth and beauty and lightheartedness. I am only eighteen and I know I am very merry but I wonder if I am really pretty. It seems to me that I am when I look in Aunt Margaret's beautiful mirrors. They make me look very different from the old cracked one in my room at home which always twisted my face and turned me green. But Aunt Margaret spoiled her compliment by telling me I look exactly as she did at my age. If I thought I'd ever look as Aunt Margaret does now, I don't know what I'd do. She is so fat and red.

June 29.

Last week I went to the garden party and I met a young man called Paul Osborne. He is a young artist from Montreal who is boarding over at Heppoch. He is the handsomest man I have ever seen — very tall and slender, with dreamy, dark eyes and a pale, clever face. I have not been able to keep from thinking about him ever since, and to-day he came over here and asked if he could paint me. I felt very much flattered and so

pleased when Aunt Margaret gave him permission. He says he wants to paint me as “Spring,” standing under the poplars where a fine rain of sunshine falls through. I am to wear my blue muslin gown and a wreath of flowers on my hair. He says I have such beautiful hair. He has never seen any of such a real pale gold. Somehow it seems even prettier than ever to me since he praised it.

I had a letter from home to-day. Ma says the blue hen stole her nest and came off with fourteen chickens, and that pa has sold the little spotted calf. Somehow those things don’t interest me like they once did.

July 9.

The picture is coming on very well, Mr. Osborne says. I know he is making me look far too pretty in it, although he persists in saying he can’t do me justice. He is going to send it to some great exhibition when finished, but he says he will make a little water-color copy for me.

He comes every day to paint and we talk a great deal and he reads me lovely things out of his books. I don’t understand them all, but I try to, and he explains them so nicely and is so patient with my stupidity. And he says any one with my eyes and hair and coloring does not need to be clever. He says I have the sweetest, merriest laugh in the world. But I will not write down all the compliments he has paid me. I dare say he does not mean them at all.

In the evening we stroll among the spruces or sit on the bench under the acacia tree. Sometimes we don’t talk at all, but I never find the time long. Indeed, the minutes just seem to fly — and then the moon will come up, round and red, over the harbor and Mr. Osborne will sigh and say he supposes it is time for him to go.

July 24.

I am so happy. I am frightened at my happiness. Oh, I didn’t think life could ever be so beautiful for me as it is!

Paul loves me! He told me so tonight as we walked by the harbor and watched the sunset, and he asked me to be his wife. I have cared for him ever since I met him, but I am afraid I am not clever and well-educated enough for a wife for Paul. Because, of course, I'm only an ignorant little country girl and have lived all my life on a farm. Why, my hands are quite rough yet from the work I've done. But Paul just laughed when I said so, and took my hands and kissed them. Then he looked into my eyes and laughed again, because I couldn't hide from him how much I loved him.

We are to be married next spring and Paul says he will take me to Europe. That will be very nice, but nothing matters so long as I am with him.

Paul's people are very wealthy and his mother and sisters are very fashionable. I am frightened of them, but I did not tell Paul so because I think it would hurt him and oh, I wouldn't do that for the world.

There is nothing I wouldn't suffer if it would do him any good. I never thought any one could feel so. I used to think if I loved anybody I would want him to do everything for me and wait on me as if I were a princess. But that is not the way at all. Love makes you very humble and you want to do everything yourself for the one you love.

August 10.

Paul went home to-day. Oh, it is so terrible! I don't know how I can bear to live even for a little while without him. But this is silly of me, because I know he has to go and he will write often and come to me often. But, still, it is so lonesome. I didn't cry when he left me because I wanted him to remember me smiling in the way he liked best, but I have been crying ever since and I can't stop, no matter how hard I try. We have had such a beautiful fortnight. Every day seemed dearer and happier than the last, and now it is ended and I feel as if it could never be the same again. Oh, I am very foolish — but I love him so dearly and if I were to lose his love I know I would die.

August 17.

I think my heart is dead. But no, it can't be, for it aches too much.

Paul's mother came here to see me to-day. She was not angry or disagreeable. I wouldn't have been so frightened of her if she had been. As it was, I felt that I couldn't say a word. She is very beautiful and stately and wonderful, with a low, cold voice and proud, dark eyes. Her face is like Paul's but without the loveableness of his.

She talked to me for a long time and she said terrible things — terrible, because I knew they were all true. I seemed to see everything through her eyes. She said that Paul was infatuated with my youth and beauty but that it would not last and what else I to give him? She said Paul must marry a woman of his own class, who could do honor to his fame and position. She said that he was very talented and had a great career before him, but that if he married me it would ruin his life.

I saw it all, just as she explained it out, and I told her at last that I would not marry Paul, and she might tell him so. But she smiled and said I must tell him myself, because he would not believe any one else. I could have begged her to spare me that, but I knew it would be of no use. I do not think she has any pity or mercy for any one. Besides, what she said was quite true.

When she thanked me for being so REASONABLE I told her I was not doing it to please her, but for Paul's sake, because I would not spoil his life, and that I would always hate her. She smiled again and went away.

Oh, how can I bear it? I did not know any one could suffer like this!

August 18.

I have done it. I wrote to Paul to-day. I knew I must tell him by letter, because I could never make him believe it face to face. I was afraid I could not even do it by letter. I suppose a clever woman easily could, but I am so stupid. I wrote a great many letters and tore them up, because I felt sure they wouldn't convince Paul. At last I got one that I thought would do. I knew I must make it seem as if I were very frivolous and heartless, or he would never believe. I spelled some words wrong and put in some mistakes of grammar on purpose. I told him I had just been flirting with him, and that I had another fellow at home I liked better. I said FELLOW

because I knew it would disgust him. I said that it was only because he was rich that I was tempted to marry him.

I thought would my heart would break while I was writing those dreadful falsehoods. But it was for his sake, because I must not spoil his life. His mother told me I would be a millstone around his neck. I love Paul so much that I would do anything rather than be that. It would be easy to die for him, but I don't see how I can go on living. I think my letter will convince Paul.

I suppose it convinced Paul, because there was no further entry in the little brown book. When we had finished it the tears were running down both our faces.

"Oh, poor, dear Miss Emily," sobbed Diana. "I'm so sorry I ever thought her funny and meddlesome."

"She was good and strong and brave," I said. "I could never have been as unselfish as she was."

I thought of Whittier's lines,

"The outward, wayward life we see
The hidden springs we may not know."

At the back of the little brown book we found a faded water-color sketch of a young girl — such a slim, pretty little thing, with big blue eyes and lovely, long, rippling golden hair. Paul Osborne's name was written in faded ink across the corner.

We put everything back in the box. Then we sat for a long time by my window in silence and thought of many things, until the rainy twilight came down and blotted out the world.

SARA'S WA Y

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The warm June sunshine was coming down through the trees, white with the virginal bloom of apple-blossoms, and through the shining panes, making a tremulous mosaic upon Mrs. Eben Andrews' spotless kitchen floor. Through the open door, a wind, fragrant from long wanderings over orchards and clover meadows, drifted in, and, from the window, Mrs. Eben and her guest could look down over a long, misty valley sloping to a sparkling sea.

Mrs. Jonas Andrews was spending the afternoon with her sister-in-law. She was a big, sonsy woman, with full-blown peony cheeks and large, dreamy, brown eyes. When she had been a slim, pink-and-white girl those eyes had been very romantic. Now they were so out of keeping with the rest of her appearance as to be ludicrous.

Mrs. Eben, sitting at the other end of the small tea-table that was drawn up against the window, was a thin little woman, with a very sharp nose and light, faded blue eyes. She looked like a woman whose opinions were always very decided and warranted to wear.

"How does Sara like teaching at Newbridge?" asked Mrs. Jonas, helping herself a second time to Mrs. Eben's matchless black fruit cake, and thereby bestowing a subtle compliment which Mrs. Eben did not fail to appreciate.

"Well, I guess she likes it pretty well — better than down at White Sands, anyway," answered Mrs. Eben. "Yes, I may say it suits her. Of course it's a long walk there and back. I think it would have been wiser for her to keep on boarding at Morrison's, as she did all winter, but Sara is bound to be home all she can. And I must say the walk seems to agree with her."

"I was down to see Jonas' aunt at Newbridge last night," said Mrs. Jonas, "and she said she'd heard that Sara had made up her mind to take Lige Baxter at last, and that they were to be married in the fall. She asked me if it was true. I said I didn't know, but I hoped to mercy it was. Now, is it, Louisa?"

"Not a word of it," said Mrs. Eben sorrowfully. "Sara hasn't any more notion of taking Lige than ever she had. I'm sure it's not MY fault. I've

talked and argued till I'm tired. I declare to you, Amelia, I am terribly disappointed. I'd set my heart on Sara's marrying Lige — and now to think she won't!"

"She is a very foolish girl," said Mrs. Jonas, judicially. "If Lige Baxter isn't good enough for her, who is?"

"And he's so well off," said Mrs. Eben, "and does such a good business, and is well spoken of by every one. And that lovely new house of his at Newbridge, with bay windows and hardwood floors! I've dreamed and dreamed of seeing Sara there as mistress."

"Maybe you'll see her there yet," said Mrs. Jonas, who always took a hopeful view of everything, even of Sara's contrariness. But she felt discouraged, too. Well, she had done her best.

If Lige Baxter's broth was spoiled it was not for lack of cooks. Every Andrews in Avonlea had been trying for two years to bring about a match between him and Sara, and Mrs. Jonas had borne her part valiantly.

Mrs. Eben's despondent reply was cut short by the appearance of Sara herself. The girl stood for a moment in the doorway and looked with a faintly amused air at her aunts. She knew quite well that they had been discussing her, for Mrs. Jonas, who carried her conscience in her face, looked guilty, and Mrs. Eben had not been able wholly to banish her aggrieved expression.

Sara put away her books, kissed Mrs. Jonas' rosy cheek, and sat down at the table. Mrs. Eben brought her some fresh tea, some hot rolls, and a little jelly-pot of the apricot preserves Sara liked, and she cut some more fruit cake for her in moist plummy slices. She might be out of patience with Sara's "contrariness," but she spoiled and petted her for all that, for the girl was the very core of her childless heart.

Sara Andrews was not, strictly speaking, pretty; but there was that about her which made people look at her twice. She was very dark, with a rich, dusky sort of darkness, her deep eyes were velvety brown, and her lips and cheeks were crimson.

She ate her rolls and preserves with a healthy appetite, sharpened by her long walk from Newbridge, and told amusing little stories of her day's work that made the two older women shake with laughter, and exchange shy glances of pride over her cleverness.

When tea was over she poured the remaining contents of the cream jug into a saucer.

"I must feed my pussy," she said as she left the room.

"That girl beats me," said Mrs. Eben with a sigh of perplexity. "You know that black cat we've had for two years? Eben and I have always made a lot of him, but Sara seemed to have a dislike to him. Never a peaceful nap under the stove could he have when Sara was home — out he must go. Well, a little spell ago he got his leg broke accidentally and we thought he'd have to be killed. But Sara wouldn't hear of it. She got splints and set his leg just as knacky, and bandaged it up, and she has tended him like a sick baby ever since. He's just about well now, and he lives in clover, that cat does. It's just her way. There's them sick chickens she's been doctoring for a week, giving them pills and things!

"And she thinks more of that wretched-looking calf that got poisoned with paris green than of all the other stock on the place."

As the summer wore away, Mrs. Eben tried to reconcile herself to the destruction of her air castles. But she scolded Sara considerably.

"Sara, why don't you like Lige? I'm sure he is a model young man."

“I don’t like model young men,” answered Sara impatiently. “And I really think I hate Lige Baxter. He has always been held up to me as such a paragon. I’m tired of hearing about all his perfections. I know them all off by heart. He doesn’t drink, he doesn’t smoke, he doesn’t steal, he doesn’t tell fibs, he never loses his temper, he doesn’t swear, and he goes to church regularly. Such a faultless creature as that would certainly get on my nerves. No, no, you’ll have to pick out another mistress for your new house at the Bridge, Aunt Louisa.”

When the apple trees, that had been pink and white in June, were russet and bronze in October, Mrs. Eben had a quilting. The quilt was of the “Rising Star” pattern, which was considered in Avonlea to be very handsome. Mrs. Eben had intended it for part of Sara’s “setting out,” and, while she sewed the red-and-white diamonds together, she had regaled her fancy by imagining she saw it spread out on the spare-room bed of the house at Newbridge, with herself laying her bonnet and shawl on it when she went to see Sara. Those bright visions had faded with the apple blossoms, and Mrs. Eben hardly had the heart to finish the quilt at all.

The quilting came off on Saturday afternoon, when Sara could be home from school. All Mrs. Eben’s particular friends were ranged around the quilt, and tongues and fingers flew. Sara flitted about, helping her aunt with the supper preparations. She was in the room, getting the custard dishes out of the cupboard, when Mrs. George Pye arrived.

Mrs. George had a genius for being late. She was later than usual to-day, and she looked excited. Every woman around the “Rising Star” felt that Mrs. George had some news worth listening to, and there was an expectant silence while she pulled out her chair and settled herself at the quilt.

She was a tall, thin woman with a long pale face and liquid green eyes. As she looked around the circle she had the air of a cat daintily licking its chops over some titbit.

“I suppose,” she said, “that you have heard the news?”

She knew perfectly well that they had not. Every other woman at the frame stopped quilting. Mrs. Eben came to the door with a pan of puffy, smoking-hot soda biscuits in her hand. Sara stopped counting the custard dishes, and turned her ripely-colored face over her shoulder. Even the black cat, at her feet, ceased preening his fur. Mrs. George felt that the undivided attention of her audience was hers.

“Baxter Brothers have failed,” she said, her green eyes shooting out flashes of light. “Failed DISGRACEFULLY!”

She paused for a moment; but, since her hearers were as yet speechless from surprise, she went on.

“George came home from Newbridge, just before I left, with the news. You could have knocked me down with a feather. I should have thought that firm was as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar! But they’re ruined — absolutely ruined. Louisa, dear, can you find me a good needle?”

“Louisa, dear,” had set her biscuits down with a sharp thud, reckless of results. A sharp, metallic tinkle sounded at the closet where Sara had struck the edge of her tray against a shelf. The sound seemed to loosen the paralyzed tongues, and everybody began talking and exclaiming at once. Clear and shrill above the confusion rose Mrs. George Pye’s voice.

“Yes, indeed, you may well say so. It IS disgraceful. And to think how everybody trusted them! George will lose considerable by the crash, and so will a good many folks. Everything will have to go — Peter Baxter’s farm and Lige’s grand new house. Mrs. Peter won’t carry her head so high after this, I’ll be bound. George saw Lige at the Bridge, and he said he looked dreadful cut up and ashamed.”

“Who, or what’s to blame for the failure?” asked Mrs. Rachel Lynde sharply. She did not like Mrs. George Pye.

“There are a dozen different stories on the go,” was the reply. “As far as George could make out, Peter Baxter has been speculating with other folks’ money, and this is the result. Everybody always suspected that Peter

was crooked; but you'd have thought that Lige would have kept him straight. HE had always such a reputation for saintliness."

"I don't suppose Lige knew anything about it," said Mrs. Rachel indignantly.

"Well, he'd ought to, then. If he isn't a knave he's a fool," said Mrs. Harmon Andrews, who had formerly been among his warmest partisans. "He should have kept watch on Peter and found out how the business was being run. Well, Sara, you were the level-headest of us all — I'll admit that now. A nice mess it would be if you were married or engaged to Lige, and him left without a cent — even if he can clear his character!"

"There is a good deal of talk about Peter, and swindling, and a lawsuit," said Mrs. George Pye, quilting industriously. "Most of the Newbridge folks think it's all Peter's fault, and that Lige isn't to blame. But you can't tell. I dare say Lige is as deep in the mire as Peter. He was always a little too good to be wholesome, I thought."

There was a clink of glass at the cupboard, as Sara set the tray down. She came forward and stood behind Mrs. Rachel Lynde's chair, resting her shapely hands on that lady's broad shoulders. Her face was very pale, but her flashing eyes sought and faced defiantly Mrs. George Pye's cat-like orbs. Her voice quivered with passion and contempt.

"You'll all have a fling at Lige Baxter, now that he's down. You couldn't say enough in his praise, once. I'll not stand by and hear it hinted that Lige Baxter is a swindler. You all know perfectly well that Lige is as honest as the day, if he IS so unfortunate as to have an unprincipled brother. You, Mrs. Pye, know it better than any one, yet you come here and run him down the minute he's in trouble. If there's another word said here against Lige Baxter I'll leave the room and the house till you're gone, every one of you."

She flashed a glance around the quilt that cowed the gossips. Even Mrs. George Pye's eyes flickered and waned and quailed. Nothing more was said until Sara had picked up her glasses and marched from the room. Even then they dared not speak above a whisper. Mrs. Pye, alone, smarting

from snub, ventured to ejaculate, "Pity save us!" as Sara slammed the door.

For the next fortnight gossip and rumor held high carnival in Avonlea and Newbridge, and Mrs. Eben grew to dread the sight of a visitor.

"They're bound to talk about the Baxter failure and criticize Lige," she deplored to Mrs. Jonas. "And it riles Sara up so terrible. She used to declare that she hated Lige, and now she won't listen to a word against him. Not that I say any, myself. I'm sorry for him, and I believe he's done his best. But I can't stop other people from talking."

One evening Harmon Andrews came in with a fresh budget of news.

"The Baxter business is pretty near wound up at last," he said, as he lighted his pipe. "Peter has got his lawsuits settled and has hushed up the talk about swindling, somehow. Trust him for slipping out of a scrape clean and clever. He don't seem to worry any, but Lige looks like a walking skeleton. Some folks pity him, but I say he should have kept the run of things better and not have trusted everything to Peter. I hear he's going out West in the Spring, to take up land in Alberta and try his hand at farming. Best thing he can do, I guess. Folks hereabouts have had enough of the Baxter breed. Newbridge will be well rid of them."

Sara, who had been sitting in the dark corner by the stove, suddenly stood up, letting the black cat slip from her lap to the floor. Mrs. Eben glanced at her apprehensively, for she was afraid the girl was going to break out in a tirade against the complacent Harmon.

But Sara only walked fiercely out of the kitchen, with a sound as if she were struggling for breath. In the hall she snatched a scarf from the wall, flung open the front door, and rushed down the lane in the chill, pure air of the autumn twilight. Her heart was throbbing with the pity she always felt for bruised and baited creatures.

On and on she went heedlessly, intent only on walking away her pain, over gray, brooding fields and winding slopes, and along the skirts of ruinous, dusky pine woods, curtained with fine spun purple gloom. Her dress

brushed against the brittle grasses and sere ferns, and the moist night wind, loosed from wild places far away, blew her hair about her face.

At last she came to a little rustic gate, leading into a shadowy wood-lane. The gate was bound with willow withes, and, as Sara fumbled vainly at them with her chilled hands, a man's firm step came up behind her, and Lige Baxter's hand closed over her's.

"Oh, Lige!" she said, with something like a sob.

He opened the gate and drew her through. She left her hand in his, as they walked through the lane where lissome boughs of young saplings flicked against their heads, and the air was wildly sweet with the woodsy odors.

"It's a long while since I've seen you, Lige," Sara said at last.

Lige looked wistfully down at her through the gloom.

"Yes, it seems very long to me, Sara. But I didn't think you'd care to see me, after what you said last spring. And you know things have been going against me. People have said hard things. I've been unfortunate, Sara, and may be too easygoing, but I've been honest. Don't believe folks if they tell you I wasn't."

"Indeed, I never did — not for a minute!" fired Sara.

"I'm glad of that. I'm going away, later on. I felt bad enough when you refused to marry me, Sara; but it's well that you didn't. I'm man enough to be thankful my troubles don't fall on you."

Sara stopped and turned to him. Beyond them the lane opened into a field and a clear lake of crocus sky cast a dim light into the shadow where they stood. Above it was a new moon, like a gleaming silver scimitar. Sara saw it was over her left shoulder, and she saw Lige's face above her, tender and troubled.

"Lige," she said softly, "do you love me still?"

"You know I do," said Lige sadly.

That was all Sara wanted. With a quick movement she nestled into his arms, and laid her warm, tear-wet cheek against his cold one.

When the amazing rumor that Sara was going to marry Lige Baxter, and go out West with him, circulated through the Andrews clan, hands were lifted and heads were shaken. Mrs. Jonas puffed and panted up the hill to learn if it were true. She found Mrs. Eben stitching for dear life on an “Irish Chain” quilt, while Sara was sewing the diamonds on another “Rising Star” with a martyr-like expression on her face. Sara hated patchwork above everything else, but Mrs. Eben was mistress up to a certain point.

“You’ll have to make that quilt, Sara Andrews. If you’re going to live out on those prairies, you’ll need piles of quilts, and you shall have them if I sew my fingers to the bone. But you’ll have to help make them.”

And Sara had to.

When Mrs. Jonas came, Mrs. Eben sent Sara off to the postoffice to get her out of the way.

“I suppose it’s true, this time?” said Mrs. Jonas.

“Yes, indeed,” said Mrs. Eben briskly. “Sara is set on it. There is no use trying to move her — you know that — so I’ve just concluded to make the best of it. I’m no turncoat. Lige Baxter is Lige Baxter still, neither more nor less. I’ve always said he’s a fine young man, and I say so still. After all, he and Sara won’t be any poorer than Eben and I were when we started out.”

Mrs. Jonas heaved a sigh of relief.

“I’m real glad you take that view of it, Louisa. I’m not displeased, either, although Mrs. Harmon would take my head off if she heard me say so. I always liked Lige. But I must say I’m amazed, too, after the way Sara used to rail at him.”

“Well, we might have expected it,” said Mrs. Eben sagely. “It was always Sara’s way. When any creature got sick or unfortunate she seemed to take

it right into her heart. So you may say Lige Baxter's failure was a success after all."

THE SON OF HIS MOTHE R

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Thyra Carewe was waiting for Chester to come home. She sat by the west window of the kitchen, looking out into the gathering of the shadows with the expectant immovability that characterized her. She never twitched or fidgeted. Into whatever she did she put the whole force of her nature. If it was sitting still, she sat still.

“A stone image would be twitchedly beside Thyra,” said Mrs. Cynthia White, her neighbor across the lane. “It gets on my nerves, the way she sits at that window sometimes, with no more motion than a statue and her great eyes burning down the lane. When I read the commandment, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’ I declare I always think of Thyra. She worships that son of hers far ahead of her Creator. She’ll be punished for it yet.”

Mrs. White was watching Thyra now, knitting furiously, as she watched, in order to lose no time. Thyra’s hands were folded idly in her lap. She had not moved a muscle since she sat down. Mrs. White complained it gave her the weeps.

“It doesn’t seem natural to see a woman sit so still,” she said. “Sometimes the thought comes to me, ‘what if she’s had a stroke, like her old Uncle Horatio, and is sitting there stone dead!’”

The evening was cold and autumnal. There was a fiery red spot out at sea, where the sun had set, and, above it, over a chill, clear, saffron sky, were reefs of purple-black clouds. The river, below the Carewe homestead, was livid. Beyond it, the sea was dark and brooding. It was an evening to make most people shiver and forebode an early winter; but Thyra loved it, as she loved all stern, harshly beautiful things. She would not light a lamp because it would blot out the savage grandeur of sea and sky. It was better to wait in the darkness until Chester came home.

He was late tonight. She thought he had been detained over-time at the harbor, but she was not anxious. He would come straight home to her as soon as his business was completed — of that she felt sure. Her thoughts went out along the bleak harbor road to meet him. She could see him plainly, coming with his free stride through the sandy hollows and over the windy hills, in the harsh, cold light of that forbidding sunset, strong and handsome in his comely youth, with her own deeply cleft chin and his father's dark gray, straightforward eyes. No other woman in Avonlea had a son like hers — her only one. In his brief absences she yearned after him with a maternal passion that had in it something of physical pain, so intense was it. She thought of Cynthia White, knitting across the road, with contemptuous pity. That woman had no son — nothing but pale-faced girls. Thyra had never wanted a daughter, but she pitied and despised all sonless women.

Chester's dog whined suddenly and piercingly on the doorstep outside. He was tired of the cold stone and wanted his warm corner behind the stove. Thyra smiled grimly when she heard him. She had no intention of letting him in. She said she had always disliked dogs, but the truth, although she would not glance at it, was that she hated the animal because Chester loved him. She could not share his love with even a dumb brute. She loved no living creature in the world but her son, and fiercely demanded a like concentrated affection from him. Hence it pleased her to hear his dog whine.

It was now quite dark; the stars had begun to shine out over the shorn harvest fields, and Chester had not come. Across the lane Cynthia White had pulled down her blind, in despair of out-watching Thyra, and had lighted a lamp. Lively shadows of little girl-shapes passed and repassed on the pale oblong of light. They made Thyra conscious of her exceeding loneliness. She had just decided that she would walk down the lane and wait for Chester on the bridge, when a thunderous knock came at the east kitchen door.

She recognized August Vorst's knock and lighted a lamp in no great haste, for she did not like him. He was a gossip and Thyra hated gossip, in man or woman. But August was privileged.

She carried the lamp in her hand, when she went to the door, and its upward-striking light gave her face a ghastly appearance. She did not mean to ask August in, but he pushed past her cheerfully, not waiting to be invited. He was a midget of a man, lame of foot and hunched of back, with a white, boyish face, despite his middle age and deep-set, malicious black eyes.

He pulled a crumpled newspaper from his pocket and handed it to Thyra. He was the unofficial mail-carrier of Avonlea. Most of the people gave him a trifle for bringing their letters and papers from the office. He earned small sums in various other ways, and so contrived to keep the life in his stunted body. There was always venom in August's gossip. It was said that he made more mischief in Avonlea in a day than was made otherwise in a year, but people tolerated him by reason of his infirmity. To be sure, it was the tolerance they gave to inferior creatures, and August felt this. Perhaps it accounted for a good deal of his malignity. He hated most those who were kindest to him, and, of these, Thyra Carewe above all. He hated Chester, too, as he hated strong, shapely creatures. His time had come at last to wound them both, and his exultation shone through his crooked body and pinched features like an illuminating lamp. Thyra perceived it and vaguely felt something antagonistic in it. She pointed to the rocking-chair, as she might have pointed out a mat to a dog.

August crawled into it and smiled. He was going to make her writhe presently, this woman who looked down upon him as some venomous creeping thing she disdained to crush with her foot.

"Did you see anything of Chester on the road?" asked Thyra, giving August the very opening he desired. "He went to the harbor after tea to see Joe Raymond about the loan of his boat, but it's the time he should be back. I can't think what keeps the boy."

"Just what keeps most men — leaving out creatures like me — at some time or other in their lives. A girl — a pretty girl, Thyra. It pleases me to look at her. Even a hunchback can use his eyes, eh? Oh, she's a rare one!"

"What is the man talking about?" said Thyra wonderingly.

“Damaris Garland, to be sure. Chester’s down at Tom Blair’s now, talking to her — and looking more than his tongue says, too, of that you may be sure. Well, well, we were all young once, Thyra — all young once, even crooked little August Vorst. Eh, now?”

“What do you mean?” said Thyra.

She had sat down in a chair before him, with her hands folded in her lap. Her face, always pale, had not changed; but her lips were curiously white. August Vorst saw this and it pleased him. Also, her eyes were worth looking at, if you liked to hurt people — and that was the only pleasure August took in life. He would drink this delightful cup of revenge for her long years of disdainful kindness — ah, he would drink it slowly to prolong its sweetness. Sip by sip — he rubbed his long, thin, white hands together — sip by sip, tasting each mouthful.

“Eh, now? You know well enough, Thyra.”

“I know nothing of what you would be at, August Vorst. You speak of my son and Damaris — was that the name? — Damaris Garland as if they were something to each other. I ask you what you mean by it?”

“Tut, tut, Thyra, nothing very terrible. There’s no need to look like that about it. Young men will be young men to the end of time, and there’s no harm in Chester’s liking to look at a lass, eh, now? Or in talking to her either? The little baggage, with the red lips of her! She and Chester will make a pretty pair. He’s not so ill-looking for a man, Thyra.”

“I am not a very patient woman, August,” said Thyra coldly. “I have asked you what you mean, and I want a straight answer. Is Chester down at Tom Blair’s while I have been sitting here, alone, waiting for him?”

August nodded. He saw that it would not be wise to trifle longer with Thyra.

“That he is. I was there before I came here. He and Damaris were sitting in a corner by themselves, and very well-satisfied they seemed to be with each other. Tut, tut, Thyra, don’t take the news so. I thought you knew. It’s

no secret that Chester has been going after Damaris ever since she came here. But what then? You can't tie him to your apron strings forever, woman. He'll be finding a mate for himself, as he should. Seeing that he's straight and well-shaped, no doubt Damaris will look with favor on him. Old Martha Blair declares the girl loves him better than her eyes."

Thyra made a sound like a strangled moan in the middle of August's speech. She heard the rest of it immovably. When it came to an end she stood and looked down upon him in a way that silenced him.

"You've told the news you came to tell, and gloated over it, and now get you gone," she said slowly.

"Now, Thyra," he began, but she interrupted him threateningly.

"Get you gone, I say! And you need not bring my mail here any longer. I want no more of your misshapen body and lying tongue!"

August went, but at the door he turned for a parting stab.

"My tongue is not a lying one, Mrs. Carewe. I've told you the truth, as all Avonlea knows it. Chester is mad about Damaris Garland. It's no wonder I thought you knew what all the settlement can see. But you're such a jealous, odd body, I suppose the boy hid it from you for fear you'd go into a tantrum. As for me, I'll not forget that you've turned me from your door because I chanced to bring you news you'd no fancy for."

Thyra did not answer him. When the door closed behind him she locked it and blew out the light. Then she threw herself face downward on the sofa and burst into wild tears. Her very soul ached. She wept as tempestuously and unreasoningly as youth weeps, although she was not young. It seemed as if she was afraid to stop weeping lest she should go mad thinking. But, after a time, tears failed her, and she began bitterly to go over, word by word, what August Vorst had said.

That her son should ever cast eyes of love on any girl was something Thyra had never thought about. She would not believe it possible that he should love any one but herself, who loved him so much. And now the

possibility invaded her mind as subtly and coldly and remorselessly as a sea-fog stealing landward.

Chester had been born to her at an age when most women are letting their children slip from them into the world, with some natural tears and heartaches, but content to let them go, after enjoying their sweetest years. Thyra's late-come motherhood was all the more intense and passionate because of its very lateness. She had been very ill when her son was born, and had lain helpless for long weeks, during which other women had tended her baby for her. She had never been able to forgive them for this.

Her husband had died before Chester was a year old. She had laid their son in his dying arms and received him back again with a last benediction. To Thyra that moment had something of a sacrament in it. It was as if the child had been doubly given to her, with a right to him solely that nothing could take away or transcend.

Marrying! She had never thought of it in connection with him. He did not come of a marrying race. His father had been sixty when he had married her, Thyra Lincoln, likewise well on in life. Few of the Lincolns or Carewes had married young, many not at all. And, to her, Chester was her baby still. He belonged solely to her.

And now another woman had dared to look upon him with eyes of love. Damaris Garland! Thyra now remembered seeing her. She was a newcomer in Avonlea, having come to live with her uncle and aunt after the death of her mother. Thyra had met her on the bridge one day a month previously. Yes, a man might think she was pretty — a low-browed girl, with a wave of reddish-gold hair, and crimson lips blossoming out against the strange, milk-whiteness of her skin. Her eyes, too — Thyra recalled them — hazel in tint, deep, and laughter-brimmed.

The girl had gone past her with a smile that brought out many dimples. There was a certain insolent quality in her beauty, as if it flaunted itself somewhat too defiantly in the beholder's eye. Thyra had turned and looked after the lithe, young creature, wondering who she might be.

And tonight, while she, his mother, waited for him in darkness and loneliness, he was down at Blair's, talking to this girl! He loved her; and it was past doubt that she loved him. The thought was more bitter than death to Thyra. That she should dare! Her anger was all against the girl. She had laid a snare to get Chester and he, like a fool, was entangled in it, thinking, man-fashion, only of her great eyes and red lips. Thyra thought savagely of Damaris' beauty.

"She shall not have him," she said, with slow emphasis. "I will never give him up to any other woman, and, least of all, to her. She would leave me no place in his heart at all — me, his mother, who almost died to give him life. He belongs to me! Let her look for the son of some other woman — some woman who has many sons. She shall not have my only one!"

She got up, wrapped a shawl about her head, and went out into the darkly golden evening. The clouds had cleared away, and the moon was shining. The air was chill, with a bell-like clearness. The alders by the river rustled eerily as she walked by them and out upon the bridge. Here she paced up and down, peering with troubled eyes along the road beyond, or leaning over the rail, looking at the sparkling silver ribbon of moonlight that garlanded the waters. Late travelers passed her, and wondered at her presence and mien. Carl White saw her, and told his wife about her when he got home.

"Striding to and fro over the bridge like mad! At first I thought it was old, crazy May Blair. What do you suppose she was doing down there at this hour of the night?"

"Watching for Ches, no doubt," said Cynthia. "He ain't home yet. Likely he's snug at Blairs'. I do wonder if Thyra suspicions that he goes after Damaris. I've never dared to hint it to her. She'd be as liable to fly at me, tooth and claw, as not."

"Well, she picks out a precious queer night for moon-gazing," said Carl, who was a jolly soul and took life as he found it. "It's bitter cold — there'll be a hard frost. It's a pity she can't get it grained into her that the boy is grown up and must have his fling like the other lads. She'll go out

of her mind yet, like her old grandmother Lincoln, if she doesn't ease up. I've a notion to go down to the bridge and reason a bit with her."

"Indeed, and you'll do no such thing!" cried Cynthia. "Thyra Carewe is best left alone, if she is in a tantrum. She's like no other woman in Avonlea — or out of it. I'd as soon meddle with a tiger as her, if she's rampaging about Chester. I don't envy Damaris Garland her life if she goes in there. Thyra'd sooner strangle her than not, I guess."

"You women are all terrible hard on Thyra," said Carl, goodnaturedly. He had been in love with Thyra, himself, long ago, and he still liked her in a friendly fashion. He always stood up for her when the Avonlea women ran her down. He felt troubled about her all night, recalling her as she paced the bridge. He wished he had gone back, in spite of Cynthia.

When Chester came home he met his mother on the bridge. In the faint, yet penetrating, moonlight they looked curiously alike, but Chester had the milder face. He was very handsome. Even in the seething of her pain and jealousy Thyra yearned over his beauty. She would have liked to put up her hands and caress his face, but her voice was very hard when she asked him where he had been so late.

"I called in at Tom Blair's on my way home from the harbor," he answered, trying to walk on. But she held him back by his arm.

"Did you go there to see Damaris?" she demanded fiercely.

Chester was uncomfortable. Much as he loved his mother, he felt, and always had felt, an awe of her and an impatient dislike of her dramatic ways of speaking and acting. He reflected, resentfully, that no other young man in Avonlea, who had been paying a friendly call, would be met by his mother at midnight and held up in such tragic fashion to account for himself. He tried vainly to loosen her hold upon his arm, but he understood quite well that he must give her an answer. Being strictly straightforward by nature and upbringing, he told the truth, albeit with more anger in his tone than he had ever shown to his mother before.

"Yes," he said shortly.

Thyra released his arm, and struck her hands together with a sharp cry. There was a savage note in it. She could have slain Damaris Garland at that moment.

“Don’t go on so, mother,” said Chester, impatiently. “Come in out of the cold. It isn’t fit for you to be here. Who has been tampering with you? What if I did go to see Damaris?”

“Oh — oh — oh!” cried Thyra. “I was waiting for you — alone — and you were thinking only of her! Chester, answer me — do you love her?”

The blood rolled rapidly over the boy’s face. He muttered something and tried to pass on, but she caught him again. He forced himself to speak gently.

“What if I do, mother? It wouldn’t be such a dreadful thing, would it?”

“And me? And me?” cried Thyra. “What am I to you, then?”

“You are my mother. I wouldn’t love you any the less because I cared for another, too.”

“I won’t have you love another,” she cried. “I want all your love — all! What’s that baby-face to you, compared to your mother? I have the best right to you. I won’t give you up.”

Chester realized that there was no arguing with such a mood. He walked on, resolved to set the matter aside until she might be more reasonable. But Thyra would not have it so. She followed on after him, under the alders that crowded over the lane.

“Promise me that you’ll not go there again,” she entreated.

“Promise me that you’ll give her up.”

“I can’t promise such a thing,” he cried angrily.

His anger hurt her worse than a blow, but she did not flinch.

“You’re not engaged to her?” she cried out.

“Now, mother, be quiet. All the settlement will hear you. Why do you object to Damaris? You don’t know how sweet she is. When you know her —”

“I will never know her!” cried Thyra furiously. “And she shall not have you! She shall not, Chester!”

He made no answer. She suddenly broke into tears and loud sobs. Touched with remorse, he stopped and put his arms about her.

“Mother, mother, don’t! I can’t bear to see you cry so. But, indeed, you are unreasonable. Didn’t you ever think the time would come when I would want to marry, like other men?”

“No, no! And I will not have it — I cannot bear it, Chester. You must promise not to go to see her again. I won’t go into the house this night until you do. I’ll stay out here in the bitter cold until you promise to put her out of your thoughts.”

“That’s beyond my power, mother. Oh, mother, you’re making it hard for me. Come in, come in! You’re shivering with cold now. You’ll be sick.”

“Not a step will I stir till you promise. Say you won’t go to see that girl any more, and there’s nothing I won’t do for you. But if you put her before me, I’ll not go in — I never will go in.”

With most women this would have been an empty threat; but it was not so with Thyra, and Chester knew it. He knew she would keep her word. And he feared more than that. In this frenzy of hers what might she not do? She came of a strange breed, as had been said disapprovingly when Luke Carewe married her. There was a strain of insanity in the Lincolns. A Lincoln woman had drowned herself once. Chester thought of the river, and grew sick with fright. For a moment even his passion for Damaris weakened before the older tie.

“Mother, calm yourself. Oh, surely there’s no need of all this! Let us wait until tomorrow, and talk it over then. I’ll hear all you have to say. Come in, dear.”

Thyra loosened her arms from about him, and stepped back into a moonlit space. Looking at him tragically, she extended her arms and spoke slowly and solemnly.

“Chester, choose between us. If you choose her, I shall go from you tonight, and you will never see me again!”

“Mother!”

“Choose!” she reiterated, fiercely.

He felt her long ascendancy. Its influence was not to be shaken off in a moment. In all his life he had never disobeyed her. Besides, with it all, he loved her more deeply and understandingly than most sons love their mothers. He realized that, since she would have it so, his choice was already made — or, rather that he had no choice.

“Have your way,” he said sullenly.

She ran to him and caught him to her heart. In the reaction of her feeling she was half laughing, half crying. All was well again — all would be well; she never doubted this, for she knew he would keep his ungracious promise sacredly.

“Oh, my son, my son,” she murmured, “you’d have sent me to my death if you had chosen otherwise. But now you are mine again!”

She did not heed that he was sullen — that he resented her injustice with all her own intensity. She did not heed his silence as they went into the house together. Strangely enough, she slept well and soundly that night. Not until many days had passed did she understand that, though Chester might keep his promise in the letter, it was beyond his power to keep it in the spirit. She had taken him from Damaris Garland; but she had not won him back to herself. He could never be wholly her son again. There was a barrier between them which not all her passionate love could break down. Chester was gravely kind to her, for it was not in his nature to remain sullen long, or visit his own unhappiness upon another’s head; besides, he understood her exacting affection, even in its injustice, and it has been

well-said that to understand is to forgive. But he avoided her, and she knew it. The flame of her anger burned bitterly towards Damaris.

“He thinks of her all the time,” she moaned to herself. “He’ll come to hate me yet, I fear, because it’s I who made him give her up. But I’d rather even that than share him with another woman. Oh, my son, my son!”

She knew that Damaris was suffering, too. The girl’s wan face told that when she met her. But this pleased Thyra. It eased the ache in her bitter heart to know that pain was gnawing at Damaris’ also.

Chester was absent from home very often now. He spent much of his spare time at the harbor, consorting with Joe Raymond and others of that ilk, who were but sorry associates for him, Avonlea people thought.

In late November he and Joe started for a trip down the coast in the latter’s boat. Thyra protested against it, but Chester laughed at her alarm.

Thyra saw him go with a heart sick from fear. She hated the sea, and was afraid of it at any time; but, most of all, in this treacherous month, with its sudden, wild gales.

Chester had been fond of the sea from boyhood. She had always tried to stifle this fondness and break off his associations with the harbor fishermen, who liked to lure the high-spirited boy out with them on fishing expeditions. But her power over him was gone now.

After Chester’s departure she was restless and miserable, wandering from window to window to scan the dour, unsmiling sky. Carl White, dropping in to pay a call, was alarmed when he heard that Chester had gone with Joe, and had not tact enough to conceal his alarm from Thyra.

“‘T isn’t safe this time of year,” he said. “Folks expect no better from that reckless, harum-scarum Joe Raymond. He’ll drown himself some day, there’s nothing surer. This mad freak of starting off down the shore in November is just of a piece with his usual performances. But you shouldn’t have let Chester go, Thyra.”

“I couldn’t prevent him. Say what I could, he would go. He laughed when I spoke of danger. Oh, he’s changed from what he was! I know who has wrought the change, and I hate her for it!”

Carl shrugged his fat shoulders. He knew quite well that Thyra was at the bottom of the sudden coldness between Chester Carewe and Damaris Garland, about which Avonlea gossip was busying itself. He pitied Thyra, too. She had aged rapidly the past month.

“You’re too hard on Chester, Thyra. He’s out of leading-strings now, or should be. You must just let me take an old friend’s privilege, and tell you that you’re taking the wrong way with him. You’re too jealous and exacting, Thyra.”

“You don’t know anything about it. You have never had a son,” said Thyra, cruelly enough, for she knew that Carl’s sonlessness was a rankling thorn in his mind. “You don’t know what it is to pour out your love on one human being, and have it flung back in your face!”

Carl could not cope with Thyra’s moods. He had never understood her, even in his youth. Now he went home, still shrugging his shoulders, and thinking that it was a good thing Thyra had not looked on him with favor in the old days. Cynthia was much easier to get along with.

More than Thyra looked anxiously to sea and sky that night in Avonlea. Damaris Garland listened to the smothered roar of the Atlantic in the murky northeast with a prescience of coming disaster. Friendly longshoremen shook their heads and said that Ches and Joe would better have kept to good, dry land.

“It’s sorry work joking with a November gale,” said Abel Blair. He was an old man and, in his life, had seen some sad things along the shore.

Thyra could not sleep that night. When the gale came shrieking up the river, and struck the house, she got out of bed and dressed herself. The wind screamed like a ravening beast at her window. All night she wandered to and fro in the house, going from room to room, now wringing

her hands with loud outcries, now praying below her breath with white lips, now listening in dumb misery to the fury of the storm.

The wind raged all the next day; but spent itself in the following night, and the second morning was calm and fair. The eastern sky was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings. Thyra, looking from her kitchen window, saw a group of men on the bridge. They were talking to Carl White, with looks and gestures directed towards the Carewe house.

She went out and down to them. None of these who saw her white, rigid face that day ever forgot the sight.

“You have news for me,” she said.

They looked at each other, each man mutely imploring his neighbor to speak.

“You need not fear to tell me,” said Thyra calmly. “I know what you have come to say. My son is drowned.”

“We don’t know THAT, Mrs. Carewe,” said Abel Blair quickly. “We haven’t got the worst to tell you — there’s hope yet. But Joe Raymond’s boat was found last night, stranded bottom up, on the Blue Point sand shore, forty miles down the coast.”

“Don’t look like that, Thyra,” said Carl White pityingly. “They may have escaped — they may have been picked up.”

Thyra looked at him with dull eyes.

“You know they have not. Not one of you has any hope. I have no son. The sea has taken him from me — my bonny baby!”

She turned and went back to her desolate home. None dared to follow her. Carl White went home and sent his wife over to her.

Cynthia found Thyra sitting in her accustomed chair. Her hands lay, palms upward, on her lap. Her eyes were dry and burning. She met Cynthia’s compassionate look with a fearful smile.

“Long ago, Cynthia White,” she said slowly, “you were vexed with me one day, and you told me that God would punish me yet, because I made an idol of my son, and set it up in His place. Do you remember? Your word was a true one. God saw that I loved Chester too much, and He meant to take him from me. I thwarted one way when I made him give up Damaris. But one can’t fight against the Almighty. It was decreed that I must lose him — if not in one way, then in another. He has been taken from me utterly. I shall not even have his grave to tend, Cynthia.”

“As near to a mad woman as anything you ever saw, with her awful eyes,” Cynthia told Carl, afterwards. But she did not say so there. Although she was a shallow, commonplace soul, she had her share of womanly sympathy, and her own life had not been free from suffering. It taught her the right thing to do now. She sat down by the stricken creature and put her arms about her, while she gathered the cold hands in her own warm clasp. The tears filled her big, blue eyes and her voice trembled as she said:

“Thyra, I’m sorry for you. I — I — lost a child once — my little firstborn. And Chester was a dear, good lad.”

For a moment Thyra strained her small, tense body away from Cynthia’s embrace. Then she shuddered and cried out. The tears came, and she wept her agony out on the other woman’s breast.

As the ill news spread, other Avonlea women kept dropping in all through the day to condole with Thyra. Many of them came in real sympathy, but some out of mere curiosity to see how she took it. Thyra knew this, but she did not resent it, as she would once have done. She listened very quietly to all the halting efforts at consolation, and the little platitudes with which they strove to cover the nakedness of bereavement.

When darkness came Cynthia said she must go home, but would send one of her girls over for the night.

“You won’t feel like staying alone,” she said.

Thyra looked up steadily.

“No. But I want you to send for Damaris Garland.”

“Damaris Garland!” Cynthia repeated the name as if disbelieving her own ears. There was never any knowing what whim Thyra might take, but Cynthia had not expected this.

“Yes. Tell her I want her — tell her she must come. She must hate me bitterly; but I am punished enough to satisfy even her hate. Tell her to come to me for Chester’s sake.”

Cynthia did as she was bid, she sent her daughter, Jeanette, for Damaris. Then she waited. No matter what duties were calling for her at home she must see the interview between Thyra and Damaris. Her curiosity would be the last thing to fail Cynthia White. She had done very well all day; but it would be asking too much of her to expect that she would consider the meeting of these two women sacred from her eyes.

She half believed that Damaris would refuse to come. But Damaris came. Jeanette brought her in amid the fiery glow of a November sunset. Thyra stood up, and for a moment they looked at each other.

The insolence of Damaris’ beauty was gone. Her eyes were dull and heavy with weeping, her lips were pale, and her face had lost its laughter and dimples. Only her hair, escaping from the shawl she had cast around it, gushed forth in warm splendor in the sunset light, and framed her wan face like the aureole of a Madonna. Thyra looked upon her with a shock of remorse. This was not the radiant creature she had met on the bridge that summer afternoon. This — this — was HER work. She held out her arms.

“Oh, Damaris, forgive me. We both loved him — that must be a bond between us for life.”

Damaris came forward and threw her arms about the older woman, lifting her face. As their lips met even Cynthia White realized that she had no business there. She vented the irritation of her embarrassment on the innocent Jeanette.

“Come away,” she whispered crossly. “Can’t you see we’re not wanted here?”

She drew Jeanette out, leaving Thyra rocking Damaris in her arms, and crooning over her like a mother over her child.

When December had grown old Damaris was still with Thyra. It was understood that she was to remain there for the winter, at least. Thyra could not bear her to be out of her sight. They talked constantly about Chester; Thyra confessed all her anger and hatred. Damaris had forgiven her; but Thyra could never forgive herself. She was greatly changed, and had grown very gentle and tender. She even sent for August Vorst and begged him to pardon her for the way she had spoken to him.

Winter came late that year, and the season was a very open one. There was no snow on the ground and, a month after Joe Raymond’s boat had been cast up on the Blue Point sand shore, Thyra, wandering about in her garden, found some pansies blooming under their tangled leaves. She was picking them for Damaris when she heard a buggy rumble over the bridge and drive up the White lane, hidden from her sight by the alders and firs. A few minutes later Carl and Cynthia came hastily across their yard under the huge balm-of-gileads. Carl’s face was flushed, and his big body quivered with excitement. Cynthia ran behind him, with tears rolling down her face.

Thyra felt herself growing sick with fear. Had anything happened to Damaris? A glimpse of the girl, sewing by an upper window of the house, reassured her.

“Oh, Thyra, Thyra!” gasped Cynthia.

“Can you stand some good news, Thyra?” asked Carl, in a trembling voice. “Very, very good news!”

Thyra looked wildly from one to the other.

“There’s but one thing you would dare to call good news to me,” she cried. “Is it about — about—”

“Chester! Yes, it’s about Chester! Thyra, he is alive — he’s safe — he and Joe, both of them, thank God! Cynthia, catch her!”

“No, I am not going to faint,” said Thyra, steadying herself by Cynthia’s shoulder. “My son alive! How did you hear? How did it happen? Where has he been?”

“I heard it down at the harbor, Thyra. Mike McCready’s vessel, the Nora Lee, was just in from the Magdalens. Ches and Joe got capsized the night of the storm, but they hung on to their boat somehow, and at daybreak they were picked up by the Nora Lee, bound for Quebec. But she was damaged by the storm and blown clear out of her course. Had to put into the Magdalens for repairs, and has been there ever since. The cable to the islands was out of order, and no vessels call there this time of year for mails. If it hadn’t been an extra open season the Nora Lee wouldn’t have got away, but would have had to stay there till spring. You never saw such rejoicing as there was this morning at the harbor, when the Nora Lee came in, flying flags at the mast head.”

“And Chester — where is he?” demanded Thyra.

Carl and Cynthia looked at each other.

“Well, Thyra,” said the latter, “the fact is, he’s over there in our yard this blessed minute. Carl brought him home from the harbor, but I wouldn’t let him come over until we had prepared you for it. He’s waiting for you there.”

Thyra made a quick step in the direction of the gate. Then she turned, with a little of the glow dying out of her face.

“No, there’s one has a better right to go to him first. I can atone to him — thank God, I can atone to him!”

She went into the house and called Damaris. As the girl came down the stairs Thyra held out her hands with a wonderful light of joy and renunciation on her face.

“Damaris,” she said, “Chester has come back to us — the sea has given him back to us. He is over at Carl White’s house. Go to him, my daughter, and bring him to me!”

THE EDUCATION OF BETT Y

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When Sara Currie married Jack Churchill I was brokenhearted...or believed myself to be so, which, in a boy of twenty-two, amounts to pretty much the same thing. Not that I took the world into my confidence; that was never the Douglas way, and I held myself in honor bound to live up to the family traditions. I thought, then, that nobody but Sara knew; but I dare say, now, that Jack knew it also, for I don't think Sara could have helped telling him. If he did know, however, he did not let me see that he did, and never insulted me by any implied sympathy; on the contrary, he asked me to be his best man. Jack was always a thoroughbred.

I was best man. Jack and I had always been bosom friends, and, although I had lost my sweetheart, I did not intend to lose my friend into the bargain. Sara had made a wise choice, for Jack was twice the man I was; he had had to work for his living, which perhaps accounts for it.

So I danced at Sara's wedding as if my heart were as light as my heels; but, after she and Jack had settled down at Glenby I closed The Maples and went abroad...being, as I have hinted, one of those unfortunate mortals who need consult nothing but their own whims in the matter of time and money. I stayed away for ten years, during which The Maples was given over to moths and rust, while I enjoyed life elsewhere. I did enjoy it hugely, but always under protest, for I felt that a brokenhearted man ought not to enjoy himself as I did. It jarred on my sense of fitness, and I tried to moderate my zest, and think more of the past than I did. It was no use; the present insisted on being intrusive and pleasant; as for the future...well, there was no future.

Then Jack Churchill, poor fellow, died. A year after his death, I went home and again asked Sara to marry me, as in duty bound. Sara again declined, alleging that her heart was buried in Jack's grave, or words to that effect. I found that it did not much matter...of course, at thirty-two one does not

take these things to heart as at twenty-two. I had enough to occupy me in getting The Maples into working order, and beginning to educate Betty.

Betty was Sara's ten year-old daughter, and she had been thoroughly spoiled. That is to say, she had been allowed her own way in everything and, having inherited her father's outdoor tastes, had simply run wild. She was a thorough tomboy, a thin, scrawny little thing with a trace of Sara's beauty. Betty took after her father's dark, tall race and, on the occasion of my first introduction to her, seemed to be all legs and neck. There were points about her, though, which I considered promising. She had fine, almond-shaped, hazel eyes, the smallest and most shapely hands and feet I ever saw, and two enormous braids of thick, nut-brown hair.

For Jack's sake I decided to bring his daughter up properly. Sara couldn't do it, and didn't try. I saw that, if somebody didn't take Betty in hand, wisely and firmly, she would certainly be ruined. There seemed to be nobody except myself at all interested in the matter, so I determined to see what an old bachelor could do as regards bringing up a girl in the way she should go. I might have been her father; as it was, her father had been my best friend. Who had a better right to watch over his daughter? I determined to be a father to Betty, and do all for her that the most devoted parent could do. It was, self-evidently, my duty.

I told Sara I was going to take Betty in hand. Sara sighed one of the plaintive little sighs which I had once thought so charming, but now, to my surprise, found faintly irritating, and said that she would be very much obliged if I would.

"I feel that I am not able to cope with the problem of Betty's education, Stephen," she admitted, "Betty is a strange child...all Churchill. Her poor father indulged her in everything, and she has a will of her own, I assure you. I have really no control over her, whatever. She does as she pleases, and is ruining her complexion by running and galloping out of doors the whole time. Not that she had much complexion to start with. The Churchills never had, you know."...Sara cast a complacent glance at her delicately tinted reflection in the mirror.... "I tried to make Betty wear a sunbonnet this summer, but I might as well have talked to the wind."

A vision of Betty in a sunbonnet presented itself to my mind, and afforded me so much amusement that I was grateful to Sara for having furnished it. I rewarded her with a compliment.

“It is to be regretted that Betty has not inherited her mother’s charming color,” I said, “but we must do the best we can for her under her limitations. She may have improved vastly by the time she has grown up. And, at least, we must make a lady of her; she is a most alarming tomboy at present, but there is good material to work upon...there must be, in the Churchill and Currie blend. But even the best material may be spoiled by unwise handling. I think I can promise you that I will not spoil it. I feel that Betty is my vocation; and I shall set myself up as a rival of Wordsworth’s ‘nature,’ of whose methods I have always had a decided distrust, in spite of his insidious verses.”

Sara did not understand me in the least; but, then, she did not pretend to.

“I confide Betty’s education entirely to you, Stephen,” she said, with another plaintive sigh. “I feel sure I could not put it into better hands. You have always been a person who could be thoroughly depended on.”

Well, that was something by way of reward for a lifelong devotion. I felt that I was satisfied with my position as unofficial advisor-in-chief to Sara and self-appointed guardian of Betty. I also felt that, for the furtherance of the cause I had taken to heart, it was a good thing that Sara had again refused to marry me. I had a sixth sense which informed me that a staid old family friend might succeed with Betty where a stepfather would have signally failed. Betty’s loyalty to her father’s memory was passionate, and vehement; she would view his supplanter with resentment and distrust; but his old familiar comrade was a person to be taken to her heart.

Fortunately for the success of my enterprise, Betty liked me. She told me this with the same engaging candor she would have used in informing me that she hated me, if she had happened to take a bias in that direction, saying frankly:

“You are one of the very nicest old folks I know, Stephen. Yes, you are a ripping good fellow!”

This made my task a comparatively easy one; I sometimes shudder to think what it might have been if Betty had not thought I was a “ripping good fellow.” I should have stuck to it, because that is my way; but Betty would have made my life a misery to me. She had startling capacities for tormenting people when she chose to exert them; I certainly should not have liked to be numbered among Betty’s foes.

I rode over to Glenby the next morning after my paternal interview with Sara, intending to have a frank talk with Betty and lay the foundations of a good understanding on both sides. Betty was a sharp child, with a disconcerting knack of seeing straight through grindstones; she would certainly perceive and probably resent any underhanded management. I thought it best to tell her plainly that I was going to look after her.

When, however, I encountered Betty, tearing madly down the beech avenue with a couple of dogs, her loosened hair streaming behind her like a banner of independence, and had lifted her, hatless and breathless, up before me on my mare, I found that Sara had saved me the trouble of an explanation.

“Mother says you are going to take charge of my education, Stephen,” said Betty, as soon as she could speak. “I’m glad, because I think that, for an old person, you have a good deal of sense. I suppose my education has to be seen to, some time or other, and I’d rather you’d do it than anybody else I know.”

“Thank you, Betty,” I said gravely. “I hope I shall deserve your good opinion of my sense. I shall expect you to do as I tell you, and be guided by my advice in everything.”

“Yes, I will,” said Betty, “because I’m sure you won’t tell me to do anything I’d really hate to do. You won’t shut me up in a room and make me sew, will you? Because I won’t do it.”

I assured her I would not.

“Nor send me to a boarding-school,” pursued Betty. “Mother’s always threatening to send me to one. I suppose she would have done it before

this, only she knew I'd run away. You won't send me to a boarding-school, will you, Stephen? Because I won't go."

"No," I said obligingly. "I won't. I should never dream of cooping a wild little thing, like you, up in a boarding-school. You'd fret your heart out like a caged skylark."

"I know you and I are going to get along together splendidly, Stephen," said Betty, rubbing her brown cheek chummily against my shoulder. "You are so good at understanding. Very few people are. Even dad darling didn't understand. He let me do just as I wanted to, just because I wanted to, not because he really understood that I couldn't be tame and play with dolls. I hate dolls! Real live babies are jolly; but dogs and horses are ever so much nicer than dolls."

"But you must have lessons, Betty. I shall select your teachers and superintend your studies, and I shall expect you to do me credit along that line, as well as along all others."

"I'll try, honest and true, Stephen," declared Betty. And she kept her word.

At first I looked upon Betty's education as a duty; in a very short time it had become a pleasure...the deepest and most abiding interest of my life. As I had premised, Betty was good material, and responded to my training with gratifying plasticity. Day by day, week by week, month by month, her character and temperament unfolded naturally under my watchful eye. It was like beholding the gradual development of some rare flower in one's garden. A little checking and pruning here, a careful training of shoot and tendril there, and, lo, the reward of grace and symmetry!

Betty grew up as I would have wished Jack Churchill's girl to grow — spirited and proud, with the fine spirit and gracious pride of pure womanhood, loyal and loving, with the loyalty and love of a frank and unspoiled nature; true to her heart's core, hating falsehood and sham — as crystal-clear a mirror of maidenhood as ever man looked into and saw himself reflected back in such a halo as made him ashamed of not being more worthy of it. Betty was kind enough to say that I had taught her

everything she knew. But what had she not taught me? If there were a debt between us, it was on my side.

Sara was fairly well satisfied. It was not my fault that Betty was not better looking, she said. I had certainly done everything for her mind and character that could be done. Sara's manner implied that these unimportant details did not count for much, balanced against the lack of a pink-and-white skin and dimpled elbows; but she was generous enough not to blame me.

"When Betty is twenty-five," I said patiently — I had grown used to speaking patiently to Sara—"she will be a magnificent woman — far handsomer than you ever were, Sara, in your pinkest and whitest prime. Where are your eyes, my dear lady, that you can't see the promise of loveliness in Betty?"

"Betty is seventeen, and she is as lanky and brown as ever she was," sighed Sara. "When I was seventeen I was the belle of the county and had had five proposals. I don't believe the thought of a lover has ever entered Betty's head."

"I hope not," I said shortly. Somehow, I did not like the suggestion. "Betty is a child yet. For pity's sake, Sara, don't go putting nonsensical ideas into her head."

"I'm afraid I can't," mourned Sara, as if it were something to be regretted. "You have filled it too full of books and things like that. I've every confidence in your judgment, Stephen — and really you've done wonders with Betty. But don't you think you've made her rather too clever? Men don't like women who are too clever. Her poor father, now — he always said that a woman who liked books better than beaux was an unnatural creature."

I didn't believe Jack had ever said anything so foolish. Sara imagined things. But I resented the aspersion of blue-stockings cast on Betty.

"When the time comes for Betty to be interested in beaux," I said severely, "she will probably give them all due attention. Just at present her head is a

great deal better filled with books than with silly premature fancies and sentimentalities. I'm a critical old fellow — but I'm satisfied with Betty, Sara — perfectly satisfied."

Sara sighed.

"Oh, I dare say she is all right, Stephen. And I'm really grateful to you. I'm sure I could have done nothing at all with her. It's not your fault, of course, — but I can't help wishing she were a little more like other girls."

I galloped away from Glenby in a rage. What a blessing Sara had not married me in my absurd youth! She would have driven me wild with her sighs and her obtuseness and her everlasting pink-and-whiteness. But there — there — there — gently! She was a sweet, goodhearted little woman; she had made Jack happy; and she had contrived, heaven only knew how, to bring a rare creature like Betty into the world. For that, much might be forgiven her. By the time I reached The Maples and had flung myself down in an old, kinky, comfortable chair in my library I had forgiven her and was even paying her the compliment of thinking seriously over what she had said.

Was Betty really unlike other girls? That is to say, unlike them in any respect wherein she should resemble them? I did not wish this; although I was a crusty old bachelor I approved of girls, holding them the sweetest things the good God has made. I wanted Betty to have her full complement of girlhood in all its best and highest manifestation. Was there anything lacking?

I observed Betty very closely during the next week or so, riding over to Glenby every day and riding back at night, meditating upon my observations. Eventually I concluded to do what I had never thought myself in the least likely to do. I would send Betty to a boarding-school for a year. It was necessary that she should learn how to live with other girls.

I went over to Glenby the next day and found Betty under the beeches on the lawn, just back from a canter. She was sitting on the dappled mare I had given her on her last birthday, and was laughing at the antics of her

rejoicing dogs around her. I looked at her with much pleasure; it gladdened me to see how much, nay, how totally a child she still was, despite her Churchill height. Her hair, under her velvet cap, still hung over her shoulders in the same thick plaits; her face had the firm leanness of early youth, but its curves were very fine and delicate. The brown skin, that worried Sara so, was flushed through with dusky color from her gallop; her long, dark eyes were filled with the beautiful unconsciousness of childhood. More than all, the soul in her was still the soul of a child. I found myself wishing that it could always remain so. But I knew it could not; the woman must blossom out some day; it was my duty to see that the flower fulfilled the promise of the bud.

When I told Betty that she must go away to a school for a year, she shrugged, frowned and consented. Betty had learned that she must consent to what I decreed, even when my decrees were opposed to her likings, as she had once fondly believed they never would be. But Betty had acquired confidence in me to the beautiful extent of acquiescing in everything I commanded.

“I’ll go, of course, since you wish it, Stephen,” she said. “But why do you want me to go? You must have a reason — you always have a reason for anything you do. What is it?”

“That is for you to find out, Betty,” I said. “By the time you come back you will have discovered it, I think. If not, it will not have proved itself a good reason and shall be forgotten.”

When Betty went away I bade her good-by without burdening her with any useless words of advice.

“Write to me every week, and remember that you are Betty Churchill,” I said.

Betty was standing on the steps above, among her dogs. She came down a step and put her arms about my neck.

“I’ll remember that you are my friend and that I must live up to you,” she said. “Good-by, Stephen.”

She kissed me two or three times — good, hearty smacks! did I not say she was still a child? — and stood waving her hand to me as I rode away. I looked back at the end of the avenue and saw her standing there, short-skirted and hatless, fronting the lowering sun with those fearless eyes of hers. So I looked my last on the child Betty.

That was a lonely year. My occupation was gone and I began to fear that I had outlived my usefulness. Life seemed flat, stale, and unprofitable. Betty's weekly letters were all that lent it any savor. They were spicy and piquant enough. Betty was discovered to have unsuspected talents in the epistolary line. At first she was dolefully homesick, and begged me to let her come home. When I refused — it was amazingly hard to refuse — she sulked through three letters, then cheered up and began to enjoy herself. But it was nearly the end of the year when she wrote:

“I've found out why you sent me here, Stephen — and I'm glad you did.”

I had to be away from home on unavoidable business the day Betty returned to Glenby. But the next afternoon I went over. I found Betty out and Sara in. The latter was beaming. Betty was so much improved, she declared delightedly. I would hardly know “the dear child.”

This alarmed me terribly. What on earth had they done to Betty? I found that she had gone up to the pineland for a walk, and thither I betook myself speedily. When I saw her coming down a long, golden-brown alley I stepped behind a tree to watch her — I wished to see her, myself unseen. As she drew near I gazed at her with pride, and admiration and amazement — and, under it all, a strange, dreadful, heart-sinking, which I could not understand and which I had never in all my life experienced before — no, not even when Sara had refused me.

Betty was a woman! Not by virtue of the simple white dress that clung to her tall, slender figure, revealing lines of exquisite grace and liteness; not by virtue of the glossy masses of dark brown hair heaped high on her head and held there in wonderful shining coils; not by virtue of added softness of curve and daintiness of outline; not because of all these, but because of the dream and wonder and seeking in her eyes. She was a woman, looking, all unconscious of her quest, for love.

The understanding of the change in her came home to me with a shock that must have left me, I think, something white about the lips. I was glad. She was what I had wished her to become. But I wanted the child Betty back; this womanly Betty seemed far away from me.

I stepped out into the path and she saw me, with a brightening of her whole face. She did not rush forward and fling herself into my arms as she would have done a year ago; but she came towards me swiftly, holding out her hand. I had thought her slightly pale when I had first seen her; but now I concluded I had been mistaken, for there was a wonderful sunrise of color in her face. I took her hand — there were no kisses this time.

“Welcome home, Betty,” I said.

“Oh, Stephen, it is so good to be back,” she breathed, her eyes shining.

She did not say it was good to see me again, as I had hoped she would do. Indeed, after the first minute of greeting, she seemed a trifle cool and distant. We walked for an hour in the pine wood and talked. Betty was brilliant, witty, selfpossessed, altogether charming. I thought her perfect and yet my heart ached. What a glorious young thing she was, in that splendid youth of hers! What a prize for some lucky man — confound the obtrusive thought! No doubt we should soon be overrun at Glenby with lovers. I should stumble over some forlorn youth at every step! Well, what of it? Betty would marry, of course. It would be my duty to see that she got a good husband, worthy of her as men go. I thought I preferred the old duty of superintending her studies. But there, it was all the same thing — merely a post-graduate course in applied knowledge. When she began to learn life’s greatest lesson of love, I, the tried and true old family friend and mentor, must be on hand to see that the teacher was what I would have him be, even as I had formerly selected her instructor in French and botany. Then, and not until then, would Betty’s education be complete.

I rode home very soberly. When I reached The Maples I did what I had not done for years...looked critically at myself in the mirror. The realization that I had grown older came home to me with a new and unpleasant force. There were marked lines on my lean face, and silver glints in the dark hair over my temples. When Betty was ten she had thought me “an old person.”

Now, at eighteen, she probably thought me a veritable ancient of days. Pshaw, what did it matter? And yet...I thought of her as I had seen her, standing under the pines, and something cold and painful laid its hand on my heart.

My premonitions as to lovers proved correct. Glenby was soon infested with them. Heaven knows where they all came from. I had not supposed there was a quarter as many young men in the whole county; but there they were. Sara was in the seventh heaven of delight. Was not Betty at last a belle? As for the proposals...well, Betty never counted her scalps in public; but every once in a while a visiting youth dropped out and was seen no more at Glenby. One could guess what that meant.

Betty apparently enjoyed all this. I grieve to say that she was a bit of a coquette. I tried to cure her of this serious defect, but for once I found that I had undertaken something I could not accomplish. In vain I lectured, Betty only laughed; in vain I gravely rebuked, Betty only flirted more vivaciously than before. Men might come and men might go, but Betty went on forever. I endured this sort of thing for a year and then I decided that it was time to interfere seriously. I must find a husband for Betty...my fatherly duty would not be fulfilled until I had...nor, indeed, my duty to society. She was not a safe person to have running at large.

None of the men who haunted Glenby was good enough for her. I decided that my nephew, Frank, would do very well. He was a capital young fellow, handsome, clean-souled, and wholehearted. From a worldly point of view he was what Sara would have termed an excellent match; he had money, social standing and a rising reputation as a clever young lawyer. Yes, he should have Betty, confound him!

They had never met. I set the wheels going at once. The sooner all the fuss was over the better. I hated fuss and there was bound to be a good deal of it. But I went about the business like an accomplished matchmaker. I invited Frank to visit The Maples and, before he came, I talked much...but not too much...of him to Betty, mingling judicious praise and still more judicious blame together. Women never like a paragon. Betty heard me with more gravity than she usually accorded to my dissertations on young

men. She even condescended to ask several questions about him. This I thought a good sign.

To Frank I had said not a word about Betty; when he came to The Maples I took him over to Glenby and, coming upon Betty wandering about among the beeches in the sunset, I introduced him without any warning.

He would have been more than mortal if he had not fallen in love with her upon the spot. It was not in the heart of man to resist her...that dainty, alluring bit of womanhood. She was all in white, with flowers in her hair, and, for a moment, I could have murdered Frank or any other man who dared to commit the sacrilege of loving her.

Then I pulled myself together and left them alone. I might have gone in and talked to Sara...two old folks gently reviewing their youth while the young folks courted outside...but I did not. I prowled about the pine wood, and tried to forget how blithe and handsome that curly-headed boy, Frank, was, and what a flash had sprung into his eyes when he had seen Betty. Well, what of it? Was not that what I had brought him there for? And was I not pleased at the success of my scheme? Certainly I was! Delighted!

Next day Frank went to Glenby without even making the poor pretense of asking me to accompany him. I spent the time of his absence overseeing the construction of a new greenhouse I was having built. I was conscientious in my supervision; but I felt no interest in it. The place was intended for roses, and roses made me think of the pale yellow ones Betty had worn at her breast one evening the week before, when, all lovers being unaccountably absent, we had wandered together under the pines and talked as in the old days before her young womanhood and my gray hairs had risen up to divide us. She had dropped a rose on the brown floor, and I had sneaked back, after I had left her the house, to get it, before I went home. I had it now in my pocketbook. Confound it, mightn't a future uncle cherish a family affection for his prospective niece?

Frank's wooing seemed to prosper. The other young sparks, who had haunted Glenby, faded away after his advent. Betty treated him with most encouraging sweetness; Sara smiled on him; I stood in the background,

like a benevolent god of the machine, and flattered myself that I pulled the strings.

At the end of a month something went wrong. Frank came home from Glenby one day in the dumps, and moped for two whole days. I rode down myself on the third. I had not gone much to Glenby that month; but, if there were trouble Bettyward, it was my duty to make smooth the rough places.

As usual, I found Betty in the pineland. I thought she looked rather pale and dull...fretting about Frank no doubt. She brightened up when she saw me, evidently expecting that I had come to straighten matters out; but she pretended to be haughty and indifferent.

"I am glad you haven't forgotten us altogether, Stephen," she said coolly. "You haven't been down for a week."

"I'm flattered that you noticed it," I said, sitting down on a fallen tree and looking up at her as she stood, tall and lithe, against an old pine, with her eyes averted. "I shouldn't have supposed you'd want an old foggy like myself poking about and spoiling the idyllic moments of love's young dream."

"Why do you always speak of yourself as old?" said Betty, crossly, ignoring my reference to Frank.

"Because I am old, my dear. Witness these gray hairs."

I pushed up my hat to show them the more recklessly.

Betty barely glanced at them.

"You have just enough to give you a distinguished look," she said, "and you are only forty. A man is in his prime at forty. He never has any sense until he is forty — and sometimes he doesn't seem to have any even then," she concluded impertinently.

My heart beat. Did Betty suspect? Was that last sentence meant to inform me that she was aware of my secret folly, and laughed at it?

“I came over to see what has gone wrong between you and Frank,” I said gravely.

Betty bit her lips.

“Nothing,” she said.

“Betty,” I said reproachfully, “I brought you up...or endeavored to bring you up...to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Don’t tell me I have failed. I’ll give you another chance. Have you quarreled with Frank?”

“No,” said the maddening Betty, “HE quarreled with me. He went away in a temper and I do not care if he never comes back!”

I shook my head.

“This won’t do, Betty. As your old family friend I still claim the right to scold you until you have a husband to do the scolding. You mustn’t torment Frank. He is too fine a fellow. You must marry him, Betty.”

“Must I?” said Betty, a dusky red flaming out on her cheek. She turned her eyes on me in a most disconcerting fashion. “Do YOU wish me to marry Frank, Stephen?”

Betty had a wretched habit of emphasizing pronouns in a fashion calculated to rattle anybody.

“Yes, I do wish it, because I think it will be best for you,” I replied, without looking at her. “You must marry some time, Betty, and Frank is the only man I know to whom I could trust you. As your guardian, I have an interest in seeing you well and wisely settled for life. You have always taken my advice and obeyed my wishes; and you’ve always found my way the best, in the long run, haven’t you, Betty? You won’t prove rebellious now, I’m sure. You know quite well that I am advising you for your own

good. Frank is a splendid young fellow, who loves you with all his heart. Marry him, Betty. Mind, I don't COMMAND. I have no right to do that, and you are too old to be ordered about, if I had. But I wish and advise it. Isn't that enough, Betty?"

I had been looking away from her all the time I was talking, gazing determinedly down a sunlit vista of pines. Every word I said seemed to tear my heart, and come from my lips stained with life-blood. Yes, Betty should marry Frank! But, good God, what would become of me!

Betty left her station under the pine tree, and walked around me until she got right in front of my face. I couldn't help looking at her, for if I moved my eyes she moved too. There was nothing meek or submissive about her; her head was held high, her eyes were blazing, and her cheeks were crimson. But her words were meek enough.

"I will marry Frank if you wish it, Stephen," she said. "You are my friend. I have never crossed your wishes, and, as you say, I have never regretted being guided by them. I will do exactly as you wish in this case also, I promise you that. But, in so solemn a question, I must be very certain what you DO wish. There must be no doubt in my mind or heart. Look me squarely in the eyes, Stephen — as you haven't done once to-day, no, nor once since I came home from school — and, so looking, tell me that you wish me to marry Frank Douglas and I will do it! DO you, Stephen?"

I had to look her in the eyes, since nothing else would do her; and, as I did so, all the might of manhood in me rose up in hot revolt against the lie I would have told her. That unfaltering, impelling gaze of hers drew the truth from my lips in spite of myself.

"No, I don't wish you to marry Frank Douglas, a thousand times no!" I said passionately. "I don't wish you to marry any man on earth but myself. I love you — I love you, Betty. You are dearer to me than life — dearer to me than my own happiness. It was your happiness I thought of — and so I asked you to marry Frank because I believed he would make you a happy woman. That is all!"

Betty's defiance went from her like a flame blown out. She turned away and drooped her proud head.

"It could not have made me a happy woman to marry one man, loving another," she said, in a whisper.

I got up and went over to her.

"Betty, whom do you love?" I asked, also in a whisper.

"You," she murmured meekly — oh, so meekly, my proud little girl!

"Betty," I said brokenly, "I'm old — too old for you — I'm more than twenty years your senior — I'm—"

"Oh!" Betty wheeled around on me and stamped her foot. "Don't mention your age to me again. I don't care if you're as old as Methuselah. But I'm not going to coax you to marry me, sir! If you won't, I'll never marry anybody — I'll live and die an old maid. You can please yourself, of course!"

She turned away, half-laughing, half-crying; but I caught her in my arms and crushed her sweet lips against mine.

"Betty, I'm the happiest man in the world — and I was the most miserable when I came here."

"You deserved to be," said Betty cruelly. "I'm glad you were. Any man as stupid as you deserves to be unhappy. What do you think I felt like, loving you with all my heart, and seeing you simply throwing me at another man's head. Why, I've always loved you, Stephen; but I didn't know it until I went to that detestable school. Then I found out — and I thought that was why you had sent me. But, when I came home, you almost broke my heart. That was why I flirted so with all those poor, nice boys — I wanted to hurt you but I never thought I succeeded. You just went on being FATHERLY. Then, when you brought Frank here, I almost gave up hope; and I tried to make up my mind to marry him; I should have done it if you had insisted. But I had to have one more try for happiness first. I had just

one little hope to inspire me with sufficient boldness. I saw you, that night, when you came back here and picked up my rose! I had come back, myself, to be alone and unhappy.”

“It is the most wonderful thing that ever happened — that you should love me,” I said.

“It’s not — I couldn’t help it,” said Betty, nestling her brown head on my shoulder. “You taught me everything else, Stephen, so nobody but you could teach me how to love. You’ve made a thorough thing of educating me.”

“When will you marry me, Betty?” I asked.

“As soon as I can fully forgive you for trying to make me marry somebody else,” said Betty.

It was rather hard lines on Frank, when you come to think of it. But, such is the selfishness of human nature that we didn’t think much about Frank. The young fellow behaved like the Douglas he was. Went a little white about the lips when I told him, wished me all happiness, and went quietly away, “gentleman unafraid.”

He has since married and is, I understand, very happy. Not as happy as I am, of course; that is impossible, because there is only one Betty in the world, and she is my wife.

IN HER SELFLESS MOOD

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The raw wind of an early May evening was puffing in and out the curtains of the room where Naomi Holland lay dying. The air was moist and chill, but the sick woman would not have the window closed.

“I can’t get my breath if you shut everything up so tight,” she said. “Whatever comes, I ain’t going to be smothered to death, Car’line Holland.”

Outside of the window grew a cherry tree, powdered with moist buds with the promise of blossoms she would not live to see. Between its boughs she saw a crystal cup of sky over hills that were growing dim and purple. The outside air was full of sweet, wholesome springtime sounds that drifted in fitfully. There were voices and whistles in the barnyard, and now and then faint laughter. A bird alighted for a moment on a cherry bough, and twittered restlessly. Naomi knew that white mists were hovering in the silent hollows, that the maple at the gate wore a misty blossom red, and that violet stars were shining bluely on the brooklands.

The room was a small, plain one. The floor was bare, save for a couple of braided rugs, the plaster discolored, the walls dingy and glaring. There had never been much beauty in Naomi Holland’s environment, and, now that she was dying, there was even less.

At the open window a boy of about ten years was leaning out over the sill and whistling. He was tall for his age, and beautiful — the hair a rich auburn with a glistening curl in it, skin very white and warm-tinted, eyes small and of a greenish blue, with dilated pupils and long lashes. He had a weak chin, and a full, sullen mouth.

The bed was in the corner farthest from the window; on it the sick woman, in spite of the pain that was her portion continually, was lying as quiet and

motionless as she had done ever since she had lain down upon it for the last time. Naomi Holland never complained; when the agony was at its worst, she shut her teeth more firmly over her bloodless lip, and her great black eyes glared at the blank wall before in a way that gave her attendants what they called “the creeps,” but no word or moan escaped her.

Between the paroxysms she kept up her keen interest in the life that went on about her. Nothing escaped her sharp, alert eyes and ears. This evening she lay spent on the crumpled pillows; she had had a bad spell in the afternoon and it had left her very weak. In the dim light her extremely long face looked corpse-like already. Her black hair lay in a heavy braid over the pillow and down the counterpane. It was all that was left of her beauty, and she took a fierce joy in it. Those long, glistening, sinuous tresses must be combed and braided every day, no matter what came.

A girl of fourteen was curled up on a chair at the head of the bed, with her head resting on the pillow. The boy at the window was her half-brother; but, between Christopher Holland and Eunice Carr, not the slightest resemblance existed.

Presently the sibilant silence was broken by a low, half-strangled sob. The sick woman, who had been watching a white evening star through the cherry boughs, turned impatiently at the sound.

“I wish you’d get over that, Eunice,” she said sharply. “I don’t want any one crying over me until I’m dead; and then you’ll have plenty else to do, most likely. If it wasn’t for Christopher I wouldn’t be anyways unwilling to die. When one has had such a life as I’ve had, there isn’t much in death to be afraid of. Only, a body would like to go right off, and not die by inches, like this. ‘Tain’t fair!”

She snapped out the last sentence as if addressing some unseen, tyrannical presence; her voice, at least, had not weakened, but was as clear and incisive as ever. The boy at the window stopped whistling, and the girl silently wiped her eyes on her faded gingham apron.

Naomi drew her own hair over her lips, and kissed it.

“You’ll never have hair like that, Eunice,” she said. “It does seem most too pretty to bury, doesn’t it? Mind you see that it is fixed nice when I’m laid out. Comb it right up on my head and braid it there.”

A sound, such as might be wrung from a suffering animal, came from the girl, but at the same moment the door opened and a woman entered.

“Chris,” she said sharply, “you get right off for the cows, you lazy little scamp! You knew right well you had to go for them, and here you’ve been idling, and me looking high and low for you. Make haste now; it’s ridiculous late.”

The boy pulled in his head and scowled at his aunt, but he dared not disobey, and went out slowly with a sulky mutter.

His aunt subdued a movement, that might have developed into a sound box on his ears, with a rather frightened glance at the bed. Naomi Holland was spent and dying, but her temper was still a thing to hold in dread, and her sister-in-law did not choose to rouse it by slapping Christopher. To her and her co-nurse the spasms of rage, which the sick woman sometimes had, seemed to partake of the nature of devil possession. The last one, only three days before, had been provoked by Christopher’s complaint of some real or fancied ill-treatment from his aunt, and the latter had no mind to bring on another. She went over to the bed, and straightened the clothes.

“Sarah and I are going out to milk, Naomi, Eunice will stay with you. She can run for us if you feel another spell coming on.”

Naomi Holland looked up at her sister-in-law with something like malicious enjoyment.

“I ain’t going to have any more spells, Car’line Anne. I’m going to die tonight. But you needn’t hurry milking for that, at all. I’ll take my time.”

She liked to see the alarm that came over the other woman’s face. It was richly worth while to scare Caroline Holland like that.

“Are you feeling worse, Naomi?” asked the latter shakily. “If you are I’ll send for Charles to go for the doctor.”

“No, you won’t. What good can the doctor do me? I don’t want either his or Charles’ permission to die. You can go and milk at your ease. I won’t die till you’re done — I won’t deprive you of the pleasure of seeing me.”

Mrs. Holland shut her lips and went out of the room with a martyr-like expression. In some ways Naomi Holland was not an exacting patient, but she took her satisfaction out in the biting, malicious speeches she never failed to make. Even on her deathbed her hostility to her sister-in-law had to find vent.

Outside, at the steps, Sarah Spencer was waiting, with the milk pails over her arm. Sarah Spencer had no fixed abiding place, but was always to be found where there was illness. Her experience, and an utter lack of nerves, made her a good nurse. She was a tall, homely woman with iron gray hair and a lined face. Beside her, the trim little Caroline Anne, with her light step and round, apple-red face, looked almost girlish.

The two women walked to the barnyard, discussing Naomi in undertones as they went. The house they had left behind grew very still.

In Naomi Holland’s room the shadows were gathering. Eunice timidly bent over her mother.

“Ma, do you want the light lit?”

“No, I’m watching that star just below the big cherry bough. I’ll see it set behind the hill. I’ve seen it there, off and on, for twelve years, and now I’m taking a good-by look at it. I want you to keep still, too. I’ve got a few things to think over, and I don’t want to be disturbed.”

The girl lifted herself about noiselessly and locked her hands over the bedpost. Then she laid her face down on them, biting at them silently until the marks of her teeth showed white against their red roughness.

Naomi Holland did not notice her. She was looking steadfastly at the great, pearl-like sparkle in the faint-hued sky. When it finally disappeared from her vision she struck her long, thin hands together twice, and a terrible expression came over her face for a moment. But, when she spoke, her voice was quite calm.

“You can light the candle now, Eunice. Put it up on the shelf here, where it won’t shine in my eyes. And then sit down on the foot of the bed where I can see you. I’ve got something to say to you.”

Eunice obeyed her noiselessly. As the pallid light shot up, it revealed the child plainly. She was thin and ill-formed — one shoulder being slightly higher than the other. She was dark, like her mother, but her features were irregular, and her hair fell in straggling, dim locks about her face. Her eyes were a dark brown, and over one was the slanting red scar of a birth mark.

Naomi Holland looked at her with the contempt she had never made any pretense of concealing. The girl was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, but she had never loved her; all the mother love in her had been lavished on her son.

When Eunice had placed the candle on the shelf and drawn down the ugly blue paper blinds, shutting out the strips of violet sky where a score of glimmering points were now visible, she sat down on the foot of the bed, facing her mother.

“The door is shut, is it, Eunice?”

Eunice nodded.

“Because I don’t want Car’line or any one else peeking and harking to what I’ve got to say. She’s out milking now, and I must make the most of the chance. Eunice, I’m going to die, and...”

“Ma!”

“There now, no taking on! You knew it had to come sometime soon. I haven’t the strength to talk much, so I want you just to be quiet and listen.

I ain't feeling any pain now, so I can think and talk pretty clear. Are you listening, Eunice?"

"Yes, ma."

"Mind you are. It's about Christopher. It hasn't been out of my mind since I laid down here. I've fought for a year to live, on his account, and it ain't any use. I must just die and leave him, and I don't know what he'll do. It's dreadful to think of."

She paused, and struck her shrunken hand sharply against the table.

"If he was bigger and could look out for himself it wouldn't be so bad. But he is only a little fellow, and Car'line hates him. You'll both have to live with her until you're grown up. She'll put on him and abuse him. He's like his father in some ways; he's got a temper and he is stubborn. He'll never get on with Car'line. Now, Eunice, I'm going to get you to promise to take my place with Christopher when I'm dead, as far as you can. You've got to; it's your duty. But I want you to promise."

"I will, ma," whispered the girl solemnly.

"You haven't much force — you never had. If you was smart, you could do a lot for him. But you'll have to do your best. I want you to promise me faithfully that you'll stand by him and protect him — that you won't let people impose on him; that you'll never desert him as long as he needs you, no matter what comes. Eunice, promise me this!"

In her excitement the sick woman raised herself up in the bed, and clutched the girl's thin arm. Her eyes were blazing and two scarlet spots glowed in her thin cheeks.

Eunice's face was white and tense. She clasped her hands as one in prayer.

"Mother, I promise it!"

Naomi relaxed her grip on the girl's arm and sank back exhausted on the pillow. A deathlike look came over her face as the excitement faded.

“My mind is easier now. But if I could only have lived another year or two! And I hate Car’line — hate her! Eunice, don’t you ever let her abuse my boy! If she did, or if you neglected him, I’d come back from my grave to you! As for the property, things will be pretty straight. I’ve seen to that. There’ll be no squabbling and doing Christopher out of his rights. He’s to have the farm as soon as he’s old enough to work it, and he’s to provide for you. And, Eunice, remember what you’ve promised!”

Outside, in the thickly gathering dusk, Caroline Holland and Sarah Spencer were at the dairy, straining the milk into creamers, for which Christopher was sullenly pumping water. The house was far from the road, up to which a long red lane led; across the field was the old Holland homestead where Caroline lived; her unmarried sister-in-law, Electa Holland, kept house for her while she waited on Naomi.

It was her night to go home and sleep, but Naomi’s words haunted her, although she believed they were born of pure “cantankerousness.”

“You’d better go in and look at her, Sarah,” she said, as she rinsed out the pails. “If you think I’d better stay here tonight, I will. If the woman was like anybody else a body would know what to do; but, if she thought she could scare us by saying she was going to die, she’d say it.”

When Sarah went in, the sick room was very quiet. In her opinion, Naomi was no worse than usual, and she told Caroline so; but the latter felt vaguely uneasy and concluded to stay.

Naomi was as cool and defiant as customary. She made them bring Christopher in to say goodnight and had him lifted up on the bed to kiss her. Then she held him back and looked at him admiringly — at the bright curls and rosy cheeks and round, firm limbs. The boy was uncomfortable under her gaze and squirmed hastily down. Her eyes followed him greedily, as he went out. When the door closed behind him, she groaned. Sarah Spencer was startled. She had never heard Naomi Holland groan since she had come to wait on her.

“Are you feeling any worse, Naomi? Is the pain coming back?”

“No. Go and tell Car’line to give Christopher some of that grape jelly on his bread before he goes to bed. She’ll find it in the cupboard under the stairs.”

Presently the house grew very still. Caroline had dropped asleep on the sitting-room lounge, across the hall. Sarah Spencer nodded over her knitting by the table in the sick room. She had told Eunice to go to bed, but the child refused. She still sat huddled up on the foot of the bed, watching her mother’s face intently. Naomi appeared to sleep. The candle burned long, and the wick was crowned by a little cap of fiery red that seemed to watch Eunice like some impish goblin. The wavering light cast grotesque shadows of Sarah Spencer’s head on the wall. The thin curtains at the window wavered to and fro, as if shaken by ghostly hands.

At midnight Naomi Holland opened her eyes. The child she had never loved was the only one to go with her to the brink of the Unseen.

“Eunice — remember!”

It was the faintest whisper. The soul, passing over the threshold of another life, strained back to its only earthly tie. A quiver passed over the long, pallid face.

A horrible scream rang through the silent house. Sarah Spencer sprang out of her doze in consternation, and gazed blankly at the shrieking child. Caroline came hurrying in with distended eyes. On the bed Naomi Holland lay dead.

In the room where she had died Naomi Holland lay in her coffin. It was dim and hushed; but, in the rest of the house, the preparations for the funeral were being hurried on. Through it all Eunice moved, calm and silent. Since her one wild spasm of screaming by her mother’s deathbed she had shed no tear, given no sign of grief. Perhaps, as her mother had said, she had no time. There was Christopher to be looked after. The boy’s grief was stormy and uncontrolled. He had cried until he was utterly exhausted. It was Eunice who soothed him, coaxed him to eat, kept him constantly by her. At night she took him to her own room and watched over him while he slept.

When the funeral was over the household furniture was packed away or sold. The house was locked up and the farm rented. There was nowhere for the children to go, save to their uncle's. Caroline Holland did not want them, but, having to take them, she grimly made up her mind to do what she considered her duty by them. She had five children of her own and between them and Christopher a standing feud had existed from the time he could walk.

She had never liked Naomi. Few people did. Benjamin Holland had not married until late in life, and his wife had declared war on his family at sight. She was a stranger in Avonlea, — a widow, with a three year-old child. She made few friends, as some people always asserted that she was not in her right mind.

Within a year of her second marriage Christopher was born, and from the hour of his birth his mother had worshiped him blindly. He was her only solace. For him she toiled and pinched and saved. Benjamin Holland had not been "forehanded" when she married him; but, when he died, six years after his marriage, he was a well-to-do man.

Naomi made no pretense of mourning for him. It was an open secret that they had quarreled like the proverbial cat and dog. Charles Holland and his wife had naturally sided with Benjamin, and Naomi fought her battles single-handed. After her husband's death, she managed to farm alone, and made it pay. When the mysterious malady which was to end her life first seized on her she fought against it with all the strength and stubbornness of her strong and stubborn nature. Her will won for her an added year of life, and then she had to yield. She tasted all the bitterness of death the day on which she lay down on her bed, and saw her enemy come in to rule her house.

But Caroline Holland was not a bad or unkind woman. True, she did not love Naomi or her children; but the woman was dying and must be looked after for the sake of common humanity. Caroline thought she had done well by her sister-in-law.

When the red clay was heaped over Naomi's grave in the Avonlea burying ground, Caroline took Eunice and Christopher home with her. Christopher did not want to go; it was Eunice who reconciled him. He clung to her with an exacting affection born of loneliness and grief.

In the days that followed Caroline Holland was obliged to confess to herself that there would have been no doing anything with Christopher had it not been for Eunice. The boy was sullen and obstinate, but his sister had an unfailing influence over him.

In Charles Holland's household no one was allowed to eat the bread of idleness. His own children were all girls, and Christopher came in handy as a chore boy. He was made to work — perhaps too hard. But Eunice helped him, and did half his work for him when nobody knew. When he quarreled with his cousins, she took his part; whenever possible she took on herself the blame and punishment of his misdeeds.

Electa Holland was Charles' unmarried sister. She had kept house for Benjamin until he married; then Naomi had bundled her out. Electa had never forgiven her for it. Her hatred passed on to Naomi's children. In a

hundred petty ways she revenged herself on them. For herself, Eunice bore it patiently; but it was a different matter when it touched Christopher.

Once Electa boxed Christopher's ears. Eunice, who was knitting by the table, stood up. A resemblance to her mother, never before visible, came out in her face like a brand. She lifted her hand and slapped Electa's cheek deliberately twice, leaving a dull red mark where she struck.

"If you ever strike my brother again," she said, slowly and vindictively, "I will slap your face every time you do. You have no right to touch him."

"My patience, what a fury!" said Electa. "Naomi Holland'll never be dead as long as you're alive!"

She told Charles of the affair and Eunice was severely punished. But Electa never interfered with Christopher again.

All the discordant elements in the Holland household could not prevent the children from growing up. It was a consummation which the harrassed Caroline devoutly wished. When Christopher Holland was seventeen he was a man grown — a big, strapping fellow. His childish beauty had coarsened, but he was thought handsome by many.

He took charge of his mother's farm then, and the brother and sister began their new life together in the long-unoccupied house. There were few regrets on either side when they left Charles Holland's roof. In her secret heart Eunice felt an unspeakable relief.

Christopher had been "hard to manage," as his uncle said, in the last year. He was getting into the habit of keeping late hours and doubtful company. This always provoked an explosion of wrath from Charles Holland, and the conflicts between him and his nephew were frequent and bitter.

For four years after their return home Eunice had a hard and anxious life. Christopher was idle and dissipated. Most people regarded him as a worthless fellow, and his uncle washed his hands of him utterly. Only Eunice never failed him; she never reproached or railed; she worked like a slave to keep things together. Eventually her patience prevailed.

Christopher, to a great extent, reformed and worked harder. He was never unkind to Eunice, even in his rages. It was not in him to appreciate or return her devotion; but his tolerant acceptance of it was her solace.

When Eunice was twenty-eight, Edward Bell wanted to marry her. He was a plain, middle-aged widower with four children; but, as Caroline did not fail to remind her, Eunice herself was not for every market, and the former did her best to make the match. She might have succeeded had it not been for Christopher. When he, in spite of Caroline's skillful management, got an inkling of what was going on, he flew into a true Holland rage. If Eunice married and left him — he would sell the farm and go to the Devil by way of the Klondike. He could not, and would not, do without her. No arrangement suggested by Caroline availed to pacify him, and, in the end, Eunice refused to marry Edward Bell. She could not leave Christopher, she said simply, and in this she stood rockfirm. Caroline could not budge her an inch.

"You're a fool, Eunice," she said, when she was obliged to give up in despair. "It's not likely you'll ever have another chance. As for Chris, in a year or two he'll be marrying himself, and where will you be then? You'll find your nose nicely out of joint when he brings a wife in here."

The shaft went home. Eunice's lips turned white. But she said, faintly, "The house is big enough for us both, if he does."

Caroline sniffed.

"Maybe so. You'll find out. However, there's no use talking. You're as set as your mother was, and nothing would ever budge her an inch. I only hope you won't be sorry for it."

When three more years had passed Christopher began to court Victoria Pye. The affair went on for some time before either Eunice or the Hollands go wind of it. When they did there was an explosion. Between the Hollands and the Pyes, root and branch, existed a feud that dated back for three generations. That the original cause of the quarrel was totally forgotten did not matter; it was matter of family pride that a Holland should have no dealings with a Pye.

When Christopher flew so openly in the face of this cherished hatred, there could be nothing less than consternation. Charles Holland broke through his determination to have nothing to do with Christopher, to remonstrate. Caroline went to Eunice in as much of a splutter as if Christopher had been her own brother.

Eunice did not care a row of pins for the Holland-Pye feud. Victoria was to her what any other girl, upon whom Christopher cast eyes of love, would have been — a supplanter. For the first time in her life she was torn with passionate jealousy; existence became a nightmare to her. Urged on by Caroline, and her own pain, she ventured to remonstrate with Christopher, also. She had expected a burst of rage, but he was surprisingly goodnatured. He seemed even amused.

“What have you got against Victoria?” he asked, tolerantly.

Eunice had no answer ready. It was true that nothing could be said against the girl. She felt helpless and baffled. Christopher laughed at her silence.

“I guess you’re a little jealous,” he said. “You must have expected I would get married some time. This house is big enough for us all. You’d better look at the matter sensibly, Eunice. Don’t let Charles and Caroline put nonsense into your head. A man must marry to please himself.”

Christopher was out late that night. Eunice waited up for him, as she always did. It was a chilly spring evening, reminding her of the night her mother had died. The kitchen was in spotless order, and she sat down on a stiff-backed chair by the window to wait for her brother.

She did not want a light. The moonlight fell in with faint illumination. Outside, the wind was blowing over a bed of new-sprung mint in the garden, and was suggestively fragrant. It was a very old-fashioned garden, full of perennials Naomi Holland had planted long ago. Eunice always kept it primly neat. She had been working in it that day, and felt tired.

She was all alone in the house and the loneliness filled her with a faint dread. She had tried all that day to reconcile herself to Christopher’s marriage, and had partially succeeded. She told herself that she could still

watch over him and care for his comfort. She would even try to love Victoria; after all, it might be pleasant to have another woman in the house. So, sitting there, she fed her hungry soul with these husks of comfort.

When she heard Christopher's step she moved about quickly to get a light. He frowned when he saw her; he had always resented her sitting up for him. He sat down by the stove and took off his boots, while Eunice got a lunch for him. After he had eaten it in silence he made no move to go to bed. A chill, premonitory fear crept over Eunice. It did not surprise her at all when Christopher finally said, abruptly, "Eunice, I've a notion to get married this spring."

Eunice clasped her hands together under the table. It was what she had been expecting. She said so, in a monotonous voice.

"We must make some arrangement for — for you, Eunice," Christopher went on, in a hurried, hesitant way, keeping his eyes riveted doggedly on his plate. "Victoria doesn't exactly like — well, she thinks it's better for young married folks to begin life by themselves, and I guess she's about right. You wouldn't find it comfortable, anyhow, having to step back to second place after being mistress here so long."

Eunice tried to speak, but only an indistinct murmur came from her bloodless lips. The sound made Christopher look up. Something in her face irritated him. He pushed back his chair impatiently.

"Now, Eunice, don't go taking on. It won't be any use. Look at this business in a sensible way. I'm fond of you, and all that, but a man is bound to consider his wife first. I'll provide for you comfortably."

"Do you mean to say that your wife is going to turn me out?"
Eunice gasped, rather than spoke, the words.

Christopher drew his reddish brows together.

"I just mean that Victoria says she won't marry me if she has to live with you. She's afraid of you. I told her you wouldn't interfere with her, but she

wasn't satisfied. It's your own fault, Eunice. You've always been so queer and close that people think you're an awful crank. Victoria's young and lively, and you and she wouldn't get on at all. There isn't any question of turning you out. I'll build a little house for you somewhere, and you'll be a great deal better off there than you would be here. So don't make a fuss."

Eunice did not look as if she were going to make a fuss. She sat as if turned to stone, her hands lying palm upward in her lap. Christopher got up, hugely relieved that the dreaded explanation was over.

"Guess I'll go to bed. You'd better have gone long ago. It's all nonsense, this waiting up for me."

When he had gone Eunice drew a long, sobbing breath and looked about her like a dazed soul. All the sorrow of her life was as nothing to the desolation that assailed her now.

She rose and, with uncertain footsteps, passed out through the hall and into the room where her mother died. She had always kept it locked and undisturbed; it was arranged just as Naomi Holland had left it. Eunice tottered to the bed and sat down on it.

She recalled the promise she had made to her mother in that very room. Was the power to keep it to be wrested from her? Was she to be driven from her home and parted from the only creature she had on earth to love? And would Christopher allow it, after all her sacrifices for him? Aye, that he would! He cared more for that black-eyed, waxen-faced girl at the old Pye place than for his own kin. Eunice put her hands over her dry, burning eyes and groaned aloud.

Caroline Holland had her hour of triumph over Eunice when she heard it all. To one of her nature there was no pleasure so sweet as that of saying, "I told you so." Having said it, however, she offered Eunice a home. Electa Holland was dead, and Eunice might fill her place very acceptably, if she would.

"You can't go off and live by yourself," Caroline told her. "It's all nonsense to talk of such a thing. We will give you a home, if Christopher

is going to turn you out. You were always a fool, Eunice, to pet and pamper him as you've done. This is the thanks you get for it — turned out like a dog for his fine wife's whim! I only wish your mother was alive!"

It was probably the first time Caroline had ever wished this. She had flown at Christopher like a fury about the matter, and had been rudely insulted for her pains. Christopher had told her to mind her own business.

When Caroline cooled down she made some arrangements with him, to all of which Eunice listlessly assented. She did not care what became of her. When Christopher Holland brought Victoria as mistress to the house where his mother had toiled, and suffered, and ruled with her rod of iron, Eunice was gone. In Charles Holland's household she took Electa's place — an unpaid upper servant.

Charles and Caroline were kind enough to her, and there was plenty to do. For five years her dull, colorless life went on, during which time she never crossed the threshold of the house where Victoria Holland ruled with a sway as absolute as Naomi's had been. Caroline's curiosity led her, after her first anger had cooled, to make occasional calls, the observations of which she faithfully reported to Eunice. The latter never betrayed any interest in them, save once. This was when Caroline came home full of the news that Victoria had had the room where Naomi died opened up, and showily furnished as a parlor. Then Eunice's sallow face crimsoned, and her eyes flashed, over the desecration. But no word of comment or complaint ever crossed her lips.

She knew, as every one else knew, that the glamor soon went from Christopher Holland's married life. The marriage proved an unhappy one. Not unnaturally, although unjustly, Eunice blamed Victoria for this, and hated her more than ever for it.

Christopher seldom came to Charles' house. Possibly he felt ashamed. He had grown into a morose, silent man, at home and abroad. It was said he had gone back to his old drinking habits.

One fall Victoria Holland went to town to visit her married sister. She took their only child with her. In her absence Christopher kept house for

himself.

It was a fall long remembered in Avonlea. With the dropping of the leaves, and the shortening of the dreary days, the shadow of a fear fell over the land. Charles Holland brought the fateful news home one night.

“There’s smallpox in Charlottetown — five or six cases. Came in one of the vessels. There was a concert, and a sailor from one of the ships was there, and took sick the next day.”

This was alarming enough. Charlottetown was not so very far away and considerable traffic went on between it and the north shore districts.

When Caroline recounted the concert story to Christopher the next morning his ruddy face turned quite pale. He opened his lips as if to speak, then closed them again. They were sitting in the kitchen; Caroline had run over to return some tea she had borrowed, and, incidentally, to see what she could of Victoria’s housekeeping in her absence. Her eyes had been busy while her tongue ran on, so she did not notice the man’s pallor and silence.

“How long does it take for smallpox to develop after one has been exposed to it?” he asked abruptly, when Caroline rose to go.

“Ten to fourteen days, I calc’late,” was her answer. “I must see about having the girls vaccinated right off. It’ll likely spread. When do you expect Victoria home?”

“When she’s ready to come, whenever that will be,” was the gruff response.

A week later Caroline said to Eunice, “Whatever’s got Christopher? He hasn’t been out anywhere for ages — just hangs round home the whole time. It’s something new for him. I s’pose the place is so quiet, now Madam Victoria’s away, that he can find some rest for his soul. I believe I’ll run over after milking and see how he’s getting on. You might as well come, too, Eunice.”

Eunice shook her head. She had all her mother's obstinacy, and darken Victoria's door she would not. She went on patiently darning socks, sitting at the west window, which was her favorite position — perhaps because she could look from it across the sloping field and past the crescent curve of maple grove to her lost home.

After milking, Caroline threw a shawl over her head and ran across the field. The house looked lonely and deserted. As she fumbled at the latch of the gate the kitchen door opened, and Christopher Holland appeared on the threshold.

“Don't come any farther,” he called.

Caroline fell back in blank astonishment. Was this some more of Victoria's work?

“I ain't an agent for the smallpox,” she called back viciously.

Christopher did not heed her.

“Will you go home and ask uncle if he'll go, or send for Doctor Spencer? He's the smallpox doctor. I'm sick.”

Caroline felt a thrill of dismay and fear. She faltered a few steps backward.

“Sick? What's the matter with you?”

“I was in Charlottetown that night, and went to the concert. That sailor sat right beside me. I thought at the time he looked sick. It was just twelve days ago. I've felt bad all day yesterday and to-day. Send for the doctor. Don't come near the house, or let any one else come near.”

He went in and shut the door. Caroline stood for a few moments in an almost ludicrous panic. Then she turned and ran, as if for her life, across the field. Eunice saw her coming and met her at the door.

“Mercy on us!” gasped Caroline. “Christopher's sick and he thinks he's got the smallpox. Where's Charles?”

Eunice tottered back against the door. Her hand went up to her side in a way that had been getting very common with her of late. Even in the midst of her excitement Caroline noticed it.

“Eunice, what makes you do that every time anything startles you?” she asked sharply. “Is it anything about your heart?”

“I don’t — know. A little pain — it’s gone now. Did you say that Christopher has — the smallpox?”

“Well, he says so himself, and it’s more than likely, considering the circumstances. I declare, I never got such a turn in my life. It’s a dreadful thing. I must find Charles at once — there’ll be a hundred things to do.”

Eunice hardly heard her. Her mind was centered upon one idea. Christopher was ill — alone — she must go to him. It did not matter what his disease was. When Caroline came in from her breathless expedition to the barn, she found Eunice standing by the table, with her hat and shawl on, tying up a parcel.

“Eunice! Where on earth are you going?”

“Over home,” said Eunice. “If Christopher is going to be ill he must be nursed, and I’m the one to do it. He ought to be seen to right away.”

“Eunice Carr! Have you gone clean out of your senses? It’s the smallpox — the smallpox! If he’s got it he’ll have to be taken to the smallpox hospital in town. You shan’t stir a step to go to that house!”

“I will.” Eunice faced her excited aunt quietly. The odd resemblance to her mother, which only came out in moments of great tension, was plainly visible. “He shan’t go to the hospital — they never get proper attention there. You needn’t try to stop me. It won’t put you or your family in any danger.”

Caroline fell helplessly into a chair. She felt that it would be of no use to argue with a woman so determined. She wished Charles was there. But Charles had already gone, posthaste, for the doctor.

With a firm step, Eunice went across the field footpath she had not trodden for so long. She felt no fear — rather a sort of elation. Christopher needed her once more; the interloper who had come between them was not there. As she walked through the frosty twilight she thought of the promise made to Naomi Holland, years ago.

Christopher saw her coming and waved her back.

“Don’t come any nearer, Eunice. Didn’t Caroline tell you? I’m taking smallpox.”

Eunice did not pause. She went boldly through the yard and up the porch steps. He retreated before her and held the door.

“Eunice, you’re crazy, girl! Go home, before it’s too late.”

Eunice pushed open the door resolutely and went in.

“It’s too late now. I’m here, and I mean to stay and nurse you, if it’s the smallpox you’ve got. Maybe it’s not. Just now, when a person has a finger-ache, he thinks it’s smallpox. Anyhow, whatever it is, you ought to be in bed and looked after. You’ll catch cold. Let me get a light and have a look at you.”

Christopher had sunk into a chair. His natural selfishness reasserted itself, and he made no further effort to dissuade Eunice. She got a lamp and set it on the table by him, while she scrutinized his face closely.

“You look feverish. What do you feel like? When did you take sick?”

“Yesterday afternoon. I have chills and hot spells and pains in my back. Eunice, do you think it’s really smallpox? And will I die?”

He caught her hands, and looked imploringly up at her, as a child might have done. Eunice felt a wave of love and tenderness sweep warmly over her starved heart.

“Don’t worry. Lots of people recover from smallpox if they’re properly nursed, and you’ll be that, for I’ll see to it. Charles has gone for the doctor,

and we'll know when he comes. You must go straight to bed."

She took off her hat and shawl, and hung them up. She felt as much at home as if she had never been away. She had got back to her kingdom, and there was none to dispute it with her. When Dr. Spencer and old Giles Blewett, who had had smallpox in his youth, came, two hours later, they found Eunice in serene charge. The house was in order and reeking of disinfectants. Victoria's fine furniture and fixings were being bundled out of the parlor. There was no bedroom downstairs, and, if Christopher was going to be ill, he must be installed there.

The doctor looked grave.

"I don't like it," he said, "but I'm not quite sure yet. If it is smallpox the eruption will probably be out by morning. I must admit he has most of the symptoms. Will you have him taken to the hospital?"

"No," said Eunice, decisively. "I'll nurse him myself. I'm not afraid and I'm well and strong."

"Very well. You've been vaccinated lately?"

"Yes."

"Well, nothing more can be done at present. You may as well lie down for a while and save your strength."

But Eunice could not do that. There was too much to attend to. She went out to the hall and threw up the window. Down below, at a safe distance, Charles Holland was waiting. The cold wind blew up to Eunice the odor of the disinfectants with which he had steeped himself.

"What does the doctor say?" he shouted.

"He thinks it's the smallpox. Have you sent word to Victoria?"

"Yes, Jim Blewett drove into town and told her. She'll stay with her sister till it is over. Of course it's the best thing for her to do. She's terribly frightened."

Eunice's lip curled contemptuously. To her, a wife who could desert her husband, no matter what disease he had, was an incomprehensible creature. But it was better so; she would have Christopher all to herself.

The night was long and wearisome, but the morning came all too soon for the dread certainty it brought. The doctor pronounced the case smallpox. Eunice had hoped against hope, but now, knowing the worst, she was very calm and resolute.

By noon the fateful yellow flag was flying over the house, and all arrangements had been made. Caroline was to do the necessary cooking, and Charles was to bring the food and leave it in the yard. Old Giles Blewett was to come every day and attend to the stock, as well as help Eunice with the sick man; and the long, hard fight with death began.

It was a hard fight, indeed. Christopher Holland, in the clutches of the loathsome disease, was an object from which his nearest and dearest might have been pardoned for shrinking. But Eunice never faltered; she never left her post. Sometimes she dozed in a chair by the bed, but she never lay down. Her endurance was something wonderful, her patience and tenderness almost superhuman. To and fro she went, in noiseless ministry, as the long, dreadful days wore away, with a quiet smile on her lips, and in her dark, sorrowful eyes the rapt look of a pictured saint in some dim cathedral niche. For her there was no world outside the bare room where lay the repulsive object she loved.

One day the doctor looked very grave. He had grown well-hardened to pitiful scenes in his lifetime; but he shrunk from telling Eunice that her brother could not live. He had never seen such devotion as hers. It seemed brutal to tell her that it had been in vain.

But Eunice had seen it for herself. She took it very calmly, the doctor thought. And she had her reward at last — such as it was. She thought it amply sufficient.

One night Christopher Holland opened his swollen eyes as she bent over him. They were alone in the old house. It was raining outside, and the drops rattled noisily on the panes.

Christopher smiled at his sister with parched lips, and put out a feeble hand toward her.

“Eunice,” he said faintly, “you’ve been the best sister ever a man had. I haven’t treated you right; but you’ve stood by me to the last. Tell Victoria — tell her — to be good to you—”

His voice died away into an inarticulate murmur. Eunice Carr was alone with her dead.

They buried Christopher Holland in haste and privacy the next day. The doctor disinfected the house, and Eunice was to stay there alone until it might be safe to make other arrangements. She had not shed a tear; the doctor thought she was a rather odd person, but he had a great admiration for her. He told her she was the best nurse he had ever seen. To Eunice, praise or blame mattered nothing. Something in her life had snapped — some vital interest had departed. She wondered how she could live through the dreary, coming years.

Late that night she went into the room where her mother and brother had died. The window was open and the cold, pure air was grateful to her after the drug-laden atmosphere she had breathed so long. She knelt down by the stripped bed.

“Mother,” she said aloud, “I have kept my promise.”

When she tried to rise, long after, she staggered and fell across the bed, with her hand pressed on her heart. Old Giles Blewett found her there in the morning. There was a smile on her face.

THE CONSCIENCE CASE OF DAVID BELL

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Eben Bell came in with an armful of wood and banged it cheerfully down in the box behind the glowing Waterloo stove, which was coloring the heart of the little kitchen's gloom with tremulous, rose-red whirls of light.

“There, sis, that’s the last chore on my list. Bob’s milking. Nothing more for me to do but put on my white collar for meeting. Avonlea is more than lively since the evangelist came, ain’t it, though!”

Mollie Bell nodded. She was curling her hair before the tiny mirror that hung on the whitewashed wall and distorted her round, pink-and-white face into a grotesque caricature.

“Wonder who’ll stand up tonight,” said Eben reflectively, sitting down on the edge of the woodbox. “There ain’t many sinners left in Avonlea — only a few hardened chaps like myself.”

“You shouldn’t talk like that,” said Mollie rebukingly. “What if father heard you?”

“Father wouldn’t hear me if I shouted it in his ear,” returned Eben. “He goes around, these days, like a man in a dream and a mighty bad dream at that. Father has always been a good man. What’s the matter with him?”

“I don’t know,” said Mollie, dropping her voice. “Mother is dreadfully worried over him. And everybody is talking, Eb. It just makes me squirm. Flora Jane Fletcher asked me last night why father never testified, and him one of the elders. She said the minister was perplexed about it. I felt my face getting red.”

“Why didn’t you tell her it was no business of hers?” said Eben angrily. “Old Flora Jane had better mind her own business.”

“But all the folks are talking about it, Eb. And mother is fretting her heart out over it. Father has never acted like himself since these meetings began. He just goes there night after night, and sits like a mummy, with his head down. And almost everybody else in Avonlea has testified.”

“Oh, no, there’s lots haven’t,” said Eben. “Matthew Cuthbert never has, nor Uncle Elisha, nor any of the Whites.”

“But everybody knows they don’t believe in getting up and testifying, so nobody wonders when they don’t. Besides,” Mollie laughed—“Matthew could never get a word out in public, if he did believe in it. He’d be too shy. But,” she added with a sigh, “it isn’t that way with father. He believes in testimony, so people wonder why he doesn’t get up. Why, even old Josiah Sloane gets up every night.”

“With his whiskers sticking out every which way, and his hair ditto,” interjected the graceless Eben.

“When the minister calls for testimonials and all the folks look at our pew, I feel ready to sink through the floor for shame,” sighed Mollie. “If father would get up just once!”

Miriam Bell entered the kitchen. She was ready for the meeting, to which Major Spencer was to take her. She was a tall, pale girl, with a serious face, and dark, thoughtful eyes, totally unlike Mollie. She had “come under conviction” during the meetings, and had stood up for prayer and testimony several times. The evangelist thought her very spiritual. She heard Mollie’s concluding sentence and spoke reprovingly.

“You shouldn’t criticize your father, Mollie. It isn’t for you to judge him.”

Eben had hastily slipped out. He was afraid Miriam would begin talking religion to him if he stayed. He had with difficulty escaped from an exhortation by Robert in the cowstable. There was no peace in Avonlea for

the unregenerate, he reflected. Robert and Miriam had both “come out,” and Mollie was hovering on the brink.

“Dad and I are the black sheep of the family,” he said, with a laugh, for which he at once felt guilty. Eben had been brought up with a strict reverence for all religious matters. On the surface he might sometimes laugh at them, but the deeps troubled him whenever he did so.

Indoors, Miriam touched her younger sister’s shoulder and looked at her affectionately.

“Won’t you decide tonight, Mollie?” she asked, in a voice tremulous with emotion.

Mollie crimsoned and turned her face away uncomfortably. She did not know what answer to make, and was glad that a jingle of bells outside saved her the necessity of replying.

“There’s your beau, Miriam,” she said, as she darted into the sitting room.

Soon after, Eben brought the family pung and his chubby red mare to the door for Mollie. He had not as yet attained to the dignity of a cutter of his own. That was for his elder brother, Robert, who presently came out in his new fur coat and drove dashing away with bells and glitter.

“Thinks he’s the people,” remarked Eben, with a fraternal grin.

The rich winter twilight was purpling over the white world as they drove down the lane under the overarching wild cherry trees that glittered with gemmy hoar-frost. The snow creaked and crisped under the runners. A shrill wind was keening in the leafless dogwoods. Over the trees the sky was a dome of silver, with a lucent star or two on the slope of the west. Earth-stars gleamed warmly out here and there, where homesteads were tucked snugly away in their orchards or groves of birch.

“The church will be jammed tonight,” said Eben. “It’s so fine that folks will come from near and far. Guess it’ll be exciting.”

“If only father would testify!” sighed Mollie, from the bottom of the pung, where she was snuggled amid furs and straw. “Miriam can say what she likes, but I do feels as if we were all disgraced. It sends a creep all over me to hear Mr. Bentley say, ‘Now, isn’t there one more to say a word for Jesus?’ and look right over at father.”

Eben flicked his mare with his whip, and she broke into a trot. The silence was filled with a faint, fairylike melody from afar down the road where a pungful of young folks from White Sands were singing hymns on their way to meeting.

“Look here, Mollie,” said Eben awkwardly at last, “are you going to stand up for prayers tonight?”

“I — I can’t as long as father acts this way,” answered Mollie, in a choked voice. “I — I want to, Eb, and Mirry and Bob want me to, but I can’t. I do hope that the evangelist won’t come and talk to me special tonight. I always feels as if I was being pulled two different ways, when he does.”

Back in the kitchen at home Mrs. Bell was waiting for her husband to bring the horse to the door. She was a slight, dark-eyed little woman, with thin, vivid-red cheeks. From out of the swathings in which she had wrapped her bonnet, her face gleamed sad and troubled. Now and then she sighed heavily.

The cat came to her from under the stove, languidly stretching himself, and yawning until all the red cavern of his mouth and throat was revealed. At the moment he had an uncanny resemblance to Elder Joseph Blewett of White Sands — Roaring Joe, the irreverent boys called him — when he grew excited and shouted. Mrs. Bell saw it — and then reproached herself for the sacrilege.

“But it’s no wonder I’ve wicked thoughts,” she said, wearily. “I’m that worried I ain’t rightly myself. If he would only tell me what the trouble is, maybe I could help him. At any rate, I’d KNOW. It hurts me so to see him going about, day after day, with his head hanging and that look on his face, as if he had something fearful on his conscience — him that never harmed a living soul. And then the way he groans and mutters in his sleep! He has

always lived a just, upright life. He hasn't no right to go on like this, disgracing his family."

Mrs. Bell's angry sob was cut short by the sleigh at the door. Her husband poked in his busy, iron-gray head and said, "Now, mother." He helped her into the sleigh, tucked the rugs warmly around her, and put a hot brick at her feet. His solicitude hurt her. It was all for her material comfort. It did not matter to him what mental agony she might suffer over his strange attitude. For the first time in their married life Mary Bell felt resentment against her husband.

They drove along in silence, past the snow-powdered hedges of spruce, and under the arches of the forest roadways. They were late, and a great stillness was over all the land. David Bell never spoke. All his usual cheerful talkativeness had disappeared since the revival meetings had begun in Avonlea. From the first he had gone about as a man over whom some strange doom is impending, seemingly oblivious to all that might be said or thought of him in his own family or in the church. Mary Bell thought she would go out of her mind if her husband continued to act in this way. Her reflections were bitter and rebellious as they sped along through the glittering night of the winter's prime.

"I don't get one bit of good out of the meetings," she thought resentfully. "There ain't any peace or joy for me, not even in testifying myself, when David sits there like a stick or stone. If he'd been opposed to the revivalist coming here, like old Uncle Jerry, or if he didn't believe in public testimony, I wouldn't mind. I'd understand. But, as it is, I feel dreadful humiliated."

Revival meetings had never been held in Avonlea before. "Uncle" Jerry MacPherson, who was the supreme local authority in church matters, taking precedence of even the minister, had been uncompromisingly opposed to them. He was a stern, deeply religious Scotchman, with a horror of the emotional form of religion. As long as Uncle Jerry's spare, ascetic form and deeply-graved square-jawed face filled his accustomed corner by the northwest window of Avonlea church no revivalist might venture therein, although the majority of the congregation, including the minister, would have welcomed one warmly.

But now Uncle Jerry was sleeping peacefully under the tangled grasses and white snows of the burying ground, and, if dead people ever do turn in their graves, Uncle Jerry might well have turned in his when the revivalist came to Avonlea church, and there followed the emotional services, public testimonies, and religious excitement which the old man's sturdy soul had always abhorred.

Avonlea was a good field for an evangelist. The Rev. Geoffrey Mountain, who came to assist the Avonlea minister in revivifying the dry bones thereof, knew this and reveled in the knowledge. It was not often that such a virgin parish could be found nowadays, with scores of impressionable, unspoiled souls on which fervid oratory could play skillfully, as a master on a mighty organ, until every note in them thrilled to life and utterance. The Rev. Geoffrey Mountain was a good man; of the earth, earthy, to be sure, but with an unquestionable sincerity of belief and purpose which went far to counterbalance the sensationalism of some of his methods.

He was large and handsome, with a marvelously sweet and winning voice — a voice that could melt into irresistible tenderness, or swell into sonorous appeal and condemnation, or ring like a trumpet calling to battle.

His frequent grammatical errors, and lapses into vulgarity, counted for nothing against its charm, and the most commonplace words in the world would have borrowed much of the power of real oratory from its magic. He knew its value and used it effectively — perhaps even ostentatiously.

Geoffrey Mountain's religion and methods, like the man himself, were showy, but, of their kind, sincere, and, though the good he accomplished might not be unmixed, it was a quantity to be reckoned with.

So the Rev. Geoffrey Mountain came to Avonlea, conquering and to conquer. Night after night the church was crowded with eager listeners, who hung breathlessly on his words and wept and thrilled and exulted as he willed. Into many young souls his appeals and warnings burned their way, and each night they rose for prayer in response to his invitation. Older Christians, too, took on a new lease of intensity, and even the unregenerate and the scoffers found a certain fascination in the meetings. Threading through it all, for old and young, converted and unconverted,

was an unacknowledged feeling for religious dissipation. Avonlea was a quiet place, — and the revival meetings were lively.

When David and Mary Bell reached the church the services had begun, and they heard the refrain of a hallelujah hymn as they were crossing Harmon Andrews' field. David Bell left his wife at the platform and drove to the horseshed.

Mrs. Bell unwound the scarf from her bonnet and shook the frost crystals from it. In the porch Flora Jane Fletcher and her sister, Mrs. Harmon Andrews, were talking in low whispers. Presently Flora Jane put out her lank, cashmere-gloved hand and plucked Mrs. Bell's shawl.

"Mary, is the elder going to testify tonight?" she asked, in a shrill whisper.

Mrs. Bell winced. She would have given much to be able to answer "Yes," but she had to say stiffly,

"I don't know."

Flora Jane lifted her chin.

"Well, Mrs. Bell, I only asked because every one thinks it is strange he doesn't — and an elder, of all people. It looks as if he didn't think himself a Christian, you know. Of course, we all know better, but it LOOKS that way. If I was you, I'd tell him folks was talking about it. Mr. Bentley says it is hindering the full success of the meetings."

Mrs. Bell turned on her tormentor in swift anger. She might resent her husband's strange behavior herself, but nobody else should dare to criticize him to her.

"I don't think you need to worry yourself about the elder, Flora Jane," she said bitingly. "Maybe 't isn't the best Christians that do the most talking about it always. I guess, as far as living up to his profession goes, the elder will compare pretty favorably with Levi Boulter, who gets up and testifies every night, and cheats the very eye-teeth out of people in the daytime."

Levi Boulter was a middle-aged widower, with a large family, who was supposed to have cast a matrimonial eye Flora Janeward. The use of his name was an effective thrust on Mrs. Bell's part, and silenced Flora Jane. Too angry for speech she seized her sister's arm and hurried her into church.

But her victory could not remove from Mary Bell's soul the sting implanted there by Flora Jane's words. When her husband came up to the platform she put her hand on his snowy arm appealingly.

"Oh, David, won't you get up tonight? I do feel so dreadful bad — folks are talking so — I just feel humiliated."

David Bell hung his head like a shamed schoolboy.

"I can't, Mary," he said huskily. "'Tain't no use to pester me."

"You don't care for my feelings," said his wife bitterly. "And Mollie won't come out because you're acting so. You're keeping her back from salvation. And you're hindering the success of the revival — Mr. Bentley says so."

David Bell groaned. This sign of suffering wrung his wife's heart. With quick contrition she whispered,

"There, never mind, David. I oughtn't to have spoken to you so. You know your duty best. Let's go in."

"Wait." His voice was imploring.

"Mary, is it true that Mollie won't come out because of me? Am I standing in my child's light?"

"I — don't — know. I guess not. Mollie's just a foolish young girl yet. Never mind — come in."

He followed her dejectedly in, and up the aisle to their pew in the center of the church. The building was warm and crowded. The pastor was reading the Bible lesson for the evening. In the choir, behind him, David Bell saw

Mollie's girlish face, tinged with a troubled seriousness. His own wind-ruddy face and bushy gray eyebrows worked convulsively with his inward throes. A sigh that was almost a groan burst from him.

"I'll have to do it," he said to himself in agony.

When several more hymns had been sung, and late arrivals began to pack the aisles, the evangelist arose. His style for the evening was the tender, the pleading, the solemn. He modulated his tones to marvelous sweetness, and sent them thrillingly over the breathless pews, entangling the hearts and souls of his listeners in a mesh of subtle emotion. Many of the women began to cry softly. Fervent amens broke from some of the members. When the evangelist sat down, after a closing appeal which, in its way, was a masterpiece, an audible sigh of relieved tension passed like a wave over the audience.

After prayer the pastor made the usual request that, if any of those present wished to come out on the side of Christ, they would signify the wish by rising for a moment in their places. After a brief interval, a pale boy under the gallery rose, followed by an old man at the top of the church. A frightened, sweet-faced child of twelve got tremblingly upon her feet, and a dramatic thrill passed over the congregation when her mother suddenly stood up beside her. The evangelist's "Thank God" was hearty and insistent.

David Bell looked almost imploringly at Mollie; but she kept her seat, with downcast eyes. Over in the big square "stone pew" he saw Eben bending forward, with his elbows on his knees, gazing frowningly at the floor.

"I'm a stumbling block to them both," he thought bitterly.

A hymn was sung and prayer offered for those under conviction. Then testimonies were called for. The evangelist asked for them in tones which made it seem a personal request to every one in that building.

Many testimonies followed, each infused with the personality of the giver. Most of them were brief and stereotyped. Finally a pause ensued. The

evangelist swept the pews with his kindling eyes and exclaimed, appealingly,

“Has EVERY Christian in this church tonight spoken a word for his Master?”

There were many who had not testified, but every eye in the building followed the pastor’s accusing glance to the Bell pew. Mollie crimsoned with shame. Mrs. Bell cowered visibly.

Although everybody looked thus at David Bell, nobody now expected him to testify. When he rose to his feet, a murmur of surprise passed over the audience, followed by a silence so complete as to be terrible. To David Bell it seemed to possess the awe of final judgment.

Twice he opened his lips, and tried vainly to speak. The third time he succeeded; but his voice sounded strangely in his own ears. He gripped the back of the pew before him with his knotty hands, and fixed his eyes unseeingly on the Christian Endeavor pledge that hung over the heads of the choir.

“Brethren and sisters,” he said hoarsely, “before I can say a word of Christian testimony here tonight I’ve got something to confess. It’s been lying hard and heavy on my conscience ever since these meetings begun. As long as I kept silence about it I couldn’t get up and bear witness for Christ. Many of you have expected me to do it. Maybe I’ve been a stumbling block to some of you. This season of revival has brought no blessing to me because of my sin, which I repented of, but tried to conceal. There has been a spiritual darkness over me.

“Friends and neighbors, I have always been held by you as an honest man. It was the shame of having you know I was not which has kept me back from open confession and testimony. Just afore these meetings commenced I come home from town one night and found that somebody had passed a counterfeit ten-dollar bill on me. Then Satan entered into me and possessed me. When Mrs. Rachel Lynde come next day, collecting for foreign missions, I give her that ten dollar bill. She never knowed the difference, and sent it away with the rest. But I knew I’d done a mean and

sinful thing. I couldn't drive it out of my thoughts. A few days afterwards I went down to Mrs. Rachel's and give her ten good dollars for the fund. I told her I had come to the conclusion I ought to give more than ten dollars, out of my abundance, to the Lord. That was a lie. Mrs. Lynde thought I was a generous man, and I felt ashamed to look her in the face. But I'd done what I could to right the wrong, and I thought it would be all right. But it wasn't. I've never known a minute's peace of mind or conscience since. I tried to cheat the Lord, and then tried to patch it up by doing something that redounded to my worldly credit. When these meetings begun, and everybody expected me to testify, I couldn't do it. It would have seemed like blasphemy. And I couldn't endure the thought of telling what I'd done, either. I argued it all out a thousand times that I hadn't done any real harm after all, but it was no use. I've been so wrapped up in my own brooding and misery that I didn't realize I was inflicting suffering on those dear to me by my conduct, and, maybe, holding some of them back from the paths of salvation. But my eyes have been opened to this tonight, and the Lord has given me strength to confess my sin and glorify His holy name."

The broken tones ceased, and David Bell sat down, wiping the great drops of perspiration from his brow. To a man of his training, and cast of thought, no ordeal could be more terrible than that through which he had just passed. But underneath the turmoil of his emotion he felt a great calm and peace, threaded with the exultation of a hard-won spiritual victory.

Over the church was a solemn hush. The evangelist's "amen" was not spoken with his usual unctuous fervor, but very gently and reverently. In spite of his coarse fiber, he could appreciate the nobility behind such a confession as this, and the deeps of stern suffering it sounded.

Before the last prayer the pastor paused and looked around.

"Is there yet one," he asked gently, "who wishes to be especially remembered in our concluding prayer?"

For a moment nobody moved. Then Mollie Bell stood up in the choir seat, and, down by the stove, Eben, his flushed, boyish face held high, rose sturdily to his feet in the midst of his companions.

“Thank God,” whispered Mary Bell.

“Amen,” said her husband huskily.

“Let us pray,” said Mr. Bentley.

ONLY A COMMON FELLO W

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On my dearie's wedding morning I wakened early and went to her room. Long and long ago she had made me promise that I would be the one to wake her on the morning of her wedding day.

"You were the first to take me in your arms when I came into the world, Aunt Rachel," she had said, "and I want you to be the first to greet me on that wonderful day."

But that was long ago, and now my heart foreboded that there would be no need of wakening her. And there was not. She was lying there awake, very quiet, with her hand under her cheek, and her big blue eyes fixed on the window, through which a pale, dull light was creeping in — a joyless light it was, and enough to make a body shiver. I felt more like weeping than rejoicing, and my heart took to aching when I saw her there so white and patient, more like a girl who was waiting for a winding-sheet than for a bridal veil. But she smiled brave-like, when I sat down on her bed and took her hand.

"You look as if you haven't slept all night, dearie," I said.

"I didn't — not a great deal," she answered me. "But the night didn't seem long; no, it seemed too short. I was thinking of a great many things. What time is it, Aunt Rachel?"

"Five o'clock."

"Then in six hours more—"

She suddenly sat up in her bed, her great, thick rope of brown hair falling over her white shoulders, and flung her arms about me, and burst into tears on my old breast. I petted and soothed her, and said not a word; and, after a

while, she stopped crying; but she still sat with her head so that I couldn't see her face.

"We didn't think it would be like this once, did we, Aunt Rachel?" she said, very softly.

"It shouldn't be like this, now," I said. I had to say it. I never could hide the thought of that marriage, and I couldn't pretend to. It was all her stepmother's doings — right well I knew that. My dearie would never have taken Mark Foster else.

"Don't let us talk of that," she said, soft and beseeching, just the same way she used to speak when she was a baby-child and wanted to coax me into something. "Let us talk about the old days — and HIM."

"I don't see much use in talking of HIM, when you're going to marry Mark Foster to-day," I said.

But she put her hand on my mouth.

"It's for the last time, Aunt Rachel. After to-day I can never talk of him, or even think of him. It's four years since he went away. Do you remember how he looked, Aunt Rachel?"

"I mind well enough, I reckon," I said, kind of curt-like. And I did. Owen Blair hadn't a face a body could forget — that long face of his with its clean color and its eyes made to look love into a woman's. When I thought of Mark Foster's sallow skin and lank jaws I felt sick-like. Not that Mark was ugly — he was just a common-looking fellow.

"He was so handsome, wasn't he, Aunt Rachel?" my dearie went on, in that patient voice of hers. "So tall and strong and handsome. I wish we hadn't parted in anger. It was so foolish of us to quarrel. But it would have been all right if he had lived to come back. I know it would have been all right. I know he didn't carry any bitterness against me to his death. I thought once, Aunt Rachel, that I would go through life true to him, and then, over on the other side, I'd meet him just as before, all his and his only. But it isn't to be."

“Thanks to your stepma’s wheedling and Mark Foster’s scheming,” said I.

“No, Mark didn’t scheme,” she said patiently. “Don’t be unjust to Mark, Aunt Rachel. He has been very good and kind.”

“He’s as stupid as an owlet and as stubborn as Solomon’s mule,” I said, for I WOULD say it. “He’s just a common fellow, and yet he thinks he’s good enough for my beauty.”

“Don’t talk about Mark,” she pleaded again. “I mean to be a good, faithful wife to him. But I’m my own woman yet — YET — for just a few more sweet hours, and I want to give them to HIM. The last hours of my maidenhood — they must belong to HIM.”

So she talked of him, me sitting there and holding her, with her lovely hair hanging down over my arm, and my heart aching so for her that it hurt bitter. She didn’t feel as bad as I did, because she’d made up her mind what to do and was resigned. She was going to marry Mark Foster, but her heart was in France, in that grave nobody knew of, where the Huns had buried Owen Blair — if they had buried him at all. And she went over all they had been to each other, since they were mites of babies, going to school together and meaning, even then, to be married when they grew up; and the first words of love he’d said to her, and what she’d dreamed and hoped for. The only thing she didn’t bring up was the time he thrashed Mark Foster for bringing her apples. She never mentioned Mark’s name; it was all Owen — Owen — and how he looked, and what might have been, if he hadn’t gone off to the awful war and got shot. And there was me, holding her and listening to it all, and her stepma sleeping sound and triumphant in the next room.

When she had talked it all out she lay down on her pillow again. I got up and went downstairs to light the fire. I felt terrible old and tired. My feet seemed to drag, and the tears kept coming to my eyes, though I tried to keep them away, for well I knew it was a bad omen to be weeping on a wedding day.

Before long Isabella Clark came down; bright and pleased-looking enough, SHE was. I’d never liked Isabella, from the day Phillippa’s father brought

her here; and I liked her less than ever this morning. She was one of your sly, deep women, always smiling smooth, and scheming underneath it. I'll say it for her, though, she had been good to Phillippa; but it was her doings that my dearie was to marry Mark Foster that day.

"Up betimes, Rachel," she said, smiling and speaking me fair, as she always did, and hating me in her heart, as I well knew. "That is right, for we'll have plenty to do to-day. A wedding makes lots of work."

"Not this sort of a wedding," I said, sour-like. "I don't call it a wedding when two people get married and sneak off as if they were ashamed of it — as well they might be in this case."

"It was Phillippa's own wish that all should be very quiet," said Isabella, as smooth as cream. "You know I'd have given her a big wedding, if she'd wanted it."

"Oh, it's better quiet," I said. "The fewer to see Phillippa marry a man like Mark Foster the better."

"Mark Foster is a good man, Rachel."

"No good man would be content to buy a girl as he's bought Phillippa," I said, determined to give it in to her. "He's a common fellow, not fit for my dearie to wipe her feet on. It's well that her mother didn't live to see this day; but this day would never have come, if she'd lived."

"I dare say Phillippa's mother would have remembered that Mark Foster is very well off, quite as readily as worse people," said Isabella, a little spitefully.

I liked her better when she was spiteful than when she was smooth. I didn't feel so scared of her then.

The marriage was to be at eleven o'clock, and, at nine, I went up to help Phillippa dress. She was no fussy bride, caring much what she looked like. If Owen had been the bridegroom it would have been different. Nothing

would have pleased her then; but now it was only just “That will do very well, Aunt Rachel,” without even glancing at it.

Still, nothing could prevent her from looking lovely when she was dressed. My dearie would have been a beauty in a beggarmaid’s rags. In her white dress and veil she was as fair as a queen. And she was as good as she was pretty. It was the right sort of goodness, too, with just enough spice of original sin in it to keep it from spoiling by reason of over-sweetness.

Then she sent me out.

“I want to be alone my last hour,” she said. “Kiss me, Aunt Rachel — MOTHER Rachel.”

When I’d gone down, crying like the old fool I was, I heard a rap at the door. My first thought was to go out and send Isabella to it, for I supposed it was Mark Foster, come ahead of time, and small stomach I had for seeing him. I fall trembling, even yet, when I think, “What if I had sent Isabella to that door?”

But go I did, and opened it, defiant-like, kind of hoping it was Mark Foster to see the tears on my face. I opened it — and staggered back like I’d got a blow.

“Owen! Lord ha’ mercy on us! Owen!” I said, just like that, going cold all over, for it’s the truth that I thought it was his spirit come back to forbid that unholy marriage.

But he sprang right in, and caught my wrinkled old hands in a grasp that was of flesh and blood.

“Aunt Rachel, I’m not too late?” he said, savage-like. “Tell me I’m in time.”

I looked up at him, standing over me there, tall and handsome, no change in him except he was so brown and had a little white scar on his forehead; and, though I couldn’t understand at all, being all bewildered-like, I felt a great deep thankfulness.

“No, you’re not too late,” I said.

“Thank God,” said he, under his breath. And then he pulled me into the parlor and shut the door.

“They told me at the station that Phillippa was to be married to Mark Foster to-day. I couldn’t believe it, but I came here as fast as horse-flesh could bring me. Aunt Rachel, it can’t be true! She can’t care for Mark Foster, even if she had forgotten me!”

“It’s true enough that she is to marry Mark,” I said, half-laughing, half-crying, “but she doesn’t care for him. Every beat of her heart is for you. It’s all her stepma’s doings. Mark has got a mortgage on the place, and he told Isabella Clark that, if Phillippa would marry him, he’d burn the mortgage, and, if she wouldn’t, he’d foreclose. Phillippa is sacrificing herself to save her stepma for her dead father’s sake. It’s all your fault,” I cried, getting over my bewilderment. “We thought you were dead. Why didn’t you come home when you were alive? Why didn’t you write?”

“I DID write, after I got out of the hospital, several times,” he said, “and never a word in answer, Aunt Rachel. What was I to think when Phillippa wouldn’t answer my letters?”

“She never got one,” I cried. “She wept her sweet eyes out over you. SOMEBODY must have got those letters.”

And I knew then, and I know now, though never a shadow of proof have I, that Isabella Clark had got them — and kept them. That woman would stick at nothing.

“Well, we’ll sift that matter some other time,” said Owen impatiently. “There are other things to think of now. I must see Phillippa.”

“I’ll manage it for you,” I said eagerly; but, just as I spoke, the door opened and Isabella and Mark came in. Never shall I forget the look on Isabella’s face. I almost felt sorry for her. She turned sickly yellow and her eyes went wild; they were looking at the downfall of all her schemes and hopes. I didn’t look at Mark Foster, at first, and, when I did, there wasn’t

anything to see. His face was just as sallow and wooden as ever; he looked undersized and common beside Owen. Nobody'd ever have picked him out for a bridegroom.

Owen spoke first.

"I want to see Phillippa," he said, as if it were but yesterday that he had gone away.

All Isabella's smoothness and policy had dropped away from her, and the real woman stood there, plotting and unscrupulous, as I'd always know her.

"You can't see her," she said desperate-like. "She doesn't want to see you. You went and left her and never wrote, and she knew you weren't worth fretting over, and she has learned to care for a better man."

"I DID write and I think you know that better than most folks," said Owen, trying hard to speak quiet. "As for the rest, I'm not going to discuss it with you. When I hear from Phillippa's own lips that she cares for another man I'll believe it — and not before."

"You'll never hear it from her lips," said I.

Isabella gave me a venomous look.

"You'll not see Phillippa until she is a better man's wife," she said stubbornly, "and I order you to leave my house, Owen Blair!"

"No!"

It was Mark Foster who spoke. He hadn't said a word; but he came forward now, and stood before Owen. Such a difference as there was between them! But he looked Owen right in the face, quiet-like, and Owen glared back in fury.

"Will it satisfy you, Owen, if Phillippa comes down here and chooses between us?"

“Yes, it will,” said Owen.

Mark Foster turned to me.

“Go and bring her down,” said he.

Isabella, judging Phillippa by herself, gave a little moan of despair, and Owen, blinded by love and hope, thought his cause was won. But I knew my dearie too well to be glad, and Mark Foster did, too, and I hated him for it.

I went up to my dearie’s room, all pale and shaking. When I went in she came to meet me, like a girl going to meet death.

“Is — it — time?” she said, with her hands locked tight together.

I said not a word, hoping that the unlooked-for sight of Owen would break down her resolution. I just held out my hand to her, and led her downstairs. She clung to me and her hands were as cold as snow. When I opened the parlor door I stood back, and pushed her in before me.

She just cried, “Owen!” and shook so that I put my arms about her to steady her.

Owen made a step towards her, his face and eyes all aflame with his love and longing, but Mark barred his way.

“Wait till she has made her choice,” he said, and then he turned to Phillippa. I couldn’t see my dearie’s face, but I could see Mark’s, and there wasn’t a spark of feeling in it. Behind it was Isabella’s, all pinched and gray.

“Phillippa,” said Mark, “Owen Blair has come back. He says he has never forgotten you, and that he wrote to you several times. I have told him that you have promised me, but I leave you freedom of choice. Which of us will you marry, Phillippa?”

My dearie stood straight up and the trembling left her. She stepped back, and I could see her face, white as the dead, but calm and resolved.

“I have promised to marry you, Mark, and I will keep my word,” she said.

The color came back to Isabella Clark’s face; but Mark’s did not change.

“Phillippa,” said Owen, and the pain in his voice made my old heart ache bitterer than ever, “have you ceased to love me?”

My dearie would have been more than human, if she could have resisted the pleading in his tone. She said no word, but just looked at him for a moment. We all saw the look; her whole soul, full of love for Owen, showed out in it. Then she turned and stood by Mark.

Owen never said a word. He went as white as death, and started for the door. But again Mark Foster put himself in the way.

“Wait,” he said. “She has made her choice, as I knew she would; but I have yet to make mine. And I choose to marry no woman whose love belongs to another living man. Phillippa, I thought Owen Blair was dead, and I believed that, when you were my wife, I could win your love. But I love you too well to make you miserable. Go to the man you love — you are free!”

“And what is to become of me?” wailed Isabella.

“Oh, you! — I had forgotten about you,” said Mark, kind of weary-like. He took a paper from his pocket, and dropped it in the grate. “There is the mortgage. That is all you care about, I think. Good-morning.”

He went out. He was only a common fellow, but, somehow, just then he looked every inch the gentleman. I would have gone after him and said something but — the look on his face — no, it was no time for my foolish old words!

Phillippa was crying, with her head on Owen’s shoulder. Isabella Clark waited to see the mortgage burned up, and then she came to me in the hall, all smooth and smiling again.

“Really, it’s all very romantic, isn’t it? I suppose it’s better as it is, all things considered. Mark behaved splendidly, didn’t he? Not many men would have done as he did.”

For once in my life I agreed with Isabella. But I felt like having a good cry over it all — and I had it. I was glad for my dearie’s sake and Owen’s; but Mark Foster had paid the price of their joy, and I knew it had beggared him of happiness for life.

TANNIS OF THE FLATS

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Few people in Avonlea could understand why Elinor Blair had never married. She had been one of the most beautiful girls in our part of the Island and, as a woman of fifty, she was still very attractive. In her youth she had had ever so many beaux, as we of our generation well remembered; but, after her return from visiting her brother Tom in the Canadian Northwest, more than twenty-five years ago, she had seemed to withdraw within herself, keeping all men at a safe, though friendly, distance. She had been a gay, laughing girl when she went West; she came back quiet and serious, with a shadowed look in her eyes which time could not quite succeed in blotting out.

Elinor had never talked much about her visit, except to describe the scenery and the life, which in that day was rough indeed. Not even to me, who had grown up next door to her and who had always seemed more a sister than a friend, did she speak of other than the merest commonplaces. But when Tom Blair made a flying trip back home, some ten years later, there were one or two of us to whom he related the story of Jerome Carey, — a story revealing only too well the reason for Elinor's sad eyes and utter indifference to masculine attentions. I can recall almost his exact words and the inflections of his voice, and I remember, too, that it seemed to me a far cry from the tranquil, pleasant scene before us, on that lovely summer day, to the elemental life of the Flats.

The Flats was a forlorn little trading station fifteen miles up the river from Prince Albert, with a scanty population of half-breeds and three white men. When Jerome Carey was sent to take charge of the telegraph office there, he cursed his fate in the picturesque language permissible in the far Northwest.

Not that Carey was a profane man, even as men go in the West. He was an English gentleman, and he kept both his life and his vocabulary pretty

clean. But — the Flats!

Outside of the ragged cluster of log shacks, which comprised the settlement, there was always a shifting fringe of teepees where the Indians, who drifted down from the Reservation, camped with their dogs and squaws and papooses. There are standpoints from which Indians are interesting, but they cannot be said to offer congenial social attractions. For three weeks after Carey went to the Flats he was lonelier than he had ever imagined it possible to be, even in the Great Lone Land. If it had not been for teaching Paul Dumont the telegraphic code, Carey believed he would have been driven to suicide in self-defense.

The telegraphic importance of the Flats consisted in the fact that it was the starting point of three telegraph lines to remote trading posts up North. Not many messages came therefrom, but the few that did come generally amounted to something worth while. Days and even weeks would pass without a single one being clicked to the Flats. Carey was debarred from talking over the wires to the Prince Albert man for the reason that they were on officially bad terms. He blamed the latter for his transfer to the Flats.

Carey slept in a loft over the office, and got his meals as Joe Esquint's, across the "street." Joe Esquint's wife was a good cook, as cooks go among the breeds, and Carey soon became a great pet of hers. Carey had a habit of becoming a pet with women. He had the "way" that has to be born in a man and can never be acquired. Besides, he was as handsome as clean-cut features, deep-set, dark-blue eyes, fair curls and six feet of muscle could make him. Mrs. Joe Esquint thought that his mustache was the most wonderfully beautiful thing, in its line, that she had ever seen.

Fortunately, Mrs. Joe was so old and fat and ugly that even the malicious and inveterate gossip of skulking breeds and Indians, squatting over teepee fires, could not hint at anything questionable in the relations between her and Carey. But it was a different matter with Tannis Dumont.

Tannis came home from the academy at Prince Albert early in July, when Carey had been at the Flats a month and had exhausted all the few novelties of his position. Paul Dumont had already become so expert at the

code that his mistakes no longer afforded Carey any fun, and the latter was getting desperate. He had serious intentions of throwing up the business altogether, and betaking himself to an Alberta ranch, where at least one would have the excitement of roping horses. When he saw Tannis Dumont he thought he would hang on awhile longer, anyway.

Tannis was the daughter of old Auguste Dumont, who kept the one small store at the Flats, lived in the one frame house that the place boasted, and was reputed to be worth an amount of money which, in half-breed eyes, was a colossal fortune. Old Auguste was black and ugly and notoriously bad-tempered. But Tannis was a beauty.

Tannis' great-grandmother had been a Cree squaw who married a French trapper. The son of this union became in due time the father of Auguste Dumont. Auguste married a woman whose mother was a French half-breed and whose father was a pure-bred Highland Scotchman. The result of this atrocious mixture was its justification — Tannis of the Flats — who looked as if all the blood of all the Howards might be running in her veins.

But, after all, the dominant current in those same veins was from the race of plain and prairie. The practiced eye detected it in the slender stateliness of carriage, in the graceful, yet voluptuous, curves of the lithe body, in the smallness and delicacy of hand and foot, in the purple sheen on straight-falling masses of blue-black hair, and, more than all else, in the long, dark eye, full and soft, yet alight with a slumbering fire. France, too, was responsible for somewhat in Tannis. It gave her a light step in place of the stealthy half-breed shuffle, it arched her red upper lip into a more tremulous bow, it lent a note of laughter to her voice and a sprightlier wit to her tongue. As for her redheaded Scotch grandfather, he had bequeathed her a somewhat whiter skin and ruddier bloom than is usually found in the breeds.

Old Auguste was mightily proud of Tannis. He sent her to school for four years in Prince Albert, bound that his girl should have the best. A High School course and considerable mingling in the social life of the town — for old Auguste was a man to be conciliated by astute politicians, since he controlled some two or three hundred half-breed votes — sent Tannis

home to the Flats with a very thin, but very deceptive, veneer of culture and civilization overlying the primitive passions and ideas of her nature.

Carey saw only the beauty and the veneer. He made the mistake of thinking that Tannis was what she seemed to be — a fairly well-educated, up-to-date young woman with whom a friendly flirtation was just what it was with white womankind — the pleasant amusement of an hour or season. It was a mistake — a very big mistake. Tannis understood something of piano playing, something less of grammar and Latin, and something less still of social prevarications. But she understood absolutely nothing of flirtation. You can never get an Indian to see the sense of Platonics.

Carey found the Flats quite tolerable after the homecoming of Tannis. He soon fell into the habit of dropping into the Dumont house to spend the evening, talking with Tannis in the parlor — which apartment was amazingly well done for a place like the Flats — Tannis had not studied Prince Albert parlors four years for nothing — or playing violin and piano duets with her. When music and conversation palled, they went for long gallops over the prairies together. Tannis rode to perfection, and managed her bad-tempered brute of a pony with a skill and grace that made Carey applaud her. She was glorious on horseback.

Sometimes he grew tired of the prairies and then he and Tannis paddled themselves over the river in Nitchie Joe's dug-out, and landed on the old trail that struck straight into the wooded belt of the Saskatchewan valley, leading north to trading posts on the frontier of civilization. There they rambled under huge pines, hoary with the age of centuries, and Carey talked to Tannis about England and quoted poetry to her. Tannis liked poetry; she had studied it at school, and understood it fairly well. But once she told Carey that she thought it a long, round-about way of saying what you could say just as well in about a dozen plain words. Carey laughed. He liked to evoke those little speeches of hers. They sounded very clever, dropping from such arched, ripely-tinted lips.

If you had told Carey that he was playing with fire he would have laughed at you. In the first place he was not in the slightest degree in love with Tannis — he merely admired and liked her. In the second place, it never

occurred to him that Tannis might be in love with him. Why, he had never attempted any lovemaking with her! And, above all, he was obsessed with that aforesaid fatal idea that Tannis was like the women he had associated with all his life, in reality as well as in appearance. He did not know enough of the racial characteristics to understand.

But, if Carey thought his relationship with Tannis was that of friendship merely, he was the only one at the Flats who did think so. All the half-breeds and quarter-breeds and any-fractional breeds there believed that he meant to marry Tannis. There would have been nothing surprising to them in that. They did not know that Carey's second cousin was a baronet, and they would not have understood that it need make any difference, if they had. They thought that rich old Auguste's heiress, who had been to school for four years in Prince Albert, was a catch for anybody.

Old Auguste himself shrugged his shoulders over it and was well-pleased enough. An Englishman was a prize by way of a husband for a half-breed girl, even if he were only a telegraph operator. Young Paul Dumont worshipped Carey, and the half-Scotch mother, who might have understood, was dead. In all the Flats there were but two people who disapproved of the match they thought an assured thing. One of these was the little priest, Father Gabriel. He liked Tannis, and he liked Carey; but he shook his head dubiously when he heard the gossip of the shacks and teepees. Religions might mingle, but the different bloods — ah, it was not the right thing! Tannis was a good girl, and a beautiful one; but she was no fit mate for the fair, thoroughbred Englishman. Father Gabriel wished fervently that Jerome Carey might soon be transferred elsewhere. He even went to Prince Albert and did a little wire-pulling on his own account, but nothing came of it. He was on the wrong side of politics.

The other malcontent was Lazarre Mérimée, a lazy, besotted French half-breed, who was, after his fashion, in love with Tannis. He could never have got her, and he knew it — old Auguste and young Paul would have incontinently riddled him with bullets had he ventured near the house as a suitor, — but he hated Carey none the less, and watched for a chance to do him an ill-turn. There is no worse enemy in all the world than a half-breed.

Your true Indian is bad enough, but his diluted descendant is ten times worse.

As for Tannis, she loved Carey with all her heart, and that was all there was about it.

If Elinor Blair had never gone to Prince Albert there is no knowing what might have happened, after all. Carey, so powerful in propinquity, might even have ended by learning to love Tannis and marrying her, to his own worldly undoing. But Elinor did go to Prince Albert, and her going ended all things for Tannis of the Flats.

Carey met her one evening in September, when he had ridden into town to attend a dance, leaving Paul Dumont in charge of the telegraph office. Elinor had just arrived in Prince Albert on a visit to Tom, to which she had been looking forward during the five years since he had married and moved out West from Avonlea. As I have already said, she was very beautiful at that time, and Carey fell in love with her at the first moment of their meeting.

During the next three weeks he went to town nine times and called at the Dumonts' only once. There were no more rides and walks with Tannis. This was not intentional neglect on his part. He had simply forgotten all about her. The breeds surmised a lover's quarrel, but Tannis understood. There was another woman back there in town.

It would be quite impossible to put on paper any adequate idea of her emotions at this stage. One night, she followed Carey when he went to Prince Albert, riding out of earshot, behind him on her plains pony, but keeping him in sight. Lazarre, in a fit of jealousy, had followed Tannis, spying on her until she started back to the Flats. After that he watched both Carey and Tannis incessantly, and months later had told Tom all he had learned through his low sneaking.

Tannis trailed Carey to the Blair house, on the bluffs above the town, and saw him tie his horse at the gate and enter. She, too, tied her pony to a poplar, lower down, and then crept stealthily through the willows at the side of the house until she was close to the windows. Through one of them

she could see Carey and Elinor. The half-breed girl crouched down in the shadow and glared at her rival. She saw the pretty, fair-tinted face, the fluffy coronal of golden hair, the blue, laughing eyes of the woman whom Jerome Carey loved, and she realized very plainly that there was nothing left to hope for. She, Tannis of the Flats, could never compete with that other. It was well to know so much, at least.

After a time, she crept softly away, loosed her pony, and lashed him mercilessly with her whip through the streets of the town and out the long, dusty river trail. A man turned and looked after her as she tore past a brightly lighted store on Water Street.

“That was Tannis of the Flats,” he said to a companion. “She was in town last winter, going to school — a beauty and a bit of the devil, like all those breed girls. What in thunder is she riding like that for?”

One day, a fortnight later, Carey went over the river alone for a ramble up the northern trail, and an undisturbed dream of Elinor. When he came back Tannis was standing at the canoe landing, under a pine tree, in a rain of finely sifted sunlight. She was waiting for him and she said, with any preface:

“Mr. Carey, why do you never come to see me, now?”

Carey flushed like any girl. Her tone and look made him feel very uncomfortable. He remembered, self-reproachfully, that he must have seemed very neglectful, and he stammered something about having been busy.

“Not very busy,” said Tannis, with her terrible directness. “It is not that. It is because you are going to Prince Albert to see a white woman!”

Even in his embarrassment Carey noted that this was the first time he had ever heard Tannis use the expression, “a white woman,” or any other that would indicate her sense of a difference between herself and the dominant race. He understood, at the same moment, that this girl was not to be trifled with — that she would have the truth out of him, first or last. But he felt indescribably foolish.

“I suppose so,” he answered lamely.

“And what about me?” asked Tannis.

When you come to think of it, this was an embarrassing question, especially for Carey, who had believed that Tannis understood the game, and played it for its own sake, as he did.

“I don’t understand you, Tannis,” he said hurriedly.

“You have made me love you,” said Tannis.

The words sound flat enough on paper. They did not sound flat to Tom, as repeated by Lazarre, and they sounded anything but flat to Carey, hurled at him as they were by a woman trembling with all the passions of her savage ancestry. Tannis had justified her criticism of poetry. She had said her half-dozen words, instinct with all the despair and pain and wild appeal that all the poetry in the world had ever expressed.

They made Carey feel like a scoundrel. All at once he realized how impossible it would be to explain matters to Tannis, and that he would make a still bigger fool of himself, if he tried.

“I am very sorry,” he stammered, like a whipped schoolboy.

“It is no matter,” interrupted Tannis violently. “What difference does it make about me — a half-breed girl? We breed girls are only born to amuse the white men. That is so — is it not? Then, when they are tired of us, they push us aside and go back to their own kind. Oh, it is very well. But I will not forget — my father and brother will not forget. They will make you sorry to some purpose!”

She turned, and stalked away to her canoe. He waited under the pines until she crossed the river; then he, too, went miserably home. What a mess he had contrived to make of things! Poor Tannis! How handsome she had looked in her fury — and how much like a squaw! The racial marks always come out plainly under the stress of emotion, as Tom noted later.

Her threat did not disturb him. If young Paul and old Auguste made things unpleasant for him, he thought himself more than a match for them. It was the thought of the suffering he had brought upon Tannis that worried him. He had not, to be sure, been a villain; but he had been a fool, and that is almost as bad, under some circumstances.

The Dumonts, however, did not trouble him. After all, Tannis' four years in Prince Albert had not been altogether wasted. She knew that white girls did not mix their male relatives up in a vendetta when a man ceased calling on them — and she had nothing else to complain of that could be put in words. After some reflection she concluded to hold her tongue. She even laughed when old Auguste asked her what was up between her and her fellow, and said she had grown tired of him. Old Auguste shrugged his shoulders resignedly. It was just as well, maybe. Those English sons-in-law sometimes gave themselves too many airs.

So Carey rode often to town and Tannis bided her time, and plotted futile schemes of revenge, and Lazarre Mérimée scowled and got drunk — and life went on at the Flats as usual, until the last week in October, when a big wind and rainstorm swept over the northland.

It was a bad night. The wires were down between the Flats and Prince Albert and all communication with the outside world was cut off. Over at Joe Esquint's the breeds were having a carouse in honor of Joe's birthday. Paul Dumont had gone over, and Carey was alone in the office, smoking lazily and dreaming of Elinor.

Suddenly, above the splash of rain and whistle of wind, he heard outcries in the street. Running to the door he was met by Mrs. Joe Esquint, who grasped him breathlessly.

“Meestair Carey — come quick! Lazarre, he kill Paul — they fight!”

Carey, with a smothered oath, rushed across the street. He had been afraid of something of the sort, and had advised Paul not to go, for those half-breed carouses almost always ended in a free fight. He burst into the kitchen at Joe Esquint's, to find a circle of mute spectators ranged around the room and Paul and Lazarre in a clinch in the center. Carey was relieved

to find it was only an affair of fists. He promptly hurled himself at the combatants and dragged Paul away, while Mrs. Joe Esquint — Joe himself being dead-drunk in a corner — flung her fat arms about Lazarre and held him back.

“Stop this,” said Carey sternly.

“Let me get at him,” foamed Paul. “He insulted my sister. He said that you — let me get at him!”

He could not wriggle free from Carey’s iron grip. Lazarre, with a snarl like a wolf, sent Mrs. Joe spinning, and rushed at Paul. Carey struck out as best he could, and Lazarre went reeling back against the table. It went over with a crash and the light went out!

Mrs. Joe’s shrieks might have brought the roof down. In the confusion that ensued, two pistol shots rang out sharply. There was a cry, a groan, a fall — then a rush for the door. When Mrs. Joe Esquint’s sister-in-law, Marie, dashed in with another lamp, Mrs. Joe was still shrieking, Paul Dumont was leaning sickly against the wall with a dangling arm, and Carey lay face downward on the floor, with blood trickling from under him.

Marie Esquint was a woman of nerve. She told Mrs. Joe to shut up, and she turned Carey over. He was conscious, but seemed dazed and could not help himself. Marie put a coat under his head, told Paul to lie down on the bench, ordered Mrs. Joe to get a bed ready, and went for the doctor. It happened that there was a doctor at the Flats that night — a Prince Albert man who had been up at the Reservation, fixing up some sick Indians, and had been stormstaid at old Auguste’s on his way back.

Marie soon returned with the doctor, old Auguste, and Tannis. Carey was carried in and laid on Mrs. Esquint’s bed. The doctor made a brief examination, while Mrs. Joe sat on the floor and howled at the top of her lungs. Then he shook his head.

“Shot in the back,” he said briefly.

“How long?” asked Carey, understanding.

“Perhaps till morning,” answered the doctor. Mrs. Joe gave a louder howl than ever at this, and Tannis came and stood by the bed. The doctor, knowing that he could do nothing for Carey, hurried into the kitchen to attend to Paul, who had a badly shattered arm, and Marie went with him.

Carey looked stupidly at Tannis.

“Send for her,” he said.

Tannis smiled cruelly.

“There is no way. The wires are down, and there is no man at the Flats who will go to town tonight,” she answered.

“My God, I MUST see her before I die,” burst out Carey pleadingly. “Where is Father Gabriel? HE will go.”

“The priest went to town last night and has not come back,” said Tannis.

Carey groaned and shut his eyes. If Father Gabriel was away, there was indeed no one to go. Old Auguste and the doctor could not leave Paul and he knew well that no breed of them all at the Flats would turn out on such a night, even if they were not, one and all, mortally scared of being mixed up in the law and justice that would be sure to follow the affair. He must die without seeing Elinor.

Tannis looked inscrutably down on the pale face on Mrs. Joe Esquint’s dirty pillows. Her immobile features gave no sign of the conflict raging within her. After a short space she turned and went out, shutting the door softly on the wounded man and Mrs. Joe, whose howls had now simmered down to whines. In the next room, Paul was crying out with pain as the doctor worked on his arm, but Tannis did not go to him. Instead, she slipped out and hurried down the stormy street to old Auguste’s stable. Five minutes later she was galloping down the black, wind-lashed river trail, on her way to town, to bring Elinor Blair to her lover’s deathbed.

I hold that no woman ever did anything more unselfish than this deed of Tannis! For the sake of love she put under her feet the jealousy and hatred that had clamored at her heart. She held, not only revenge, but the dearer joy of watching by Carey to the last, in the hollow of her hand, and she cast both away that the man she loved might draw his dying breath somewhat easier. In a white woman the deed would have been merely commendable. In Tannis of the Flats, with her ancestry and tradition, it was lofty self-sacrifice.

It was eight o'clock when Tannis left the Flats; it was ten when she drew bridle before the house on the bluff. Elinor was regaling Tom and his wife with Avonlea gossip when the maid came to the door.

"Pleas'm, there's a breed girl out on the verandah and she's asking for Miss Blair."

Elinor went out wonderingly, followed by Tom. Tannis, whip in hand, stood by the open door, with the stormy night behind her, and the warm ruby light of the hall lamp showering over her white face and the long rope of drenched hair that fell from her bare head. She looked wild enough.

"Jerome Carey was shot in a quarrel at Joe Esquint's tonight," she said. "He is dying — he wants you — I have come for you."

Elinor gave a little cry, and steadied herself on Tom's shoulder. Tom said he knew he made some exclamation of horror. He had never approved of Carey's attentions to Elinor, but such news was enough to shock anybody. He was determined, however, that Elinor should not go out in such a night and to such a scene, and told Tannis so in no uncertain terms.

"I came through the storm," said Tannis, contemptuously. "Cannot she do as much for him as I can?"

The good, old Island blood in Elinor's veins showed to some purpose. "Yes," she answered firmly. "No, Tom, don't object — I must go. Get my horse — and your own."

Ten minutes later three riders galloped down the bluff road and took the river trail. Fortunately the wind was at their backs and the worst of the storm was over. Still, it was a wild, black ride enough. Tom rode, cursing softly under his breath. He did not like the whole thing — Carey done to death in some low half-breed shack, this handsome, sullen girl coming as his messenger, this nightmare ride, through wind and rain. It all savored too much of melodrama, even for the Northland, where people still did things in a primitive way. He heartily wished Elinor had never left Avonlea.

It was past twelve when they reached the Flats. Tannis was the only one who seemed to be able to think coherently. It was she who told Tom where to take the horses and then led Elinor to the room where Carey was dying. The doctor was sitting by the bedside and Mrs. Joe was curled up in a corner, sniffing to herself. Tannis took her by the shoulder and turned her, none too gently, out of the room. The doctor, understanding, left at once. As Tannis shut the door she saw Elinor sink on her knees by the bed, and Carey's trembling hand go out to her head.

Tannis sat down on the floor outside of the door and wrapped herself up in a shawl Marie Esquint had dropped. In that attitude she looked exactly like a squaw, and all comers and goers, even old Auguste, who was hunting for her, thought she was one, and left her undisturbed. She watched there until dawn came whitely up over the prairies and Jerome Carey died. She knew when it happened by Elinor's cry.

Tannis sprang up and rushed in. She was too late for even a parting look.

The girl took Carey's hand in hers, and turned to the weeping Elinor with a cold dignity.

"Now go," she said. "You had him in life to the very last. He is mine now."

"There must be some arrangements made," faltered Elinor.

"My father and brother will make all arrangements, as you call them," said Tannis steadily. "He had no near relatives in the world — none at all in Canada — he told me so. You may send out a Protestant minister from

town, if you like; but he will be buried here at the Flats and his grave with be mine — all mine! Go!”

And Elinor, reluctant, sorrowful, yet swayed by a will and an emotion stronger than her own, went slowly out, leaving Tannis of the Flats alone with her dead.

THE WATCHMAN AND OTHER POE MS (1916)

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DEDICATION

“TO THE MEMORY OF THE GALLANT
CANADIAN SOLDIERS WHO HAVE LAID
DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY
AND THEIR EMPIRE.”

THE WATCHMAN

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“And for fear of Him the keepers did shake and become as dead men.” — Matthew 23 and 4.

My Claudia, it is long since we have met,
So kissed, so held each other heart to heart!
I thought to greet thee as a conqueror comes,
Bearing the trophies of his prowess home,
But Jove hath willed it should be otherwise —

Jove, say I? Nay, some mightier stranger-god
Who thus hath laid his heavy hand on me,
No victor, Claudia, but a broken man
Who seeks to hide his weakness in thy love.

How beautiful thou art! The years have brought
An added splendor to thy loveliness,
With passion of dark eye and lip rose-red
Struggling between its dimple and its pride.
And yet there is somewhat that glooms between
Thy love and mine; come, girdle me about
With thy true arms, and pillow on thy breast
This aching and bewildered head of mine;
Here, where the fountain glitters in the sun
Among the saffron lilies, I will tell —
If so that words will answer my desire —
The shameful fate that hath befallen me.

Down in Jerusalem they slew a man,
Or god — it may be that he was a god —
Those mad, wild Jews whom Pontius Pilate rules.
Thou knowest Pilate, Claudia — a vain man,
Too weak to govern such a howling horde
As those same Jews. This man they crucified.
I knew nought of him — had not heard his name
Until the day they dragged him to his death;
Then all tongues wagged about him and his deeds;
Some said that he had claimed to be their King,
Some that he had blasphemed their deity;
‘Twas certain he was poor and meanly born,
No warrior he, nor hero; and he taught
Doctrines that surely would upset the world;
And so they killed him to be rid of him —
Wise, very wise, if he were only man,
Not quite so wise if he were half a god!

I know that strange things happened when he died —
There was a darkness and an agony,
And some were vastly frightened — not so I!
What cared I if that mob of reeking Jews
Had brought a nameless curse upon their heads?
I had no part in that blood-guiltiness.
At least he died; and some few friends of his —
I think he had not very many friends —
Took him and laid him in a garden tomb.
A watch was set about the sepulchre,
Lest these, his friends, should hide him and proclaim
That he had risen as he had foretold.
Laugh not, my Claudia. I laughed when I heard
The prophecy. I would I had not laughed!

I, Maximus, was chosen for the guard
With all my trusty fellows. Pilate knew
I was a man who had no foolish heart
Of softness all unworthy of a man!
My eyes had looked upon a tortured slave
As on a beetle crushed beneath my tread;
I gloried in the splendid strife of war,
Lusting for conquest; I had won the praise
Of our stern general on a scarlet field;
Red in my veins the warrior passion ran,
For I had sprung from heroes, Roman born!

That second night we watched before the tomb;
My men were merry; on the velvet turf,
Bestarred with early blossoms of the Spring,
They dined with jest and laughter; all around
The moonlight washed us like a silver lake,
Save where that silent, sealed sepulchre
Was hung with shadow as a purple pall.
A faint wind stirred among the olive boughs —
Methinks I hear the sighing of that wind
In all sounds since, it was so dumbly sad;

But as the night wore on it died away
And all was deadly stillness; Claudia,
That stillness was most awful, as if some
Great heart had broken and so ceased to beat!
I thought of many things, but found no joy
In any thought, even the thought of thee;
The moon waned in the west and sickly grew
Her light sucked from her in the breaking dawn —
Never was dawn so welcome as that pale,
Faint glimmer in the cloudless, brooding sky!

Claudia, how may I tell what came to pass?
I have been mocked at when I told the tale
For a crazed dreamer punished by the gods
Because he slept on guard; but mock not thou!
I could not bear it if thy lips should mock
The vision dread of that Judean morn.

Sudden the pallid east was all aflame
With radiance that beat upon our eyes
As from noonday sun; and then we saw
Two shapes that were as the immortal gods
Standing before the tomb; around me fell
My men as dead; but I, though through my veins
Ran a cold tremor never known before,
Withstood the shock and saw one shining shape
Roll back the stone; the whole world seemed ablaze,
And through the garden came a rushing wind
Thundering a paeon as of victory.

Then that dead man came forth! Oh, Claudia,
If thou coulds't but have seen the face of him!
Never was such a conqueror! Yet no pride
Was in it — nought but love and tenderness,
Such as we Romans scoff at; and his eyes
Bespake him royal. Oh, my Claudia,
Surely he was no Jew but very god!

Then he looked full upon me. I had borne
Much staunchly, but that look I could not bear!
What man may front a god and live? I fell
Prone, as if stricken by a thunderbolt;
And, though I died not, somewhat of me died
That made me man. When my long stupor passed
I was no longer Maximus — I was
A weakling with a piteous woman-soul,
All strength and pride, joy and ambition gone —
My Claudia, dare I tell thee what foul curse
Is mine because I looked upon a god?

I care no more for glory; all desire
For conquest and for strife is gone from me,
All eagerness for war; I only care
To help and heal bruised beings, and to give
Some comfort to the weak and suffering.
I cannot even hate those Jews; my lips
Speak harshly of them, but within my heart
I feel a strange compassion; and I love
All creatures, to the vilest of the slaves
Who seem to me as brothers! Claudia,
Scorn me not for this weakness; it will pass —
Surely 'twill pass in time and I shall be
Maximus strong and valiant once again,
Forgetting that slain god! and yet — and yet —
He looked as one who could not be forgot!

SONGS OF THE SEA

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RAIN ALONG SHORE

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Wan white mists upon the sea,
East wind harping mournfully
All the sunken reefs along,
Wail and heartbreak in its song,
But adown the placid bay
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

All the deeps beyond the bar
Call and murmur from afar,
'Plaining of a mighty woe
Where the great ships come and go,
But adown the harbor gray
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

When the cloudy heavens frown,
And the sweeping rain comes down,
Boats at anchorage must bide
In despite of time or tide;
Making merry as they may
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

Now is time for jest and song
All the idle shore along,
Now is time for wooing dear,
Maidens cannot choose but hear;
Daffing toil and care away
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

Oh, the fretted reefs may wail,
Every man has furled his sail!
Oh, the wind may moan in fear,
Every lad is with his dear!
Mirth and laughter have their way,
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

SEA SUNSET

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A gallant city has been builded far
In the pied heaven,
Bannered with crimson, sentinelled by star
Of crystal even;
Around a harbor of the twilight glowing,
With jubilant waves about its gateways flowing.

A city of the Land of Lost Delight
On seas enchanted,
Presently to be lost in mist moon-white
And music-haunted;
Given but briefly to our raptured vision,
With all its opal towers and shrines elysian.

Had we some mystic boat with pearly oar
And wizard pilot,
To guide us safely by the siren shore
And cloudy islet,
We might embark and reach that shining portal
Beyond which linger dreams and joys immortal.

But we may only gaze with longing eyes
On those far, sparkling
Palaces in the fairy-peopled skies,
O'er waters darkling,
Until the winds of night come shoreward roaming,
And the dim west has only gray and gloaming.

WHEN THE DARK COMES DOWN

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When the dark comes down, oh, the wind is on the sea
With lisping laugh and whimper to the red reef's threnody,
The boats are sailing homeward now across the harbor bar
With many a jest and many a shout from fishing grounds afar.
So furl your sails and take your rest, ye fisher folk so brown,
For task and quest are ended when the dark comes down.

When the dark comes down, oh, the landward valleys fill
Like brimming cups of purple, and on every landward hill
There shines a star of twilight that is watching evermore
The low, dim lighted meadows by the long, dim-lighted shore,
For there, where vagrant daisies weave the grass a silver crown,
The lads and lassies wander when the dark comes down.

When the dark comes down, oh, the children fall asleep,
And mothers in the fisher huts their happy vigils keep;
There's music in the song they sing and music on the sea,
The loving, lingering echoes of the twilight's litany,
For toil has folded hands to dream, and care has ceased to frown,
And every wave's a lyric when the dark comes down.

HARBOR MOONRISE

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There is never a wind to sing o'er the sea
On its dimpled bosom that holdeth in fee
Wealth of silver and magicry;
And the harbor is like to an ebon cup
With mother-o'-pearl to the lips lined up,
And brimmed with the wine of entranced delight,
Purple and rare, from the flagon of night.

Lo, in the east is a glamor and gleam,
Like waves that lap on the shores of dream,
Or voice their lure in a poet's theme!
And behind the curtseying fisher boats
The barge of the rising moon upfloats,
The pilot ship over unknown seas
Of treasure-laden cloud argosies.

Ere ever she drifts from the ocean's rim,
Out from the background of shadows dim,
Stealeth a boat o'er her golden rim;
Noiselessly, swiftly, it swayeth by
Into the bourne of enchanted sky,
Like a fairy shallop that seeks the strand
Of a far and uncharted fairyland.

Now, ere the sleeping winds may stir,
Send, O, my heart, a wish with her,
Like to a venturous mariner;
For who knoweth but that on an elfin sea
She may meet the bark that is sailing to thee,
And, winging thy message across the foam,
May hasten the hour when thy ship comes home?

BEFORE STORM

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There's a grayness over the harbor like fear on the face of a woman,
The sob of the waves has a sound akin to a woman's cry,
And the deeps beyond the bar are moaning with evil presage
Of a storm that will leap from its lair in that dour northeastern
sky.

Slowly the pale mists rise, like ghosts of the sea, in the offing,
Creeping all wan and chilly by headland and sunken reef,
And a wind is wailing and keening like a lost thing 'mid the islands,
Boding of wreck and tempest, plaining of dolor and grief.

Swiftly the boats come homeward, over the grim bar crowding,
Like birds that flee to their shelter in hurry and affright,
Only the wild grey gulls that love the cloud and the clamor
Will dare to tempt the ways of the ravining sea tonight.

But the ship that sailed at the dawning, manned by the lads who
love us —
God help and pity her when the storm is loosed on her track!
O women, we pray tonight and keep a vigil of sorrow
For those we speed at the dawning and may never welcome back!

ON THE BA Y

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When the salt wave laps on the long, dim shore,
And frets the reef with its windy sallies,
And the dawn's white light is threading once more
The purple firs in the landward valleys,
While yet the arms of the wide gray sea
Are cradling the sunrise that is to be,
The fisherman's boat, through the mist afar,
Has sailed in the wake of the morning star.

The wind in his cordage and canvas sings
Its old glad song of strength and endeavor,
And up from the heart of the ocean rings
A call of courage and cheer forever;
Toil and danger and stress may wait
Beyond the arch of the morning's gate,
But he knows that behind him, upon the shore,
A true heart prays for him evermore.

When a young moon floats in the hollow sky,
Like a fairy shallop, all pale and golden,
And over the rocks that are grim and high,
The lamp of the lighthouse aloft is holden;
When the bay is like to a lucent cup
With glamor and glory and glow filled up,
In the track of the sunset, across the foam,
The fisherman's boat comes sailing home.

The wind is singing a low, sweet song
Of a rest well won and a toil well over,
And there on the shore shines clear and strong

The star of the homelight to guide the rover:
And deep unto deep may call and wail
But the fisherman laughs as he furls his sail,
For the bar is passed and the reef is dim
And a true heart is waiting to welcome him!

SHORE TWILIGHT

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Lo, find we here when the ripe day is o'er,
A kingdom of enchantment by the shore!

Behold the sky with early stars ashine,
A jewelled flagon brimmed with purple wine.

Like a dumb poet's soul the troubled sea
Moans of its joy and sorrow wordlessly;

But the glad winds that utter naught of grief
Make silver speech by headland and by reef.

Saving for such there is no voice or call
To mar the gracious silence over all —

Silence so tender 'tis a sweet caress,
A most beguiling and dear loneliness.

Lo, here we find a beckoning solitude,
A winsome presence to be mutely wooed,

Which, being won, will teach us fabled lore,
The old, old, gramarye of the sibyl shore!

Oh, what a poignant rapture thus to be
Lingering at twilight by the ancient sea!

SONG OF THE SEA-WIND

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When the sun sets over the long blue wave
I spring from my couch of rest,
And I hurtle and boom over leagues of foam
That toss in the weltering west,
I pipe a hymn to the headlands high,
My comrades forevermore,
And I chase the tricky curls of foam
O'er the glimmering sandy shore.

The moon is my friend on clear, white nights
When I ripple her silver way,
And whistle blithely about the rocks
Like an elfin thing at play;
But anon I ravin with cloud and mist
And wail 'neath a curdled sky,
When the reef snarls yon like a questing beast,
And the frightened ships go by.

I scatter the dawn across the sea
Like wine of amber flung
From a crystal goblet all far and fine
Where the morning star is hung;
I blow from east and I blow from west
Wherever my longing be —
The wind of the land is a hindered thing
But the ocean wind is free!

MORNING ALONG SHORE

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Hark, oh hark the elfin laughter
All the little waves along,
As if echoes speeding after
Mocked a merry merman's song!

All the gulls are out, delighting
In a wild, uncharted quest —
See the first red sunshine smiting
Silver sheen of wing and breast!

Ho, the sunrise rainbow-hearted
Steals athwart the misty brine,
And the sky where clouds have parted
Is a bowl of amber wine!

Sweet, its cradle-lilt partaking,
Dreams that hover o'er the sea,
But the lyric of its waking
Is a sweeter thing to me!

Who would drowse in dull devotion
To his ease when dark is done,
And upon its breast the ocean
Like a jewel wears the sun?

“Up, forsake a lazy pillow!”
Calls the sea from cleft and cave,
Ho, for antic wind and billow
When the morn is on the wave!

OFF TO THE FISHING GROUN D

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There's a piping wind from a sunrise shore
Blowing over a silver sea,
There's a joyous voice in the lapsing tide
That calls enticingly;
The mist of dawn has taken flight
To the dim horizon's bound,
And with wide sails set and eager hearts
We're off to the fishing ground.

Ho, comrades mine, how that brave wind sings
Like a great sea-harp afar!
We whistle its wild notes back to it
As we cross the harbor bar.
Behind us there are the homes we love
And hearts that are fond and true,
And before us beckons a strong young day
On leagues of glorious blue.

Comrades, a song as the fleet goes out,
A song of the orient sea!
We are the heirs of its tingling strife,
Its courage and liberty.
Sing as the white sails cream and fill,
And the foam in our wake is long,
Sing till the headlands black and grim
Echo us back our song!

Oh, 'tis a glad and heartsome thing
To wake ere the night be done
And steer the course that our fathers steered
In the path of the rising sun.
The wind and welkin and wave are ours
Wherever our bourne is found,
And we envy no landsman his dream and sleep
When we're off to the fishing ground.

IN POR T

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Out of the fires of the sunset come we again to our own —
We have girdled the world in our sailing under many an orient star;
Still to our battered canvas the scents of the spice gales cling,
And our hearts are swelling within us as we cross the harbor bar.

Beyond are the dusky hills where the twilight hangs in the pine trees,
Below are the lights of home where are watching the tender eyes
We have dreamed of on fretted seas in the hours of long night-
watches,
Ever a beacon to us as we looked to the stranger skies.

Hark! how the wind comes out of the haven's arms to greet us,
Bringing with it the song that is sung on the ancient shore!
Shipmates, furl we our sails — we have left the seas behind us,
Gladly finding at last our homes and our loves once more.

THE GULL S

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I

Soft is the sky in the mist-kirtled east,
Light is abroad on the sea,
All of the heaven with silver is fleeced,
Holding the sunrise in fee.
Lo! with a flash and uplifting of wings
Down where the long ripples break,

Cometh a bevy of glad-hearted things,
'Tis morn, for the gulls are awake.

II

Slumberous calm on the ocean and shore
Comes with the turn of the tide;
Never a strong-sweeping pinion may soar,
Where the tame fishing-boats ride!
Far and beyond in blue deserts of sea,
Where the wild winds are at play,
There may the spirits of sea-birds be free —
'Tis noon, for the gulls are away.

III

Over the rim of the sunset is blown
Sea-dusk of purple and gold,
Speed now the wanderers back to their own,
Wings the most tireless must fold.
Homeward together at twilight they flock,
Sated with joys of the deep,
Drowsily huddled on headland and rock —
Tis night, for the gulls are asleep.

SUNRISE ALONG SHOR E

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Athwart the harbor lingers yet
The ashen gleam of breaking day,
And where the guardian cliffs are set
The noiseless shadows steal away;

But all the winnowed eastern sky
Is flushed with many a tender hue,
And spears of light are smiting through
The ranks where huddled sea-mists fly.

Across the ocean, wan and gray,
Gay fleets of golden ripples come,
For at the birth-hour of the day
The roistering, wayward winds are dumb.
The rocks that stretch to meet the tide
Are smitten with a ruddy glow,
And faint reflections come and go
Where fishing boats at anchor ride.

All life leaps out to greet the light —
The shining seagulls dive and soar,
The swallows whirl in dizzy flight,
And sandpeeps flit along the shore.
From every purple landward hill
The banners of the morning fly,
But on the headlands, dim and high,
The fishing hamlets slumber still.

One boat alone beyond the bar
Is sailing outward blithe and free,
To carry sturdy hearts afar
Across those wastes of sparkling sea;
Staunchly to seek what may be won
From out the treasures of the deep,
To toil for those at home who sleep
And be the first to greet the sun.

THE SEA SPIRIT

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I smile o'er the wrinkled blue —
Lo! the sea is fair,
Smooth as the flow of a maiden's hair;
And the welkin's light shines through
Into mid-sea caverns of beryl hue,
And the little waves laugh and the mermaids sing,
And the sea is a beautiful, sinuous thing!

I scowl in sullen guise —
The sea grows dark and dun,
The swift clouds hide the sun
But not the bale-light in my eyes,
And the frightened wind as it flies
Ruffles the billows with stormy wing,
And the sea is a terrible, treacherous thing!

When moonlight glimmers dim
I pass in the path of the mist,
Like a pale spirit by spirits kissed.
At dawn I chant my own weird hymn,
And I dabble my hair in the sunset's rim,
And I call to the dwellers along the shore
With a voice of gramarye evermore.

And if one for love of me
Gives to my call an ear,
I will woo him and hold him dear,
And teach him the way of the sea,
And my glamor shall ever over him be;
Though he wander afar in the cities of men
He will come at last to my arms again.

HARBOR DAW N

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There's a hush and stillness calm and deep,
For the waves have wooed all the winds to sleep
In the shadow of headlands bold and steep;
But some gracious spirit has taken the cup
Of the crystal sky and filled it up
With rosy wine, and in it afar
Has dissolved the pearl of the morning star.

The girdling hills with the night-mist cold
In purple raiment are hooded and stoled
And smit on the brows with fire and gold;
And in the distance the wide, white sea
Is a thing of glamor and wizardry,
With its wild heart lulled to a passing rest,
And the sunrise cradled upon its breast.

With the first red sunlight on mast and spar
A ship is sailing beyond the bar,
Bound to a land that is fair and far;
And those who wait and those who go
Are brave and hopeful, for well they know
Fortune and favor the ship shall win
That crosses the bar when the dawn comes in.

MY LONGSHORE LASS

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Far in the mellow western sky,
Above the restless harbor bar,
A beacon on the coast of night,
Shines out a calm, white evening star;
But your deep eyes, my 'longshore lass,
Are brighter, clearer far.

The glory of the sunset past
Still gleams upon the water there,
But all its splendor cannot match
The windblown brightness of your hair;
Not any sea-maid's floating locks
Of gold are half so fair.

The waves are whispering to the sands
With murmurs as of elfin glee;
But your low laughter, 'longshore lass,
Is like a sea-harp's melody,
And the vibrant tones of your tender voice
Are sweeter far to me.

WHEN THE FISHING BOATS GO OUT

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When the lucent skies of morning flush with dawning rose once more,
And waves of golden glory break adown the sunrise shore,
And o'er the arch of heaven pied films of vapor float.
There's joyance and there's freedom when the fishing boats go out.

The wind is blowing freshly up from far, uncharted caves,
And sending sparkling kisses o'er the brows of virgin waves,
While routed dawn-mists shiver — oh, far and fast they flee,
Pierced by the shafts of sunrise athwart the merry sea!

Behind us, fair, light-smitten hills in dappled splendor lie,
Before us the wide ocean runs to meet the limpid sky —
Our hearts are full of poignant life, and care has fled afar
As sweeps the white-winged fishing fleet across the harbor bar.

The sea is calling to us in a blithesome voice and free,
There's keenest rapture on its breast and boundless liberty!
Each man is master of his craft, its gleaming sails out-blown,
And far behind him on the shore a home he calls his own.

Salt is the breath of ocean slopes and fresher blows the breeze,
And swifter still each bounding keel cuts through the combing seas,
Athwart our masts the shadows of the dipping seagulls float,
And all the water-world's alive when the fishing boats go out.

THE BRIDAL

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Last night a pale young Moon was wed
Unto the amorous, eager Sea;
Her maiden veil of mist she wore
His kingly purple vesture, he.

With her a bridal train of stars
Walked sisterly through shadows dim,
And, master minstrel of the world,
The great Wind sang the marriage hymn.

Thus came she down the silent sky
Unto the Sea her faith to plight,
And the grave priest who wedded them
Was ancient, sombre-mantled Night.

THE SEA TO THE SHOR E

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Lo, I have loved thee long, long have I yearned and entreated!
Tell me how I may win thee, tell me how I must woo.
Shall I creep to thy white feet, in guise of a humble lover?
Shall I croon in mild petition, murmuring vows anew?

Shall I stretch my arms unto thee, bidding thy maiden coyness,
Under the silver of morning, under the purple of night?
Taming my ancient rudeness, checking my heady clamor —
Thus, is it thus I must woo thee, oh, my delight?

Nay, 'tis no way of the sea thus to be meekly suitor —
I shall storm thee away with laughter wrapped in my beard of snow,
With the wildest of billows for chords I shall harp thee a song for
thy bridal,
A mighty lyric of love that feared not nor would forego!

With a redgold wedding ring, mined from the caves of sunset,
Fast shall I bind thy faith to my faith evermore,
And the stars will wait on our pleasure, the great north wind will
trumpet
A thunderous marriage march for the nuptials of sea and shore.

THE VOYAGER S

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We shall launch our shallop on waters blue from some dim
primrose shore,
We shall sail with the magic of dusk behind and enchanted coasts
before,
Over oceans that stretch to the sunset land where lost Atlantis
lies,
And our pilot shall be the vesper star that shines in the amber
skies.

The sirens will call to us again, all sweet and demon-fair,
And a pale mermaiden will beckon us, with mist on her night-black
hair;
We shall see the flash of her ivory arms, her mocking and luring
face,
And her guiling laughter will echo through the great, wind-winnowed
space.

But we shall not linger for woven spell, or sea-nymph's sorceries,
It is ours to seek for the fount of youth, and the gold of Hesperides,
Till the harp of the waves in its rhythmic beat keeps time to our
pulses' swing,
And the orient welkin is smit to flame with auroral crimsoning.

And at last, on some white and wondrous dawn, we shall reach the
fairy

isle

Where our hope and our dream are waiting us, and the tomorrows
smile;

With song on our lips and faith in our hearts we sail on our ancient
quest,

And each man shall find, at the end of the voyage, the thing he loves
the best.

SONGS OF THE HILLS AND WOODS

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TWILIGHT AND I WENT HAND IN HAND

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Twilight and I went hand in hand,
As lovers walk in shining Mays,
O'er musky, memory-haunted ways,
Across a lonely harvest-land,
Where west winds chanted in the wheat
An old, old vesper wondrous sweet.

Oh, Twilight was a comrade rare
For gypsy heath or templed grove,
In her gray vesture, shadow-wove;
I saw the darkness of her hair
Faint-mirrored in a field-pool dim,
As we stood tip-toe on its rim.

We went as lightly as on wings
Through many a scented chamber fair,
Among the pines and balsams, where

I could have dreamed of darling things,
And ever as we went I knew
The peeping fairy folk went too.

I could have lingered now and then
By gates of moonrise that might lead
To some forgotten, spiceried mead,
Or in some mossy, cloistered glen,
Where silence, very still and deep,
Seemed fallen in enchanted sleep.

But Twilight ever led me on,
As lovers walk, until we came
To hills where sunset's shaken flame
Had paled to ashes dead and wan;
And there, with footsteps stolen-light
She left me to the lure of night.

COME, REST AWHIL E

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Come, rest awhile, and let us idly stray
In glimmering valleys, cool and far away.

Come from the greedy mart, the troubled street,
And listen to the music, faint and sweet,

That echoes ever to a listening ear,
Unheard by those who will not pause to hear —

The wayward chimes of memory's pensive bells,
Windblown o'er misty hills and curtained dells.

One step aside and dewy buds uncloset
The sweetness of the violet and the rose;

Song and romance still linger in the green,
Emblossomed ways by you so seldom seen,

And near at hand, would you but see them, lie
All lovely things beloved in days gone by.

You have forgotten what it is to smile
In your too busy life — come, rest awhile.

AN APRIL NIGHT

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The moon comes up o'er the deeps of the woods,
And the long, low dingles that hide in the hills,
Where the ancient beeches are moist with buds
Over the pools and the whimpering rills;

And with her the mists, like dryads that creep
From their oaks, or the spirits of pine-hid springs,
Who hold, while the eyes of the world are asleep,
With the wind on the hills their gay revellings.

Down on the marshlands with flicker and glow
Wanders Will-o'-the-Wisp through the night,
Seeking for witch-gold lost long ago
By the glimmer of goblin lantern-light.

The night is a sorceress, dusk-eyed and dear,
Akin to all eerie and elfin things,
Who weaves about us in meadow and mere
The spell of a hundred vanished Springs.

RAIN ON THE HILL

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Now on the hill
The fitful wind is so still
That never a wimpling mist uplifts,
Nor a trembling leaf drop-laden stirs;
From the ancient firs
Aroma of balsam drifts,
And the silent places are filled
With elusive odors distilled
By the rain from asters empearled and frilled,
And a wild wet savor that dwells
Far adown in tawny fallows and bracken dells.

Then with a rush,
Breaking the beautiful hush
Where the only sound was the lisping, low
Converse of raindrops, or the dear sound
Close to the ground,
That grasses make when they grow,
Comes the wind in a gay,
Rollicking, turbulent way,
To winnow each bough and toss each spray,
Piping and whistling in glee
With the vibrant notes of a merry minstrelsy.

The friendly rain
Sings many a haunting strain,
Now of gladness and now of dole,
Anon of the glamor and the dream
That ever seem
To wait on a pilgrim soul;
Yea, we can hear
The grief of an elder year,
And laughter half-forgotten and dear;

In the wind and the rain we find
Fellowship meet for each change of mood or mind.

FOR LITTLE THING S

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Last night I looked across the hills
And through an arch of darkling pine
Low-swung against a limpid west
I saw a young moon shine.

And as I gazed there blew a wind,
Loosed where the sylvan shadows stir,
Bringing delight to soul and sense
The breath of dying fir.

This morn I saw a dancing host
Of poppies in a garden way,
And straight my heart was mirth-possessed
And I was glad as they.

I heard a song across the sea
As sweet and faint as echoes are,
And glimpsed a poignant happiness
No care of earth might mar.

Dear God, our life is beautiful
In every splendid gift it brings,
But most I thank Thee humbly for
The joy of little things.

SPRING SON G

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Hark, I hear a robin calling!
List, the wind is from the south!
And the orchard-bloom is falling
Sweet as kisses on the mouth.

In the dreamy vale of beeches
Fair and faint is woven mist,
And the river's orient reaches
Are the palest amethyst.

Every limpid brook is singing
Of the lure of April days;
Every piney glen is ringing
With the maddest roundelays.

Come and let us seek together
Springtime lore of daffodils,
Giving to the golden weather
Greeting on the sunwarm hills.

Ours shall be the moonrise stealing
Through the birches ivory-white;
Ours shall be the mystic healing
Of the velvet-footed night.

Ours shall be the gypsy winding
Of the path with violets blue,
Ours at last the wizard finding
Of the land where dreams come true.

A DAY OF F

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Let us put awhile away
All the cares of work-a-day,
For a golden time forget,
Task and worry, toil and fret,
Let us take a day to dream
In the meadow by the stream.

We may lie in grasses cool
Fringing a pellucid pool,
We may learn the gay brook-runes
Sung on amber afternoons,
And the keen wind-rhyme that fills
Mossy hollows of the hills.

Where the wildwood whisper stirs
We may talk with lispings firs,
We may gather honeyed blooms
In the dappled forest glooms,
We may eat of berries red
O'er the emerald upland spread.

We may linger as we will
In the sunset valleys still,
Till the gypsy shadows creep
From the starlit land of sleep,
And the mist of evening gray
Girdles round our pilgrim way.

We may bring to work again
Courage from the tasselled glen,
Bring a strength unfailing won
From the paths of cloud and sun,
And the wholesome zest that springs
From all happy, growing things.

THE WIN D

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O, wind! what saw you in the South,
In liliated meadows fair and far?
I saw a lover kiss his lass
New-won beneath the evening star.

O, wind! what saw you in the West
Of passing sweet that wooed your stay?
I saw a mother kneeling by
The cradle where her firstborn lay.

O, wind! what saw you in the North
That you shall dream of evermore?
I saw a maiden keeping tryst
Upon a gray and haunted shore.

O, wind! what saw you in the East
That still of ancient dole you croon?
I saw a wan wreck on the waves
And a dead face beneath the moon.

THE WOOD POOL

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Here is a voice that soundeth low and far
And lyric — voice of wind among the pines,
Where the untroubled, glimmering waters are,
And sunlight seldom shines.

Elusive shadows linger shyly here,
And wood-flowers blow, like pale, sweet spirit-bloom,
And white, slim birches whisper, mirrored clear
In the pool's lucent gloom.

Here Pan might pipe, or wandering dryad kneel
To view her loveliness beside the brim,
Or laughing woodnymphs from the byways steal
To dance around its rim.

‘Tis such a witching spot as might beseem
A seeker for young friendship’s trysting place,
Or lover yielding to the immortal dream
Of one beloved face.

DOWN STREA M

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Comrades, up! Let us row down stream in this first rare dawnlight,
While far in the clear northwest the late moon whitens and wanes;
Before us the sun will rise, deep-purpling headland and islet,
It is well to meet him thus, with the life astir in our veins!

The wakening birds will sing for us in the woods wind-shaken,
And the solitude of the hills will be broken by hymns to the light,
As we sweep past drowsing hamlets, still feathered by dreams of
slumber,
And leave behind us the shadows that fell with the falling of night.

The young day’s strength is ours in sinew and thew and muscle,
We are filled and thrilled with the spirit that dwells in the waste
and wold,
Glamor of wind and water, charm of the wildernesses —
Oh, the dear joy of it, greater than human hearts can hold!

While the world’s tired children sleep we bend to our oars with faces
Set in our eager gladness towards the morning’s gate;
Lo, ‘tis the sweet of the day! On, comrades mine, for beyond us
All its dower of beauty, its glory and wonder, wait.

ECHO DEL L

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In a lone valley fair and far,
Where many sweet beguilements are,
I know a spot to lag and dream
Through damask morns and noons agleam;
For feet fall lightly on the fern
And twilight is a wondrous thing,
When the winds blow from some far bourne
Beyond the hill rims westering;
There echoes ring as if a throng
Of fairies hid from mortal eyes
Sent laughter back in spirit guise
And song as the pure soul of song;
Oh, 'tis a spot to love right well,
This lonely, witching Echo Dell!

Even the winds an echo know,
Elusive, faint, such as might blow
From wandering elfland bugles far,
Beneath an occidental star;
And I have thought the blue bells lent
A subtle music to my ear,
And that the pale wild roses bent
To harken sounds I might not hear.
The tasselled fir trees softly croon
The fabled lore of elder days.
And through the shimmering eastern haze
Floats slowly up the mellow moon;
Come, heart o' mine, for love must dwell
In whispering, witching Echo Dell.

THE ROVER S

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Over the fields we go, through the sweets of the purple clover,
That letters a message for us as for every vagrant rover;
Before us the dells are abloom, and a leaping brook calls after,
Feeling its kinship with us in lore of dreams and laughter.

Out of the valleys of moonlight elfin voices are calling;
Down from the misty hills faint, far greetings are falling;
Whisper the grasses to us, murmuring gleeful and airy,
Knowing us pixy-led, seeking the haunts of faery.

The wind is our joyful comrade wherever our free feet wander,
Over the tawny wolds to the meres and meadows yonder;
The mild-eyed stars go with us, or the rain so swiftly flying,
Racing us over the wastes where the hemlocks and pines are sighing.

Across the upland dim, down through the beckoning hollow —
Oh, we go too far and fast for the feet of care to follow!
The gypsy fire in our hearts for the wilderness wide and luring;
Other loves may fail but this is great and enduring.

Other delights may pall, but the joy of the open never;
The charm of the silent places must win and hold us forever;
Bondage of walls we leave with never a glance behind us.
Under the lucent sky the delights of the rover shall find us.

AMONG THE PINE S

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Here let us linger at will and delightsomely hearken
Music aeolian of wind in the boughs of pine,
Timbrel of falling waters, sounds all soft and sonorous,
Worshipful litanies sung at a bannered shrine.

Deep let us breathe the ripeness and savor of balsam,
Tears that the pines have wept in sorrow sweet,
With its aroma comes beguilement of things forgotten,
Long-past hopes of the years on tiptoeing feet.

Far in the boskiest glen of this wood is a dream and a silence —
Come, we shall claim them ours ere look we long;
A dream that we dreamed and lost, a silence richly hearted,
Deep at its lyric core with the soul of a song.

If there be storm, it will thunder a march in the branches,
So that our feet may keep true time as we go;
If there be rain, it will laugh, it will glisten, and beckon,
Calling to us as a friend all lightly and low.

If it be night, the moonlight will wander winsomely with us,
If it be hour of dawn, all heaven will bloom,
If it be sunset, it's glow will enfold and pursue us.
To the remotest valley of purple gloom.

Lo! the pine wood is a temple where the days meet to worship,
Laying their cark and care for the nonce aside,
God, who made it, keeps it as a witness to Him forever,
Walking in it, as a garden, at eventide.

A DAY IN THE OPE N

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Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away,

With a fetterless wind that is out on the downs,
And there piping a call to the fallow and shore,
Where the sea evermore
Surgeth over the gray reef, and drowns
The fierce rocks with white foam;
It is ours with untired feet to roam
Where the pines in green gloom of wide vales make their murmuring
home,
Or the pools that the sunlight hath kissed
Mirror back a blue sky that is winnowed of cloud and of mist!

Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away
Through the orient distances hazy and pied,
Hand in hand with the gypsying breezes that blow
Here and there, to and fro,
O'er the meadows all rosy and wide,
Where a lyric of flowers
Is sweet-sung to the frolicking hours,
And the merry buds letter the footsteps of tiptoeing showers;
We may climb where the steep is beset
With a turbulent waterfall, loving to clamor and fret!

Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away
To the year that is holding her cup of wild wine;
If we drink we shall be as the gods of the wold
In the blithe days of old
Elate with a laughter divine;
Yea, and then we shall know
The rare magic of solitude so
We shall nevermore wish its delight and its dreams to forego,
And our blood will upstir and upleap
With a fellowship splendid, a gladness impassioned and deep!

MIDNIGHT IN CAM P

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Night in the unslumbering forest! From the free,
Vast pinelands by the foot of man untrod,
Blows the wild wind, roaming rejoicingly
This wilderness of God;
And the tall firs that all day long have flung
Balsamic odors where the sunshine burned,
Chant to its harping primal epics learned
When this old world was young.

Beyond the lake, white, girdling peaks uplift
Untroubled brows to virgin skies afar,
And o'er the uncertain water glimmers drift
Of fitful cloud and star.
Sure never day such mystic beauty held
As sylvan midnight here in this surcease
Of toil, when the kind darkness gives us peace
Garnered from years of eld.

Lo! Harken to the mountain waterfall
Laughing adown its pathway to the glen
And nearer, in the cedars, the low call
Of brook to brook again;
Voices that garish daytime may not know
Wander at will along the bosky steeps,
And silent, silver-footed moonlight creeps
Through the dim glades below.

Oh, it is well to waken with the woods
And feel, as those who wait with God alone,
The forest's heart in these rare solitudes
Beating against our own.
Close-shut behind us are the gates of care,
Divinity enfolds us, prone to bless,
And our souls kneel. Night in the wilderness
Is one great prayer.

THE HILL MAPLE S

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Here on a hill of the occident stand we shoulder to shoulder,
Comrades tried and true through a mighty swath of the years!
Spring harps glad laughter through us, and ministrant rains of
the autumn
Sing us again the songs of ancient dolor and tears.

The glory of sunrise smites on our fair, free brows uplifted
When the silver-kirtled day steps over the twilight's bars;
At evening we look adown into valleys hearted with sunset,
And we whisper old lore together under the smouldering stars.

Crescent moons of the summer gleam through our swaying branches,
Knee-deep in fern we stand while the days of the sun-time go;
And the winds of winter love us — the keen, gay winds of the winter,
Coming to our gray arms from over the plains of snow.

Down in the valleys beneath us is wooing and winning and wedding,
Down in the long, dim valleys earth-children wail and weep;
But here on these free hills we grow and are strong and flourish,
Comrades shoulder to shoulder our watch of the years to keep.

A SUMMER DA Y

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The dawn laughs out on orient hills
And dances with the diamond rills;
The ambrosial wind but faintly stirs
The silken, beaded gossamers;
In the wide valleys, lone and fair,
Lyrics are piped from limpid air,
And, far above, the pine trees free
Voice ancient lore of sky and sea.
Come, let us fill our hearts straightway
With hope and courage of the day.

II

Noon, hiving sweets of sun and flower,
Has fallen on dreams in wayside bower,
Where bees hold honeyed fellowship
With the ripe blossom of her lip;
All silent are her poppied vales
And all her long Arcadian dales,
Where idleness is gathered up
A magic draught in summer's cup.
Come, let us give ourselves to dreams
By lisping margins of her streams.

III

Adown the golden sunset way
The evening comes in wimple gray;
By burnished shore and silver lake
Cool winds of ministration wake;
O'er occidental meadows far
There shines the light of moon and star,
And sweet, low-tinkling music rings
About the lips of haunted springs.
In quietude of earth and air
'Tis meet we yield our souls to prayer.

SEPTEMBER

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Lo! a ripe sheaf of many golden days
Gleaned by the year in autumn's harvest ways,
With here and there, blood-tinted as an ember,
Some crimson poppy of a late delight
Atoning in its splendor for the flight
Of summer blooms and joys —
This is September.

IN LOVERS' LAND

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I know a place for loitering feet
Deep in the valley where the breeze
Makes melody in lichened boughs,
And murmurs low love-litanies.

There slender harebells nod and dream,
And pale wild roses offer up
The fragrance of their golden hearts,
As from some incense-brimméd cup.

It holds the sunshine sifted down
Softly through many a beechen screen,
Save where, by deeper woods embraced,
Cool shadows linger, dim and green.

And there my love and I may walk
And harken to the lapsing fall

Of unseen brooks and tender winds,
And wooing birds that sweetly call.

And every voice to her will say
What I repeat in dear refrain,
And eyes will meet with seeking eyes,
And hands will clasp in Lovers' Lane.

Come, sweetheart, then, and we will stray
Adown that valley, lingering long,
Until the rose is wet with dew,
And robins come to evensong,

And woo each other, borrowing speech
Of love from winds and brooks and birds,
Until our sundered thoughts are one
And hearts have no more need of words.

ON THE HILL S

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Through the pungent hours of the afternoon,
On the autumn slopes we have lightly wandered
Where the sunshine lay in a golden swoon
And the lingering year all its sweetness squandered.
Oh, it was blithesome to roam at will
Over the crest of each westering hill,
Over those dreamy, enchanted lands
Where the trees held to us their friendly hands!

Winds in the pine boughs softly crooned,
Or in the grasses complained most sweetly,
With all the music of earth attuned
In this dear ripe time that must pass so fleetly:

Golden rod as we idled by
Held its torches of flame on high,
And the asters beckoned along our way
Like fair fine ladies in silk array.

We passed by woods where the day aside
Knelt like a pensive nun and tender,
We looked on valleys of purple pride
Where she reigned a queen in her misty splendor;
But out on the hills she was wild and free,
A comrade to wander right gipsily,
Luring us on over waste and wold
With the charm of a message half sung, half told.

And now, when far in the shining west
She has dropped her flowers on the sunset meadow,
We turn away from our witching quest
To the kindly starshine and gathering shadow;
Filled to the lips of our souls are we
With the beauty given so lavishly,
And hand in hand with the night we come
Back to the light and the hearth of home.

AN AUTUMN EVENING

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Dark hills against a hollow crocus sky
Scarfed with its crimson pennons, and below
The dome of sunset long, hushed valleys lie
Cradling the twilight, where the lone winds blow
And wake among the harps of leafless trees
Fantastic runes and mournful melodies.

The chilly purple air is threaded through
With silver from the rising moon afar,
And from a gulf of clear, unfathomed blue
In the southwest glimmers a great gold star
Above the darkening druid glens of fir
Where beckoning boughs and elfin voices stir.

And so I wander through the shadows still,
And look and listen with a rapt delight,
Pausing again and yet again at will
To drink the elusive beauty of the night,
Until my soul is filled, as some deep cup,
That with divine enchantment is brimmed up.

NOVEMBER EVENING

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Come, for the dusk is our own; let us fare forth together,
With a quiet delight in our hearts for the ripe, still, autumn weather,
Through the rustling valley and wood and over the crisping meadow,
Under a high-sprung sky, winnowed of mist and shadow.

Sharp is the frosty air, and through the far hill-gaps showing
Lucent sunset lakes of crocus and green are glowing;
'Tis the hour to walk at will in a wayward, unfettered roaming,
Caring for naught save the charm, elusive and swift, of the gloaming.

Watchful and stirless the fields as if not unkindly holding
Harvested joys in their clasp, and to their broad bosoms folding
Baby hopes of a Spring, trusted to motherly keeping,
Thus to be cherished and happed through the long months of their
sleeping.

Silent the woods are and gray; but the firs than ever are greener,
Nipped by the frost till the tang of their loosened balsam is keener;
And one little wind in their boughs, eerily swaying and swinging,
Very soft and low, like a wandering minstrel is singing.

Beautiful is the year, but not as the springlike maiden
Garlanded with her hopes — rather the woman laden
With wealth of joy and grief, worthily won through living,
Wearing her sorrow now like a garment of praise and thanksgiving.

Gently the dark comes down over the wild, fair places,
The whispering glens in the hills, the open, starry spaces;
Rich with the gifts of the night, sated with questing and dreaming,
We turn to the dearest of paths where the star of the homelight is
gleaming.

OUT O' DOOR S

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There's a gypsy wind across the harvest land,
Let us fare forth with it lightly hand in hand;
Where cloud shadows blow across the sunwarm waste,
And the first red leaves are falling let us haste,
For the waning days are lavish of their stores,
And the joy of life is with us out o' doors!

Let us roam along the ways of golden rod
Over uplands where the spicy bracken nod,
Through the wildwood where the hemlock branches croon
Their rune-chant of elder days across the noon.
For the mellow air its pungency outpours,
And the glory of the year is out o' doors!

There's a great gray sea beyond us calling far,
There's a blue tide curling o'er the harbor bar;
Ho, the breeze that smites us saltly on the lips
Whistles gaily in the sails of outbound ships;
Let us send our thoughts with them to fabled shores,
For the pilgrim mood is on us out o' doors!

Lo! the world's rejoicing in each spirit thrills,
Strength and gladness are to us upon the hills;
We are one with crimson bough and ancient sea,
Holding all the joy of autumn hours in fee,
Hope within us like a questing bird upsoars,
And there's room for song and laughter out o' doors.

IN THE DAYS OF THE GOLDEN ROD

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Across the meadow in brooding shadow
I walk to drink of the autumn's wine —
The charm of story, the artist's glory,
To-day on these silvering hills is mine;
On height, in hollow, where'er I follow,
By mellow hillside and searing sod,
Its plumes uplifting, in light winds drifting,
I see the glimmer of goldenrod.

In this latest comer the vanished summer
Has left its sunshine the world to cheer,
And bids us remember in late September
What beauty mates with the passing year.
The days that are fleetest are still the sweetest,
And life is near to the heart of God,
And the peace of heaven to earth is given
In this wonderful time of the goldenrod.

A WINTER DA Y

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I

The air is silent save where stirs
A bugling breeze among the firs;
The virgin world in white array
Waits for the bridegroom kiss of day;
All heaven blooms rarely in the east
Where skies are silvery and fleeced,
And o'er the orient hills made glad
The morning comes in wonder clad;
Oh, 'tis a time most fit to see
How beautiful the dawn can be!

II

Wide, sparkling fields snow-vestured lie
Beneath a blue, unshadowed sky;
A glistening splendor crowns the woods
And bosky, whistling solitudes;
In hemlock glen and reedy mere
The tang of frost is sharp and clear;
Life hath a jollity and zest,
A poignancy made manifest;
Laughter and courage have their way
At noontide of a winter's day.

III

Faint music rings in wold and dell,
The tinkling of a distant bell,

Where homestead lights with friendly glow
Glimmer across the drifted snow;
Beyond a valley dim and far
Lit by an occidental star,
Tall pines the marge of day beset
Like many a slender minaret,
Whence priest-like winds on crystal air
Summon the reverent world to prayer.

TWILIGHT T

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From vales of dawn hath Day pursued the Night
Who mocking fled, swift-sandalled, to the west,
Nor ever lingered in her wayward flight
With dusk-eyed glance to recompense his quest,
But over crocus hills and meadows gray
Sped fleetly on her way.

Now when the Day, shorn of his failing strength,
Hath fallen spent before the sunset bars,
The fair, wild Night, with pity touched at length,
Crowned with her chaplet of outblossoming stars,
Creeps back repentantly upon her way
To kiss the dying Day.

THE CALL OF THE WIND S

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Ho, come out with the wind of spring,
And step it blithely in woodlands waking;

Friend am I of each growing thing
From the gray sod into sunshine breaking;
Mine is the magic of twilights dim,
Of violets blue on the still pool's rim,
Mine is the breath of the blossoms young
Sweetest of fragrances storied or sung —
Come, ye earth-children, weary and worn,
I will lead you over the hills of morn.

Ho, come out with the summer wind,
And loiter in meadows of ripening clover,
Where the purple noons are long and kind,
And the great white clouds drift fleecily over.
Mine is immortal minstrelsy,
The fellowship of the rose and bee,
Beguiling laughter of willowed rills,
The rejoicing of pines on inland hills,
Come, ye earth-children, by dale and stream,
I will lead you into the ways of dream.

Ho, when the wind of autumn rings
Through jubilant mornings crisp and golden,
Come where the yellow woodland flings
Its hoarded wealth over by-ways olden.
Mine are the grasses frosted and sere,
That lisp and rustle around the mere,
Mine are the flying racks that dim
The lingering sunset's reddening rim,
Earth-children, come, in the waning year,
I will harp you to laughter and buoyant cheer.

Ho, when the wind of winter blows
Over the uplands and moonlit spaces,
Come ye out to the waste of snows,
To the glimmering fields and the silent places.
I whistle gaily on starry nights
Through the arch of the elfin northern lights,

But in long white valleys I pause to hark
Where the ring of the homelights gems the dark.
Come, ye earth-children, whose hearts are sad,
I will make you valiant and strong and glad!

A WINTER DAW N

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Above the marge of night a star still shines,
And on the frosty hills the sombre pines
Harbor an eerie wind that crooneth low
Over the glimmering wastes of virgin snow.

Through the pale arch of orient the morn
Comes in a milk-white splendor newly-born,
A sword of crimson cuts in twain the gray
Banners of shadow hosts, and lo, the day!

THE FOREST PAT H

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Oh, the charm of idle dreaming
Where the dappled shadows dance,
All the leafy aisles are teeming
With the lure of old romance!

Down into the forest dipping,
Deep and deeper as we go,
One might fancy dryads slipping
Where the white-stemmed birches grow.

Lurking gnome and freakish fairy
In the fern may peep and hide ...
Sure their whispers low and airy
Ring us in on every side!

Saw you where the pines are rocking
Nymph's white shoulder as she ran?
Lo, that music faint and mocking,
Is it not a pipe of Pan?

Hear you that elusive laughter
Of the hidden waterfall?
Nay, a satyr speeding after
Ivy-crowned bacchanal.

Far and farther as we wander
Sweeter shall our roaming be,
Come, for dim and winsome yonder
Lies the path to Arcady!

AT NIGHTFALL

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The dark is coming o'er the world, my playmate,
And the fields where poplars stand are very still,
All our groves of green delight have been invaded,
There are voices quite unknown upon the hill;

The wind has grown too weary for a comrade,
It is keening in the rushes spent and low,
Let us join our hands and hasten very softly
To the little, olden, friendly path we know.

The stars are laughing at us, O, my playmate,
Very, very far away in lonely skies,
The trees that were our friends are strangers to us,
And the fern is full of whispers and of sighs.

The sounds we hear are not what we may share in,
We may not linger where the white moths roam,
We must hasten yet more swiftly, little playmate,
To the house among the pines that is our home.

The dark is creeping closer yet, my playmate,
And the woods seem crowding nearer as we go,
Oh, how very, very bold have grown the shadows,
They may touch us as they flutter to and fro!

The silence is too dreadful for our laughter,
The night is very full of strange alarms,
But it cannot hurt us now, O, little playmate,
One more step and we are safe in mother's arms!

THE TRUCE O' NIGH T

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Lo, it is dark,
Save for the crystal spark
Of a virgin star o'er the purpling lea,
Or the fine, keen, silvery grace of a young
Moon that is hung
O'er the priest-like firs by the sea;
Lo, it is still,
Save for the wind of the hill,
And the luring, primeval sounds that fill
The moist and scented air —
'Tis the truce o' night, away with unrest and care!

Now we may forget
Love's fever and hate's fret,
Forget tomorrow and yesterday;
And the hopes we buried in musky gloom
Will come out of their tomb,
Warm and poignant and gay;
We may wander wide,
With only a wish for a guide,
By heath and pool where the Little Folk bide,
We may share in fairy mirth,
And partake once more in the happy thoughts of earth.

Lo, we may rest
Here on her cradling breast
In the wonderful time of the truce o' night,
And sweet things that happened long ago,
Softly and slow,
Will creep back to us in delight;
And our dreams may be

Compact of young melody,
Just such as under the Eden Tree,
‘Mid the seraphim’s lullabies,
Eve’s might have been ere banished from Paradise.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

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TO MY ENEMY

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Let those who will of friendship sing,
And to its guerdon grateful be,
But I a lyric garland bring
To crown thee, O, mine enemy!

Thanks, endless thanks, to thee I owe
For that my lifelong journey through
Thine honest hate has done for me
What love perchance had failed to do.

I had not scaled such weary heights
But that I held thy scorn in fear,
And never keenest lure might match
The subtle goading of thy sneer.

Thine anger struck from me a fire
That purged all dull content away,
Our mortal strife to me has been
Unflagging spur from day to day.

And thus, while all the world may laud
The gifts of love and loyalty,
I lay my meed of gratitude
Before thy feet, mine enemy!

AS THE HEART HOPE S

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It is a year dear one, since you afar
Went out beyond my yearning mortal sight —
A wondrous year! perchance in many a star
You have sojourned, or basked within the light
Of mightier suns; it may be you have trod
The glittering pathways of the Pleiades,
And through the Milky Way's white mysteries
Have walked at will, fire-shod.

You may have gazed in the immortal eyes
Of prophets and of martyrs; talked with seers
Learned in all the lore of Paradise,
The infinite wisdom of eternal years;
To you the Sons of Morning may have sung,
The impassioned strophes of their matin hymn,
For you the choirs of the seraphim
Their harpings wild out-flung.

But still I think at eve you come to me
For old, delightsome speech of eye and lip,
Deeming our mutual converse thus to be
Fairer than archangelic comradeship;
Dearer our close communings fondly given
Than all the rainbow dreams a spirit knows,
Sweeter my gathered violets than the rose
Upon the hills of heaven.

Can any exquisite, unearthly morn,
Silverly breaking o'er a starry plain,
Give to your soul the poignant pleasure born
Of virgin moon and sunset's lustrous stain
When we together watch them? Oh, apart
A hundred universes you may roam,
But still I know — I know — your only home
Is here within my heart!

TWO LOVE S

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One said; "Lo, I would walk handclasped with thee
Adown the ways of joy and sunlit slopes
Of earthly song in happiest vagrancy
To pluck the blossom of a thousand hopes.
Let us together drain the wide world's cup
With gladness brimméd up!"

And one said, "I would pray to go with thee
When sorrow claims thee; I would fence thy heart
With mine against all anguish; I would be
The comforter and healer of thy smart;
And I would count it all the wide world's gain
To spare or share thy pain!"

THE CHRISTMAS NIGHT

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Wrapped was the world in slumber deep,
By seaward valley and cedarn steep,

And bright and blest were the dreams of its sleep;
All the hours of that wonderful night-tide through
The stars outblossomed in fields of blue,
A heavenly chaplet, to diadem
The King in the manger of Bethlehem.

Out on the hills the shepherds lay,
Wakeful, that never a lamb might stray,
Humble and clean of heart were they;
Thus it was given them to hear
Marvellous harpings strange and clear,
Thus it was given them to see
The heralds of the nativity.

In the dim-lit stable the mother mild
Looked with holy eyes on her child,
Cradled him close to her heart and smiled;
Kingly purple nor crown had he,
Never a trapping of royalty;
But Mary saw that the baby's head
With a slender nimbus was garlanded.

Speechless her joy as she watched him there,
Forgetful of pain and grief and care,
And every thought in her soul was a prayer;
While under the dome of the desert sky
The Kings of the East from afar drew nigh,
And the great white star that was guide to them
Kept ward o'er the manger of Bethlehem.

IN AN OLD FARMHOUSE

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Outside the afterlight's lucent rose
Is smiting the hills and brimming the valleys,
And shadows are stealing across the snows;
From the mystic gloom of the pineland alleys.
Glamour of mingled night and day
Over the wide, white world has sway,
And through their prisoning azure bars,
Gaze the calm, cold eyes of the early stars.

But here, in this long, low-raftered room,
Where the blood-red light is crouching and leaping,
The fire that colors the heart of the gloom
The lost sunshine of old summers is keeping —
The wealth of forests that held in fee
Many a season's rare alchemy,
And the glow and gladness without a name
That dwells in the deeps of unstinted flame.

Gather we now round the opulent blaze
With the face that loves and the heart that rejoices,
Dream we once more of the old-time days,
Listen once more to the old-time voices!
From the clutch of the cities and paths of the sea
We have come again to our own rooftree,
And forgetting the loves of the stranger lands
We yearn for the clasp of our kindred's hands.

There are tales to tell, there are tears to shed,
There are children's flower-faces and women's sweet laughter;
There's a chair left vacant for one who is dead
Where the firelight crimsons the ancient rafter;
What reck we of the world that waits
With care and clamor beyond our gates,
We, with our own, in this witching light,
Who keep our tryst with the past tonight?

Ho! how the elf-flames laugh in glee!
Closer yet let us draw together,

Holding our revel of memory
In the guiling twilight of winter weather;
Out on the waste the wind is chill,
And the moon swings low o'er the western hill,
But old hates die and old loves burn higher
With the wane and flash of the farmhouse fire.

A REQUES T

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When I am dead
I would that ye make my bed
On that lowlying, windy waste by the sea,
Where the silvery grasses rustle and lisp;
There, where the crisp
Foam-flakes shall fly over me,
And murmurs creep
From the ancient heart of the deep,
Lulling me ever, I shall most sweetly sleep.
While the eerie sea-folk croon
On the long dim shore by the light of a waning moon.

I shall not hear
Clamor of young life anear,
Voices of gladness to stir an unrest;
Only the wandering mists of the sea
Shall companion me;
Only the wind in its quest
Shall come where I lie,
Or the rain from the brooding sky
With furtive footstep shall pass me by,
And never a dream of the earth
Shall break on my slumber with lure of an outlived mirth.

MEMORY PICTURE S

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I

A widespring meadow in a rosy dawn
Bedropt with virgin buds; an orient sky
Fleeced with a dappled cloud but half withdrawn;
A mad wind blowing by,
O'er slopes of rippling grass and glens apart;
A brackened path to a wild-woodland place
A limpid pool with a fair, laughing face
Mirrored within its heart.

II

An ancient garden brimmed with summer sun
Upon a still and slumberous afternoon;
Old walks and pleasancess with shadows spun
Where honeyed odors swoon;
A velvet turf with blossoms garlanded;
A hedge of Mary-lilies white and tall;
And, shining out against a lichened wall,
A stately-golden head.

III

An autumn hilltop in the sunset hue,
Pine boughs uptossed against the crystal west,
And, girdled with the twilight dim and blue,
A valley peace-possessed;
A high-sprung heaven stained with colors rare,
A sheen of moonrise on the sea afar,

And, bright and soft as any glimmering star,
Eyes holy as a prayer.

DOWN HOME

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Down home tonight the moonshine falls
Across a hill with daisies pied,
The pear tree by the garden gate
Beckons with white arms like a bride.

A savor as of trampled fern
Along the whispering meadow stirs,
And, beacon of immortal love,
A light is shining through the firs.

To my old gable window creeps
The night wind with a sigh and song,
And, weaving ancient sorceries,
Thereto the gleeful moonbeams throng.

Beside the open kitchen door
My mother stands all lovingly,
And o'er the pathways of the dark
She sends a yearning thought to me.

It seeks and finds my answering heart
Which shall no more be peace-posessed
Until I reach her empty arms
And lay my head upon her breast.

THE CHOICE

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Life, come to me in no pale guise and ashen,
I care not for thee in such placid fashion!
I would share widely, Life,
In all thy joy and strife,
Would sound thy deeps and reach thy highest passion,
With thy delight and with thy suffering rife.

Whether I bide with thee in cot or palace,
I would drink deeply, Life, of thy great chalice,
Even to its bitter lees —
Yea, shrinking not from these,
Since out of bitterness come strength and solace
And wisdom is not won in slumberous ease.

Wan peace, uncolored days, were a poor favor;
To lack great pain and love were to lack savor.
Life, take the heart of me
And fill it brimmingly,
No matter with what poignant brew or flavor,
So that it may not shrunk and empty be.

Yea, Life, thus would I live, nor play at living,
The best of me for thy best gladly giving,
With an unfaltering cheer,
Greeting thee year by year,
Even in thy dourest mood some good achieving,
Until I read thy deep-hid meaning clear.

TWILIGHT IN THE GARDE N

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The scent of the earth is moist and good
In the dewy shade
Of the tall, dark poplars whose slender tops
Against the sunset bloom are laid,
And a robin is whistling in the copse
By the dim spruce wood.

The west wind blowing o'er branch and flower
Out of the wold,
Steals through the honeysuckle bower
And bears away on its airy wings
Odors that breath of paradise;
Dim are the poppies' splendid dyes,
But many a pallid primrose swings
Its lamp of gold.

A white moth flits from tree to tree
Like a wandering soul;
Deep in the lily a muffled boom
Tells of a honey-drunken bee
Wildered with sweets in that ivory bowl;
Many a subtle melody,
Many a rare sound all unknown
To the lusty daylight's fuller tone
Threads with its magic this hush and gloom.

Many a dear thought deep in the heart,
Many a memory, dulcet and fine,
Wakes as we walk in the garden tonight,
In this soft kissing of dark and light,
When the world has drawn itself apart
From our spirit's shrine.

MY LEGAC Y

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My friend has gone away from me
From shadow into perfect light,
But leaving a sweet legacy.

My heart shall hold it long in fee —
A grand ideal, calm and bright,
A song of hope for ministry,

A faith of unstained purity,
A thought of beauty for delight —
These did my friend bequeath to me;

And, more than even these can be,
The worthy pattern of a white,
Unmarred life lived most graciously.

Dear comrade, loyal thanks to thee
Who now hath fared beyond my sight,
My friend has gone away from me,
But leaving a sweet legacy.

GRATITUDE

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I thank thee, friend, for the beautiful thought
That in words well chosen thou gavest to me.
Deep in the life of my soul it has wrought
With its own rare essence to ever imbue me,
To gleam like a star over devious ways,
To bloom like a flower on the drearest days —
Better such gift from thee to me
Than gold of the hills or pearls of the sea.

For the luster of jewels and gold may depart,
And they have in them no life of the giver,
But this gracious gift from thy heart to my heart
Shall witness to me of thy love forever;
Yea, it shall always abide with me
As a part of my immortality;
For a beautiful thought is a thing divine,
So I thank thee, oh, friend, for this gift of thine.

FANCIE S

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Surely the flowers of a hundred springs
Are simply the souls of beautiful things!

The poppies aflame with gold and red
Were the kisses of lovers in days that are fled.

The purple pansies with dewdrops pearled
Were the rainbow dreams of a youngling world.

The lily, white as a star apart,
Was the first pure prayer of a virgin heart.

The daisies that dance and twinkle so
Were the laughter of children in long ago.

The sweetness of all true friendship yet
Lives in the breath of the mignonette.

To the white narcissus there must belong
The very delight of a maiden's song.

And the rose, all flowers of the earth above,
Was a perfect, rapturous thought of love.

Oh! surely the blossoms of all the springs
Must be the souls of beautiful things.

ONE OF THE SHEPHERD S

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We were out on the hills that night
To watch our sheep;
Drowsily by the fire we lay
Where the waning flame did flicker and leap,
And some were weary and half asleep,
And some talked low of their flocks and the fright
Of a lion that day.

But I had drawn from the others apart;
I was only a lad,
And the night's great silence so filled my heart
That I dared not talk and I dared not jest;
The moon had gone down behind the hill
And even the wind of the desert was still;
As the touch of death the air was cold,
And the world seemed all outworn and old;
Yet a poignant delight in my soul was guest,
And I could not be sad.

Still were my thoughts the thoughts of youth
Under the skies:
I dreamed of the holy and tender truth
That shone for me in my mother's eyes;
Of my little sister's innocent grace,
And the mirthful lure in the olive face
Of a maid I had seen at the well that day,
Singing low as I passed that way,
And so sweet and wild were the notes of her song,
That I listened long.

Was it the dawn that silvered and broke
Over the hill?
Each at the other looked in amaze,
And never a breathless word we spoke.
Fast into rose and daffodil

Deepened that splendor; athwart its blaze
That pierced like a sword the gulf of night
We saw a form that was shaped of the light,
And we veiled our faces in awe and dread
To hearken the tidings the Bright One told —
Oh! wonderful were the words he said —
Of a Child in Bethlehem's manger old.

The stars were drowned in that orient glow;
The sky was abloom like a meadow in spring;
But each blossom there was a radiant face
And each flash of glory a shining wing;
They harped of peace and great good will,
And such was their music that well I know
There can never again in my soul be space
For a sound of ill.

The light died out as the sunset dies
In the western skies;
Swift went we to the Bethlehem khan,
Many our questions laughed to scorn,
But one, a gray and wrinkled man,
With strange, deep eyes that searched the heart,
Led us down to the child newborn
In a dim-lighted cave apart.

There on the straw the mother lay
Wan and white,
But her look was so holy and rapt and mild
That it seemed to shed a marvellous light,
Faint as the first rare gleam of day,
Around the child.

It was as other children are
Saving for something in the eyes,
Starlike and clear and strangely wise —
Then came a sudden thought to me
Of a lamb I had found on the waste afar;

Lost and sick with hunger and cold,
I had brought it back in my arms to the fold
For tender ministry.

Dawn had flooded the east as a wave
When we left the cave;
All the world suddenly seemed to be
Young and pure and joyous again;
The others lingered to talk with the men,
Full of wonder and rapture still;
But I hastened back to the fold on the hill
To tend the lamb that had need of me.

IF MARY HAD KNOWN

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If Mary had known
When she held her Babe's hands in her own —
Little hands that were tender and white as a rose,
All dented with dimples from finger to wrist,
Such as mothers have kissed —
That one day they must feel the fierce blows
Of a hatred insane.
Must redden with holiest stain,
And grasp as their guerdon the boon of the bitterest pain,
Oh, I think that her sweet, brooding face
Must have blanched with its anguish of knowledge above her
embrace.

But — if Mary had known,
As she held her Babe's hands in her own,
What a treasure of gifts to the world they would bring;
What healing and hope to the hearts that must ache,
And without him must break;

Had she known they would pluck forth death's sting
And set open the door
Of the close, jealous grave evermore,
Making free who were captives in sorrow and darkness before,
Oh, I think that a gracious sunrise
Of rapture had broken across the despair of her eyes!

If Mary had known
As she sat with her baby alone,
And guided so gently his bare little feet
To take their first steps from the throne of her knee,
How weary must be
The path that for them should be meet;
And how it must lead
To the cross of humanity's need,
Giving hissing and shame, giving blame and reproach for its meed,
Oh, I think that her tears would have dewed
Those dear feet that must walk such a hard, starless way to the Rood!

But — if Mary had known,
As she sat with her Baby alone,
On what errands of mercy and peace they would go,
How those footsteps would ring through the years of all time
With an echo sublime,
Making holy the land of their woe,
That the pathway they trod
Would guide the world back to its God,
And lead ever upward away from the grasp of the clod,
She had surely forgot to be sad
And only remembered to be most immortally glad!

If Mary had known,
As she held him so closely, her own,
Cradling his shining, fair head on her breast,
Sunned over with ringlets as bright as the morn,
That a garland of thorn
On that tender brow would be pressed

Till the red drops would fall
Into eyes that looked out upon all,
Abrim with a pity divine over clamor and brawl,
Oh, I think that her lullaby song
Would have died on her lips into wailing impassioned and long!

But — if Mary had known,
As she held him so closely, her own,
That over the darkness and pain he would be
The Conqueror hailed in all oncoming days,
The world's hope and praise,
And the garland of thorn,
The symbol of mocking and scorn
Would be a victorious diadem royally worn,
Oh, I think that ineffable joy
Must have flooded her soul as she bent o'er her wonderful Boy!

AT THE LONG SAUL T

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(“Searching the pile of corpses the victors found four
Frenchmen still breathing. Three had scarcely a spark of life
... the fourth seemed likely to survive and they reserved him
for future torments.”

Parkman's History.)

A prisoner under the stars I lie,
With no friend near;
Tomorrow they lead me forth to die,
The stake is ready, the torments set,
They will pay in full their deadly debt;
But I fear them not! Oh, none could fear
Of those who stood by Daulac's side —

While he prayed and laughed and sang and fought
In the very reek of death — and caught
The martyr passion that flamed from his face
As he died!

Where he led us we followed glad,
For we loved him well;
Some there were that held him mad,
But we knew that a heavenly rage had place
In that dauntless soul; the good God spake
To us through him; we had naught to do
Save only obey; and when his eyes
Flashed and kindled like storm-swept skies,
And his voice like a trumpet thrilled us through,
We would have marched with delight for his sake
To the jaws of hell.

The mists hung blue and still on the stream
At the marge of dawn;
The rapids laughed till we saw their teeth
Like a snarling wolf's fangs glisten and gleam;
Sweetly the pine trees underneath
The shadows slept in the moonlight wan;
Sweetly beneath the steps of the spring
The great, grim forest was blossoming;
And we fought, that springs for other men
Might blossom again.

Faint, thirst-maddened we prayed and fought
By night and by day;
Eyes glared at us with serpent hate —
Yet sometimes a hush fell, and then we heard naught
Save the wind's shrill harping far away,
The piping of birds, and the softened calls
Of the merry, distant waterfalls;
Then of other scenes we thought —
Of valleys beloved in sunny France,

Purple vineyards of song and dance,
Hopes and visions roseate;
Of many a holy festal morn,
And many a dream at vesper bell —
But anon the shuddering air was torn
By noises such as the fiends of hell
Might make in holding high holiday!
Once, so bitter the death-storm hailed,
We shrank and quailed.

Daulac sprang out before us then,
Shamed in our fears;
Glorious was his face to see,
The face of one who listens and hears
Voices unearthly, summonings high —
Rang his tone like a clarion, “Men,
See yonder star in the golden sky,
Such a man’s duty is to him,
A beacon that will not flicker nor dim,
Shining through darkness and despair.
Almost the martyr’s crown is yours!
Thinking the price too high to be paid,
Will you leave the sacrifice half made?
I tell you God will answer the prayer
Of the soul that endures!

“Comrades, far in the future I see
A mighty land;
Throned among the nations of earth,
Noble and happy, calm and free;
As a veil were lifted I see her stand,
And out of that future a voice to me
Promises that our names shall shine
On the page of her story with lustre divine
Impelling to visions and deeds of worth.

“Ever thus since the world was begun,
When a man hath given up his life,
Safety and freedom have been won
By the holy power of self-sacrifice;
For the memory of your mother’s kiss
Valiantly stand to the breach again.
Comrades, blench not now from the strife,
Quit you like men!”

Oh, we rushed to meet at our captain’s side
Death as a bride!
All our brave striplings bravely fell.
I, less fortunate, slowly came
Back from that din of shot and yell
Slowly and gaspingly, to know
A harder fate reserved for me
Than that brief, splendid agony.
Through many a bitter pang and throe
My spirit must tomorrow go
To seek my comrades; but I bear
The tidings that our desperate stand
By the Long Sault has saved our land,
And God has answered Daulac’s prayer.

THE EXILE

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We told her that her far off shore was bleak and dour to view,
And that her sky was dull and mirk while ours was smiling blue.
She only sighed in answer, “It is even as ye say,
But oh, the ragged splendor when the sun bursts through the gray!”

We brought her dew-wet roses from our fairest summer bowers,
We bade her drink their fragrance, we heaped her lap with flowers;

She only said, with eyes that yearned, "Oh, if ye might have brought
The pale, unscented blossoms by my father's lowly cot!"

We bade her listen to the birds that sang so madly sweet,
The lyric of the laughing stream that dimpled at our feet;
"But, O," she cried, "I weary for the music wild that stirs
When keens the mournful western wind among my native firs!"

We told her she had faithful friends and loyal hearts anear,
We prayed her take the fresher loves, we prayed her be of cheer;
"Oh, ye are kind and true," she wept, "but woe's me for the grace
Of tenderness that shines upon my mother's wrinkled face!"

THE THREE SONGS

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The poet sang of a battlefield
Where doughty deeds were done,
Where stout blows rang on helm and shield
And a kingdom's fate was spun
With the scarlet thread of victory,
And honor from death's grim revelry
Like a flame-red flower was won!
So bravely he sang that all who heard
With the sting of the fight and the triumph were stirred,
And they cried, "Let us blazon his name on high,
He has sung a song that will never die!"

Again, full throated, he sang of fame
And ambition's honeyed lure,
Of the chaplet that garlands a mighty name,
Till his listeners fired with the godlike flame
To do, to dare, to endure!
The thirsty lips of the world were fain

The cup of glamor he vaunted to drain,
And the people murmured as he went by,
“He has sung a song that will never die!”

And once more he sang, all low and apart,
A song of the love that was born in his heart,
Thinking to voice in unfettered strain
Its sweet delight and its sweeter pain;
Nothing he cared what the throngs might say
Who passed him unheeding from day to day,
For he only longed with his melodies
The soul of the one beloved to please.

The song of war that he sang is as naught,
For the field and its heroes are long forgot,
And the song he sang of fame and power
Was never remembered beyond its hour!
Only to-day his name is known
By the song he sang apart and alone,
And the great world pauses with joy to hear
The notes that were strung for a lover’s ear.

IN AN OLD TOWN GARDEN

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Shut from the clamor of the street
By an old wall with lichen grown,
It holds apart from jar and fret
A peace and beauty all its own.

The freshness of the springtime rains
And dews of morning linger here;
It holds the glow of summer noons
And ripest twilights of the year.

Above its bloom the evening stars
Look down at closing of the day,
And in its sweet and shady walks
Winds spent with roaming love to stray,

Upgathering to themselves the breath
Of wide-blown roses white and red,
The spice of musk and lavender
Along its winding alleys shed.

Outside are shadeless, troubled streets
And souls that quest for gold and gain,
Lips that have long forgot to smile
And hearts that burn and ache with pain.

But here is all the sweet of dreams,
The grace of prayer, the boon of rest,
The spirit of old songs and loves
Dwells in this garden blossom-blest.

Here would I linger for a space,
And walk herein with memory;
The world will pass me as it may
And hope will minister to me.

THE SEEKE R

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I sought for my happiness over the world,
Oh, eager and far was my quest;
I sought it on mountain and desert and sea,
I asked it of east and of west.
I sought it in beautiful cities of men,
On shores that were sunny and blue,

And laughter and lyric and pleasure were mine
In palaces wondrous to view;
Oh, the world gave me much to my plea and my prayer
But never I found aught of happiness there!

Then I took my way back to a valley of old
And a little brown house by a rill,
Where the winds piped all day in the sentinel firs
That guarded the crest of the hill;
I went by the path that my childhood had known
Through the bracken and up by the glen,
And I paused at the gate of the garden to drink
The scent of sweetbriar again;
The homelight shone out through the dusk as of yore
And happiness waited for me at the door!

THE POET'S THOUGH T

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It came to him in rainbow dreams,
Blent with the wisdom of the sages,
Of spirit and of passion born;
In words as lucent as the morn
He prisoned it, and now it gleams
A jewel shining through the ages.

THE CAL L

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Mother of her who is close to my heart
Cease to chide!

For no small thing must I wander afar
From the tender arms and lips of my bride —
My love with eyes like the glowing star
In the twilight sky apart.

Couldst't thou have seen Him standing there
Ere the day was born,
With the mild high look that was like a prayer,
Thou wouldst't not marvel that I must leave all
I hold most dear to answer the call
Of that wonderful morn.

We were casting our nets in the sea,
Andrew and I;
Over the mountains a young wind came
To kiss the waters of Galilee,
And in the calm blue northern sky
The gleaming crest of old Hermon rose
Girt with its diadem of snows,
And the east was smit with flame.

All our thoughts were simple and glad
As toilers' should be;
Andrew, that careless, dark-eyed lad
Sang a song right merrily,
Joyous of melody and word,
As he worked with oar and net and sail,
But I dreamed of the face that would blush and pale
When my step should be heard!

Then, as we lifted heedless eyes,
We saw Him there,
Where the silver waters curled on the shore;
Behind Him the radiance of the skies
Shining over His long, fair hair
Wreathed it as with a crown of light;
And oh, the grandeur and the grace
Of that pale and kingly face —

We were weary and hungered with toil of the night
But we thought not of it more!

He looked upon us with eyes that must see
Far in our hearts past mortal ken;
All the delights of the world grew dim —
Sweeter is seemed to suffer pain
And wander, outcast of men with Him,
Than share in another's joy and gain;
Spake He thus royally, "Come with me;
I will make you fishers of men."

Mother of her who weeps at my side
Cease to chide!
Thou knowest not how that one word rings
Ever by day and by night in my ear,
I cannot hearken to olden things
I cannot listen to hope or fear;
Mother of her who is dearest of all,
I must follow the Nazarene's call!

THE OLD HOME CALL S

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Come back to me, little dancing feet that roam the wide world o'er,
I long for the lilt of your flying steps in my silent rooms once more;
Come back to me, little voices gay with laughter and with song,
Come back, little hearts beating high with hopes, I have missed and
mourned you long.

My roses bloom in my garden walks all sweet and wet with the dew,
My lights shine down on the long hill road the waning twilights
through,

The swallows flutter about my eaves as in the years of old,
And close about me their steadfast arms the lispine pine trees fold.

But I weary for you at morn and eve, O, children of my love,
Come back to me from your pilgrim ways, from the seas and plains
ye
rove,
Come over the meadows and up the lane to my door set open wide,
And sit ye down where the red light shines from my welcoming
fireside.

I keep for you all your childhood dreams, your gladness and delights,
The joy of days in the sun and rain, the sleep of carefree nights,
All the sweet faiths ye have lost and sought again shall be your own,
Darlings, come to my empty heart — I am old and still and alone!

GENIUS

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A hundred generations have gone into its making,
With all their love and tenderness, with all their dreams and tears;
Their vanished joy and pleasure, their pain and their heartbreaking,
Have colored this rare blossom of the long-unfruitful years.

Their victory and their laughter for this have strong men given,
For this have sweet, dead women paid in patience which survives —
That a great soul might bring the world, as from the gate of heaven,
All that was rich and beautiful in those forgotten lives.

LOVE'S PRAYER

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Beloved, this the heart I offer thee
Is purified from old idolatry,
From outworn hopes, and from the lingering stain
Of passion's dregs, by penitential pain.

Take thou it, then, and fill it up for me
With thine unstinted love, and it shall be
An earthy chalice that is made divine
By its red draught of sacramental wine.

THE PRISONER

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I lash and writhe against my prison bars,
And watch with sullen eyes the gaping crowd ...
Give me my freedom and the burning stars,
The hollow sky, and crags of moonlit cloud!

Once I might range across the trackless plain,
And roar with joy, until the desert air
And wide horizons echoed it again:
I feared no foe, for I was monarch there!

I saw my shadow on the parching sand,
When the hot sun had kissed the mountain's rim;
And when the moon rose o'er long wastes of land,
I sought my prey by some still river's brim;

And with me my fierce love, my tawny mate,
Meet mother of strong cubs, meet lion's bride ...
We made our lair in regions desolate,
The solitude of wildernesses wide.

They slew her ... and I watched the life-blood flow
From her torn flank, and her proud eyes grow dim:

I howled her dirge above her while the low,
Red moon clomb up the black horizon's rim.

Me, they entrapped ... cowards! They did not dare
To fight, as brave men do, without disguise,
And face my unleashed rage! The hidden snare
Was their device to win an untamed prize.

I am a captive ... not for me the vast,
White dome of sky above the blinding sand,
The sweeping rapture of the desert blast
Across long ranges of untrodden land!

Yet still they fetter not my thought! In dreams
I, desert-born, tread the hot wastes once more,
Quench my deep thirst in cool, untainted streams,
And shake the darkness with my kingly roar!

COMPANIONE D

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I walked to-day, but not alone,
Adown a windy, sea-girt lea,
For memory, spendthrift of her charm,
Peopled the silent lands for me.

The faces of old comradeship
In golden youth were round my way,
And in the keening wind I heard
The songs of many an orient day.

And to me called, from out the pines
And woven grasses, voices dear,
As if from elfin lips should fall
The mimicked tones of yesteryear.

Old laughter echoed o'er the leas
And love-lipped dreams the past had kept,
From wayside blooms like honeyed bees
To company my wanderings crept.

And so I walked, but not alone,
Right glad companionship had I,
On that gray meadow waste between
Dim-litten sea and winnowed sky.

YO U

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Only a long, lowlying lane
That follows to the misty sea,
Across a bare and russet plain
Where wild winds whistle vagrantly;
I know that many a fairer path
With lure of song and bloom may woo,
But oh! I love this lonely strath
Because it is so full of you.

Here we have walked in elder years,
And here your truest memories wait,
This spot is sacred to your tears,
That to your laughter dedicate;
Here, by this turn, you gave to me
A gem of thought that glitters yet,
This tawny slope is graciously
By a remembered smile beset.

Here once you lingered on an hour
When stars were shining in the west,
To gather one pale, scented flower
And place it smiling on your breast;
And since that eve its fragrance blows
For me across the grasses sere,
Far sweeter than the latest rose,
That faded bloom of yesteryear.

For me the sky, the sea, the wold,
Have beckoning visions wild and fair,
The mystery of a tale untold,

The grace of an unuttered prayer.
Let others choose the fairer path
That winds the dimpling valley through,
I gladly seek this lonely strath
Companioned by my dreams of you.

UNRECORDED

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I like to think of the many words
The Master in his early days
Must have spoken to them of Nazareth —
Words not freighted with life and death,
Piercing through soul and heart like swords.
But gracious greeting and grateful phrase,
The simple speech
That plain folk utter each to each.

Ere over him too darkly lay
The prophet shadow of Calvary,
I think he talked in very truth
With the innocent gayety of youth,
Laughing upon some festal day,
Gently, with sinless boyhood's glee.

I think if he had ever said
To a mother apart,
Cradling her baby's shining head,
"Thy man-child is strong of limb and heart,"
She must have been from that gladsome day
Thrilled with enduring pride alway,
Fearless of any future dread,
Knowing the son upon her knee
Worthy her pain and love would be.

Or if by the dusty wayside well,
From the glare and heat
Of the burning noon a wayfarer sought
A moment's rest where the palm shade fell,
And he said to him, "The day is hot,
And your road is rough for wandering feet,"
Then I think on his way the pilgrim went
As one who has shared in a sacrament,
Feeling no longer on him press
The burden of his weariness.

If he said to a maid, "The sunset lies
Redly on Nazareth hills tonight,"
Each sunset of her life would bring
A benedictive memory
Of his haunting face and holy eyes;
Or if to a bridegroom thus in spring,
"The wife of thy youth is fair and wise,"
So would she ever have seemed to be
In her husband's sight.

If he but bade a passing guest
His meal to share,
Would not the one so honored deem
Himself of all most highly blessed,
The food he ate heaven's manna rare?
Or when he to a friend addressed
A word of thanks for service done,
Or homely, familiar favor, none
Of richer recompense could dream.

No evangelist's golden pen
Wrote them for us —
The words of the Master to those he might meet
By the carpenter's bench or in Nazareth street —
But in them I think there well might be —
It is surely sweet to fancy thus —

All of the benediction for men
All of the tender humanity,
That leaven the words of his later age
On the holy page.

WITH TEARS THEY BURIED YOU TO-DA Y

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With tears they buried you to-day,
But well I knew no turf could hold
Your gladness long beneath the mould,
Or cramp your laughter in the clay;
I smiled while others wept for you
Because I knew.

And now you sit with me tonight
Here in our old, accustomed place;
Tender and mirthful is your face,
Your eyes with starry joy are bright —
Oh, you are merry as a song
For love is strong!

They think of you as lying there
Down in the churchyard grim and old;
They think of you as mute and cold,
A wan, white thing that once was fair,
With dim, sealed eyes that never may
Look on the day.

But love cannot be confined so
In clod and darkness; it must rise
And seek its own in radiant guise,
With immortality aglow,

Making of death's triumphant sting
A little thing.

Ay, we shall laugh at those who deem
Our hearts are sundered! Listen, sweet,
The tripping of the wind's swift feet
Along the by-ways of our dream,
And hark the whisper of the rose
Wilding that blows.

Oh, still you love those simple things,
And still you love them more with me;
The grave has won no victory;
It could not clasp your shining wings,
It could not keep you from my side,
Dear and my bride!

IN MEMORY OF "MAGGIE"

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A pussy-cat who was the household pet for seventeen years.

Naught but a little cat, you say;
Yet we remember her,
A creature loving, loyal, kind,
With merry, mellow purr;
The faithful friend of many years,
Shall we not give her meed of tears?

Sleek-suited in her velvet coat,
White-breasted and bright-eyed,
Feeling when she was praised and stroked
A very human pride;

A quiet nook was sure to please
Where she might take her cushioned ease.

Little gray friend, we shall not feel
Ashamed to grieve for you;
Many we know of humankind
Are not so fond and true;
Dear puss, in all the years to be
We'll keep your memory loyally.

REALIZATION

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I smiled with skeptic mocking where they told me you were dead,
You of the airy laughter and lightly twinkling feet;
“They tell a dream that haunted a chill gray dawn,” I said,
“Death could not touch or claim a thing so vivid and so sweet!”

I looked upon you coffined amid your virgin flowers,
But even that white silence could bring me no belief:
“She lies in maiden sleep,” I said, “and in the youngling hours
Her sealed dark eyes will open to scorn our foolish grief.”

But when I went at moonrise to our ancient trysting place ...
And, oh, the wind was keening in the fir-boughs overhead!...
And you came never to me with your little gypsy face,
Your lips and hands of welcome, I knew that you were dead!

THE GARDEN IN WINTER

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Frosty-white and cold it lies
Underneath the fretful skies;
Snowflakes flutter where the red
Banners of the poppies spread,
And the drifts are wide and deep
Where the lilies fell asleep.

But the sunsets o'er it throw
Flame-like splendor, lucent glow,
And the moonshine makes it gleam
Like a wonderland of dream,
And the sharp winds all the day
Pipe and whistle shrilly gay.

Safe beneath the snowdrifts lie
Rainbow buds of by-and-by;
In the long, sweet days of spring
Music of bluebells shall ring,
And its faintly golden cup
Many a primrose will hold up.

Though the winds are keen and chill
Roses' hearts are beating still,
And the garden tranquilly
Dreams of happy hours to be —
In the summer days of blue
All its dreamings will come true.

THE DIFFERENC E

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When we were together, heart of my heart, on that unforgotten quest,
With your tender arm about me thrown and your head upon my
breast,

There came a grief that was bitter and deep and straitly dwell with
me,
And I shunned it not, so sweet it was to suffer and be with thee.

And now when no more against mine own is beating thine eager
heart,
When thine eyes are turned from the glance of mine and our ways are
far apart,
A dear and long-sought joy has come my constant guest to be,
And I love it not, so bitter it is, unfelt, unshared, by thee.

THE POET

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There was strength in him and the weak won freely from it,
There was an infinite pity, and hard hearts grew soft thereby,
There was truth so unshrinking and starry-shining,
Men read clear by its light and learned to scorn a lie.

His were songs so full of a wholesome laughter
Those whose courage was ashen found it once more aflame,
His was a childlike faith and wandering feet were guided,
His was a hope so joyous despair was put to shame.

His was the delicate insight and his the poignant vision
Whereby the world might learn what wine-lipped roses know,
What a drift of rain might lisp on a gray sea-dawning,
Or a pale spring of the woodland babble low.

He builded a castle of dream and a palace of rainbow fancy,
And the starved souls of his fellows lived in them and grew glad; —
And yet — there were those who mocked the gifts of his generous
giving,

And some — but he smiled and forgave them — who deemed him wholly mad!

THE MOTHE R

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Here I lean over you, small son, sleeping
Warm in my arms,
And I con to my heart all your dew-fresh charms,
As you lie close, close in my hungry hold ...
Your hair like a miser's dream of gold,
And the white rose of your face far fairer,
Finer, and rarer
Than all the flowers in the young year's keeping;
Over lips half parted your low breath creeping
Is sweeter than violets in April grasses;
Though your eyes are fast shut I can see their blue,
Splendid and soft as starshine in heaven,
With all the joyance and wisdom given
From the many souls who have stanchly striven
Through the dead years to be strong and true.

Those fine little feet in my worn hands holden ...
Where will they tread?
Valleys of shadow or heights dawn-red?
And those silken fingers, O, wee, white son,
What valorous deeds shall by them be done
In the future that yet so distant is seeming
To my fond dreaming?
What words all so musical and golden
With starry truth and poesy olden
Shall those lips speak in the years oncoming?
O, child of mine, with waxen brow,
Surely your words of that dim tomorrow

Rapture and power and grace must borrow
From the poignant love and holy sorrow
Of the heart that shrines and cradles you now!

Some bitter day you will love another,
To her will bear
Love-gifts and woo her ... then must I share
You and your tenderness! Now you are mine
From your feet to your hair so golden and fine,
And your crumpled fingertips ... mine completely,
Wholly and sweetly;
Mine with kisses deep to smother,
No one so near to you now as your mother!
Others may hear your words of beauty,
But your precious silence is mine alone;
Here in my arms I have enrolled you,
Away from the grasping world I fold you,
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone!

TO ONE HATE D

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“Hate is only Love that has missed its way.”

Had it been when I came to the valley where the paths parted asunder,
Chance had led my feet to the way of love, not hate,
I might have cherished you well, have been to you fond and faithful,
Great as my hatred is, so might my love have been great.

Each cold word of mine might have been a kiss impassioned,
Warm with the throb of my heart, thrilled with my pulse's leap,
And every glance of scorn, lashing, pursuing, and stinging,
As a look of tenderness would have been wondrous and deep.

Bitter our hatred is, old and strong and unchanging,
Twined with the fibres of life, blent with body and soul,
But as its bitterness, so might have been our love's sweetness
Had it not missed the way — strange missing and sad! — to its goal.

WHILE THE FATES SLEEP

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Come, let us to the sunways of the west,
Hasten, while crystal dew the rose-cups fill,
Let us dream dreams again in our blithe quest
O'er whispering wold and hill.
Castles of air yon wimpling valleys keep
Where milk-white mist steals from the purpling sea,
They shall be ours in the moon's wizardry,
While the fates, wearied, sleep.

The viewless spirit of the wind will sing
In the soft starshine by the reedy mere,
The elfin harps of hemlock boughs will ring
Fitfully far and near;
The fields will yield their trove of spice and musk,
And balsam from the glens of pine will fall,
Till twilight weaves its tangled shadows all
In one dim web of dusk.

Let us put tears and memories away,
While the fates sleep time stops for revelry;
Let us look, speak, and kiss as if no day
Has been or yet will be;
Let us make friends with laughter 'neath the moon,
With music on the immemorial shore,
Yea, let us dance as lovers danced of yore —
The fates will waken soon!

THE FAREWELL

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He rides away with sword and spur,
Garbed in his warlike blazonry,
With gallant glance and smile for her
Upon the dim-lit balcony.
Her kiss upon his lips is warm,
Upon his breast he wears her rose,
From her fond arms to stress and storm
Of many a bannered field he goes.

He dreams of danger, glory, strife,
His voice is blithe, his hand is strong,
He rides perchance to death from life
And leaves his lady with a song;
But her blue-brimmed eyes are dim
With her deep anguish standing there,
Sending across the world with him
The dear, white guerdon of her prayer.

For her the lonely vigil waits
When ashen dawns come and go,
Each bringing through the future's gates
Its presages of fear and woe;
For her the watch with soul and heart
Grown sick with dread, as women may,
Yet keeping still her pain apart
From the wan duties of the day.

'Tis hers to walk when sunsets yield
Their painted splendors to the skies,
And dream on some far battlefield
Perchance alone, unwatched, he dies;

'Tis hers to kneel in patient prayer
When midnight stars keep sentinel,
Lest the chill death-dews damp the hair
Upon the brow she loves so well.

So stands she, white and sad and sweet,
Upon the latticed balcony,
From golden hair to slender feet
No lady is so fair as she;
He loves her true, he holds her dear,
But he must ride on dangerous quest,
With gallant glance and smile of cheer,
And her red rose upon his breast.

THE OLD MAN'S GRAVE

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Make it where the winds may sweep
Through the pine boughs soft and deep,
And the murmur of the sea
Come across the orient lea,
And the falling raindrops sing
Gently to his slumbering.

Make it where the meadows wide
Greenly lie on every side,
Harvest fields he reaped and trod,
Westerling slopes of clover sod,
Orchard lands where bloom and blow
Trees he planted long ago.

Make it where the starshine dim
May be always close to him,
And the sunrise glory spread

Lavishly around his bed.
And the dewy grasses creep
Tenderly above his sleep.

Since these things to him were dear
Through full many a well-spent year,
It is surely meet their grace
Should be on his resting-place,
And the murmur of the sea
Be his dirge eternally.

FOREVE R

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I

With you I shall ever be;
Over land and sea
My thoughts will companion you;
With yours shall my laughter chime,
And my step keep time
In the dusk and dew
With yours in blithesome rhyme;
In all of your joy shall I rejoice,
On my lips your sorrow shall find a voice,
And when your tears in bitterness fall
Mine shall mingle with them all;
With you in waking and dream I shall be,
In the place of shadow and memory,
Under young springtime moons,
And on harvest noons,
And when the stars are withdrawn
From the white pathway of the dawn.

II

O, my friend, nothing shall ever part
My soul from yours, yours from my heart!
I am yours and you mine, in silence and in speech,
Death will only seal us each to each.
Through the darkness we shall fare with fearless jest,
Starward we shall go on a joyous new quest;
There be many worlds, as we shall prove,
Many suns and systems, but only one love!

BY AN AUTUMN FIRE

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Now at our casement the wind is shrilling,
Poignant and keen
And all the great boughs of the pines between
It is harping a lone and hungering strain
To the eldritch weeping of the rain;
And then to the wild, wet valley flying
It is seeking, sighing,
Something lost in the summer olden.
When night was silver and day was golden;
But out on the shore the waves are moaning
With ancient and never fulfilled desire,
And the spirits of all the empty spaces,
Of all the dark and haunted places,
With the rain and the wind on their death-white faces,
Come to the lure of our leaping fire.

But we bar them out with this rose-red splendor
From our blithe domain,
And drown the whimper of wind and rain

With undaunted laughter, echoing long,
Cheery old tale and gay old song;
Ours is the joyance of ripe fruition,
Attained ambition.
Ours is the treasure of tested loving,
Friendship that needs no further proving;
No more of springtime hopes, sweet and uncertain,
Here we have largess of summer in fee —
Pile high the logs till the flame be leaping,
At bay the chill of the autumn keeping,
While pilgrim-wise, we may go a-reaping
In the fairest meadow of memory!